



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Road, Portbury, Bristol. BS20 7TR

**Previous SIAMS grade:** Outstanding

**Current inspection grade:** Good

**Diocese:** Bath and Wells

Local authority: North Somerset

Dates of inspection: 1 December 2015

Date of last inspection: 23 November 2010

School's unique reference number: 109272

Head teacher: Lorraine Wright

Inspector's name and number: David Hatrey (NS 844)

#### School context

Located in a village close to the M5, coastal towns and the Port of Avonmouth, St Mary's enjoys the benefits of a rural location with access to urban links. The school is adjacent to the church and has 99 on roll, the majority of whom are White British, including some who travel from a wide geographical area. The percentage of children who receive SEN support at the school is below national averages, whilst the percentage of children who are in receipt of Pupil Premium funding is significantly below national figures.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary's Portbury as a Church of England school is good.

- Christian values underpin all of the school's work. The children have a good understanding of these values which is evident in the quality of their relationships and behaviour.
- Children's attitudes towards learning are impressive. They are eager to learn and achieve the highest possible standards.
- Varied approaches to the teaching of Religious Education (RE) have ensured that children are enthusiastic about their learning and apply these ideas to their daily lives.
- The head teacher has a clear Christian vision for a church school. Her determined leadership has seen the school move forward as she has created a strong staff team who work well together.

#### Areas to improve

- Establish a clear understanding of spirituality. Experiences should be identified in planning and across all subjects enabling all children to share their thoughts.
- Collective worship both at school and at the church should be regularly monitored and evaluated by all who share in this.
- Monitoring of the school's Christian distinctiveness, RE and spirituality needs a more rigorous approach. This should involve all members of the school community; discussions with the children should form a central part of this.

**The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good at meeting the needs of all learners.**

The school's Christian values underpin its work and the distinctive ethos this creates has had a distinct impact upon relationships across the school. When one child was asked, how do we know that this is a Church school, the response was, "If I fell over, I know someone would come and help me up." Other children added, "We see the world in a different way, like Jesus." Children work well together and they value the contribution that each makes. The children stated that they had no concerns about any form of bullying and that should any issues arise that these would be dealt with swiftly and effectively. Staff model good relationships and pupils seek to treat others in the same way. Children have been involved in creating a new behaviour policy, whereby they receive commendations when they reflect Christian values in their own actions. They talk eagerly about moving up the 'rocket', which reflects the higher standard of behaviour. The school has involved parents, governors and staff in agreeing its key Christian values. It is evident that the understanding of these values by the children has been steadily developed and that these are informed by Biblical principles. The school understands that part of its Christian duty is to provide education for its children which enables them to make good academic progress and achieve their potential. Therefore, in recent years the school has been active in developing the quality of teaching and learning. New ideas and initiatives have been put into place, which are now beginning to bear fruit. This is seen in the progress that children are making in Key Stage 1, where they are above national expectations. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage, whilst at Key Stage 2 progress and attainment are broadly in line and some cases above. The school's Christian values are equally reflected in the caring and loving atmosphere it has created, where children feel that they can do well and be successful. Children want to achieve and are developing high aspirations. They are aware that making errors is an opportunity for new learning to take place and this is part of the learning journey. The school's RE curriculum ensures that children have opportunities to explore the beliefs that others, who are not part of the local area, have and the religious practices to which this leads. The children are able to talk intelligently about their understanding, particularly of Hinduism, including making comparisons with Christianity. This is supported by visits to a Bristol Hindu temple. Feedback from children and parents show they valued this opportunity and found it thought provoking. It is evident from comments made that children are tolerant and respectful, seeking to understand the beliefs of others whilst recognising links to their own beliefs. RE contributes positively to the understanding that the children have of the school's identified Christian values. The children understand how these Christian values influence the behaviour and actions of others and make a difference to their own lives. Staff make links where these occur naturally and where there are opportunities to explore these and deepen understanding. At present there is no agreed definition of spirituality from which the school works. Whilst some opportunities have been given for children to explore this, experiences are not yet systematically planned across the curriculum, therefore, not all the subjects are contributing to the children's development and understanding of spirituality.

**The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.**

Collective worship plays an important role in the life of the school. Children are aware of its relevance for them and talk about it as the community coming together. The children say that they enjoy singing; whilst younger children are often involved creatively in making artefacts and use actions and drama to engage them in the worship. The Christian themes developed in collective worship are drawn from a programme which explores and deepens children's understanding of the Christian value that they have for the term. The ideas developed in collective worship are often taken back and explored further in the classroom. The children talked about a variety of worship leaders undertake collective worship which they feel enriches the experiences that the children have, and broadens their understanding of Christian worship. The parents say that they enjoy attending the Friday worship and participating in this. The

school purposefully provides a range of opportunities to develop the children's understanding of prayer. One of the daily prayers used refers and relates to the school's Christian value for the term. The prayer is expressed using signs from Makaton, making it inclusive. Further, the prayer suggests how this value should be seen in action. A display in the hall also supports the developing understanding that the children have of compassion. On this board is a quote from a child, "Prayer is a moment to express yourself to God". Children use prayers spontaneously and see this as a natural way of sharing their news with God. Prayer boxes in each class and in the hall are used by the children and give opportunity for them to express their developing spirituality. Other examples are confidential prayers to God, or those given to class teachers for collection over the year. In another example, children attached prayers to a fishing net. Each week a child's prayer becomes the prayer for the week and this is read during collective worship. Children have a good understanding of prayer and use it throughout the day. They realise that there are different types of prayer and they are confident and comfortable writing these for a range of contexts. Some parents have commented that children use prayers at home. As a result of this the provision is determined to be good. Collective worship frequently draws upon biblical material and clearly focuses upon Jesus. Children have a good understanding of who Jesus is and his place within Christian worship and belief. In addition, they recognise how his teaching and example can influence their daily lives and how they respond to others. The children have an emerging understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit as they light a three wick candle at the start of the worship, asking for the presence of the Trinity at their worship. The children have a good understanding of the main Christian festivals, their meaning and importance, through their celebration; and enthusiastically play a significant role in these services which are held in the parish church. All classes take turns in leading these acts of worship, so they have experience of doing this from an early age. Significant numbers of the village community and parents join with the school for these special celebrations. The head teacher has carried out some evaluation of collective worship which has resulted in it becoming more appropriate for the different age groups. However, there is no agreed approach to evaluating collective worship, nor are any of the participants, children, parents, governors or staff involved in this. The monitoring and evaluation of collective worship needs to be more systematically undertaken to provide ongoing impact.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.**

It is apparent from scrutiny of the children's books and previous assessments in RE that achievement is at least in line with national expectations and on a number of occasions above them. During the inspection this was reinforced by comments made by children on their prior learning, and demonstrated insights and a deep knowledge and understanding of the topics covered. Very good marking gives children opportunities to respond to comments the teacher poses, which further develops their thinking. This would indicate that the quality of teaching is good, with some examples being outstanding. The head teacher and RE co-ordinator have undertaken joint learning walks and identified areas of strength in the teaching as well as in areas that are being developed further. The use of open ended questions provokes opportunities for deeper thought, analysing, interpreting and evaluating, leading to greater understanding. Teaching includes a good balance of using artefacts, joint discussion and collaboration where children learn from one another. Some children are beginning to explore questions related to meaning and purpose and draw upon their understanding of Christian values to support them. The RE curriculum has been thoughtfully designed to enable children to respond to the activities in a variety of ways. For example; children creating clay models to represent their ideas, exploring the use of art to convey their feelings, and hot seating and drama as other active experiences. The school has a system of making it clear to children what steps and learning objectives they will be covering in each topic, so that that they know where they are in this process. Children have opportunities to make their own choices about the level of difficulty of work that they are to undertake, often being confident to undertake the more challenging demands and respond to these. The subject co-ordinator is enthusiastic and has ensured that RE has a high profile across the school. She has visited other schools where excellent good practice

has been identified. The impact of this can be seen in several areas, including creating a reflection area in each of the classrooms and in the school hall. Banners have also been introduced in the hall which reinforces the children's understanding of that term's Christian value. The co-ordinator is building up resources to ensure that staff have artefacts and resources to teach all the modules of the Agreed Syllabus and listened to the ideas and opinions of the children to inform her RE development plan. This is leading to significant developments in the quality and impact of teaching and learning in RE. The children talk quite openly that they enjoy RE and appreciate that it makes a difference to their understanding and how they treat others.

**The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is good.**

The head teacher has a clear Christian vision for the school. She recognises that part of a good Christian education is to ensure that all children achieve their full academic potential as well as experiencing being part of a loving and caring church school family. Hence the distinct emphasis upon the Christian values alongside raising standards. This is also seen in the way the school supports all children; where necessary children are given 1-1 support, reflecting that each child is special and made in the image of God. Positive support is given to staff to support their professional development and grow new leaders. The governors are very supportive of the school; they value the way they can contribute to the school's work. They too have high aspirations for the school and provide sufficient challenge as the school moves forward. They are dedicated to the development of the school as a church school. The target from the previous inspection has been fully achieved; strong links have been established with the local church. The school now holds regular acts of worship in the church, which are well attended by the community. The Rector has a high profile in the school and is developing the children's understanding of 'our' church. This is becoming a strength. The school creates good relationships with other local schools and has benefitted from sharing some good practice seen elsewhere. The school is active in the local community and celebrates Easter by distributing flowers within the village. Parents and carers recognise that the school has moved forward and feel that the school listens to them and acts upon ideas and concerns they have. They see that being part of a Church school has had a positive impact on the lives of their children. This is seen in the way they articulate their ideas and their attitude towards others. During the inspection they stated confidently that their children enjoy coming to school. The school has a vision for development as a Church school and has identified the need to review its Christian values. However, monitoring and evaluation are not systematic. In order to make further progress this needs to involve all members of the school community to look at its Christian distinctiveness, spirituality and RE.

SIAMS report December 2015 St. Mary's C of E VA Primary School Portbury BS20 7TR