



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

### **Mereside Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Mereside  
Springfield  
Shrewsbury  
SY2 6LE

**Previous SIAMS grade: Satisfactory**

**Diocese: Lichfield**

Local authority: Shropshire

Dates of inspection: 4 February 2016

Date of last inspection: 7 February 2011

School's unique reference number: 8935205

Headteacher: Elizabeth Holmes

Inspector's name and number: Susan Taylor 688

#### **School context**

Mereside Church of England VC Primary School has 240 children aged 4-11 years. The headteacher has been in post since September 2011. Shortly after this the school went into special measures from which it was removed and graded good in July 2014. After a period of change staffing has been stable and pupil numbers have increased. The majority of the pupils are of a white British background. The proportion of pupils in receipt of pupil premium is below average. The incumbent has been in post since November 2014.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Mereside Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are good.**

- The headteacher, governors and staff have a clear vision for the school based upon Christian values.
- Positive relationships throughout the school ensure that pupils achieve well academically and in their personal development and well-being.
- Strong and effective partnerships exist with the church, community and parents.

#### **Areas to improve**

- Embed the school's Christian values within the life and teachings of Jesus.
- Enhance pupils' understanding of core Christian beliefs including the Trinity.
- Develop pupils' knowledge of national and global communities and Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith.
- Develop the use of the outdoors to provide opportunities for quiet reflection.

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

The leadership team of Mereside CE(C) Primary School ensures that the core Christian value of love underpins every aspect of the school. As a result the quality of care and support is outstanding and pupils are happy, behave well and are motivated to learn, so are well-prepared for the next stage of their education. The *Learning Lounge* and bereavement support are just two of the many systems that are in place to support individual pupil needs. The way each child is considered unique and their needs catered for is highly valued by both pupils and parents and consequently attendance is good. The pupils are very proud of their school song, written by pupils, and this gives them a real sense of belonging. Hardworking and caring staff, together with structured training and support, has enabled the academic achievement of the pupils to continue on an upward trend. The school clearly promotes Christian values which is evident both on the website and in the school environment. However pupils do not consistently relate these values to the teachings of Jesus so that Jesus becomes a role model for their lives and a firm foundation for all spiritual, moral and cultural development (SMC). Good opportunities are provided for social development throughout the life of the school. For example, the school is involved in *Fairtrade* and pupils relate this to their value of justice. The elected school council has instigated a number of initiatives and charity events, such as *Christian Aid* and *Christmas shoebox appeal*, showing respect for the needs of others as well as outworking the value of service. Spirituality is clearly defined with the policy based upon Christian principles, particularly 'God is love'. Many opportunities are provided to enable pupils to develop their personal spirituality. The reflection area in each classroom has been designed by the pupils of that class and consequently is well-used and valued. Prayer stones, prayer cards, prayer boxes give pupils the opportunity for personal prayer. The younger children use the forest school and all children visit the nearby mere, which provides further opportunities for spiritual reflection. The school recognises the need to provide quiet areas within the school grounds to be used at playtimes and lunchtimes as well as for outdoor worship. Pupils enjoy religious education (RE) which contributes to the Christian character of the school especially with respect to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development. The revised RE scheme of work is starting to enable pupils to build their knowledge and understanding of core Christian beliefs. Older pupils have an understanding of the difference and diversity of other faith communities; as one pupil said, "we respect everyone's faith". This has been enhanced by the school's involvement in a multi-faith Holocaust memorial event, visits to a synagogue and a mosque. Pupils' knowledge of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith is more limited.

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

Daily collective worship at Mereside is a mixture of whole school, key stage and class worship. Consequently pupils experience a range of styles and leaders, engaging their interest. Children are enthusiastic about collective worship and respond well, both spiritually and in outcomes of attitudes and behaviour. Worship is planned around the school's values and the planning clearly links the topic to a Bible passage. These themes develop pupils morally, socially and culturally and enable them to take responsibility for their own behaviour as well as helping the wider community. After a whole school introduction the theme is then expanded upon in key stages and classes which enable greater pupil participation. Children articulate clearly stories of people of courage, their current value, such as *Daniel*, *Rosa Parkes* and *Martin Luther King*. They can express how courage can help them in their daily life at home and in school. However they are less clear in relating these stories to Bible teaching and the teachings of Jesus. Pupils understand the lighting of the candles in worship signifies 'the light of Jesus'. Now that three candles are lit at the start of worship they have a basic knowledge that these represent "God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" but their understanding needs further development. There are strong and effective links with the church. Children speak highly of the worships led by the vicar, saying, "they are fun!" and the 'Open the Book' worships led by church members are much

looked forward to. The messages of these worships are particularly well remembered. The school visits the church for key Christian festivals in addition to a Christingle service and 'Experience Easter'. These visits and visitors give pupils an added dimension which enhances their understanding of both Anglican traditions and core Christian beliefs. Prayer has a high profile in classes with class prayers normally being said at lunchtime and at the end of the school day. Classrooms have a prayer box, or similar, so that pupils can write their own prayers. These opportunities have enabled pupils to have an awareness of prayer and reflection. As one child said, "prayer is taking your worries to God". The foundation governor, headteacher and leadership team monitor and evaluate worship by pupil discussion. Outcomes of these evaluations have been acted upon; for example pupils are more actively involved in worship through the use of the resource 'Working on Worship'.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding**

The school is led by a headteacher who puts the school's Christian value of love at the centre of all decisions. This has impacted upon staff appointments as well as the care and support given to pupils and their families. Consequently a very united team has been established which has enabled the school to progress both academically and in outcomes of behaviour and attitudes. The profile of the school in the community has grown considerably and so pupil numbers have increased. The open door policy of the school and its outreach work in the community, such as activities for the elderly, Shrewsbury in Bloom and being on Shropshire radio has further enabled the school to display its Christian character. The chair of governors is a foundation governor, ensuring that Christian distinctiveness is always a factor in decision-making. Governors not only monitor and evaluate the Christian distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school but there is clear evidence of the impact of the changes made as a result of the monitoring. Christian distinctiveness is given as high, if not higher, profile in school development than other areas. It has clear development points, with timescales and targets, on the school improvement plan. The incumbent, who is also a governor, is very supportive of the school both practically and prayerfully. Links between the church and the school are excellent, vibrant since the appointment of the present minister. Parents feel that this has encouraged more of them to become involved in church/school activities such as 'Messy Church'. A strength of the school is in identifying and implementing training and support for staff, particularly new staff. This has resulted in a consistency of approach to teaching and learning, thus maximising pupil progress. Teaching students in the school are very well supported and trained. The school is part of the Shrewsbury Church of England Primary School Collaboration Project which facilitates the sharing of good practice. The school also works closely with the Diocese to access support, advice and training. RE is managed extremely well, and the resulting paired monitoring, discussion and sharing of ideas, has ensured good achievement. The RE scheme of work is delivered now through 'the enquiry approach' to facilitate deeper understanding of belief. Systems are in place to monitor the effectiveness of these changes. The school is involved in 'Open Door' in Shrewsbury Abbey and events in Lichfield Cathedral and these have deepened pupils' understanding of the wider Christian church and Anglican traditions for those attending. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, "nothing is too trivial for the teachers", "the headteacher is kind and gentle, she is not overbearing but she knows what she is doing". There is an active Parents Association who fund-raise for the school and a Parents Council who review policies and documentation. Parents therefore feel valued and an integral part of their child's education. The development points from the previous SIAS have been successfully addressed.

