



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Swanage St Mark's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

**Bell Street
Swanage
BH19 2SA**

Diocese: Salisbury

Local authority: Dorset

Dates of inspection: 7 March 2014

Date of last inspection: 14 May 2009

School's unique reference number: 113814

Headteacher: Mrs Helen Armstrong

Inspector's name and number: Marcia Headon 761

School context

St Mark's CE VA Primary School is a small school of 133 children, largely drawn from the local community. Since the previous inspection the school has been re-designated as a primary school. Almost all the children are from a predominantly white British background. The proportion of children who have special educational needs is well above the national average. The proportion of children in receipt of free school meals is above national averages.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mark's as a Church of England school are good

- The strong caring ethos of the school where children are carefully nurtured and cared for within a highly inclusive community
- The enjoyment of pupils of the collective acts of worship.
- The centrality of prayer in the life of the school and its pupils
- The involvement of the governing body in the life of the school
- The principled leadership and vision of the headteacher
- The very strong links which exist with the Church and local community.

Areas to improve

- Develop evaluation among stakeholders to help define more tightly the distinctiveness of the school as a church school.
- Ensure that pupils understand how the values of the school are underpinned by Christian teaching
- Ensure that pupils are more involved in the planning, delivery and evaluation of all

aspects of collective worship and that pupils develop an understanding of the nature of the Trinity

- Develop the assessment in Religious Education (RE), ensuring that regular moderation is carried out by teachers

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

The school has a strongly nurturing and caring ethos and the needs of all children are well catered for. Pupils make good progress overall and achieve well. In 2013 attainment at Key Stage 1 was above national averages in all subjects and for all groups. The school is a highly inclusive community where good relationships exist between everyone. Learners are encouraged and given praise when they do well. The four key Christian values of love, respect, truth and inspiration underpin the work of the school. The pupils can name these values and show understanding of what these values mean. For example pupils in Key Stage 1 explained that respect was very important as they needed to respect the rights of others to be able to hear the teacher and even those who are very young understand that they should have respect for those of other faiths or no faith. However, the pupils are not able to explain how these values are explicitly linked to the Gospels or the Christian tradition. The links between the values and the Christian tradition are implicit in the school rather than explicit. Behaviour in the school is good and children help one other. This was very evident in their care for a severely disabled pupil. The spiritual development of pupils is fostered through the creative curriculum, through encouraging pupils in prayer and in the opportunities given to them to reflect in lessons. However the definition of spirituality is less well defined in the school. The needs of families are met well by the school and the governing body is eager to see the school as supporting both children and families.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The pupils enjoy collective worship, joining in singing enthusiastically and listening to the Bible stories which are read to them. It has a strong Christian focus. Pupils recognise that collective worship is a special time signified by the lighting of a candle and the reading of a welcoming prayer which they all know. Teachers also feel affirmed by collective worship and by the singing. However, the school has not yet considered how it can depict the Trinitarian nature of Christianity at a level appropriate to the children. The headteacher and collective worship coordinator plan the worship which is based on the Values for Life material. Once a week local clergy or church visitors lead worship. The children enjoy these visits and the themes which are covered but the material used does not always link to the themes being used by the school. On one day a week class collective worship is led by teachers with pupils sometimes leading prayers. Pupils' reflections during this time are recorded in a form diary. The school has very strong links with the adjoining church and monthly school collective acts of worship and school services at special festivals such as harvest, Christmas and Easter are very well attended by parents. Pupils regularly prepare and read prayers here, although they do not yet lead any other part of the collective worship. Prayer is very important to the life of the school and makes a major contribution to the pupils' spiritual development. The coordinator for collective worship monitors the class worship regularly and provides feedback to the teachers. Governors frequently attend collective worship and provide an evaluation which informs future planning.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

Pupils enjoy their RE lessons and are able to talk coherently about the work which they have done. They all have one discrete RE lesson each week and the school meets the national expectation to teach both Christianity and other faiths. However, the school has recently adopted a new scheme of work and the coordinator in the process of mapping this against the

agreed syllabus. This has created some uncertainty about the work to be covered but the coordinator is providing very helpful advice to teachers. In the lessons observed pupils were very well engaged with their learning and at Key Stage 1 particularly were very eager to explain that new life in Springtime was a result of God's creation. Teachers developed pupils' understanding by good questioning and used a variety of techniques such as a tableau setting at Key Stage 2 to stimulate thought and reflection. Pupils were busily considering how Peter may have reacted to Jesus' statement that he would die on the cross. Work in pupils' books shows that they have gained a great deal of knowledge and are developing skills but there is less evidence of questions about belief and meaning being considered. Although the school has begun to assess standards in RE against levels it is uncertain as to how standards compare with other subjects as no RE moderation has yet taken place. Progress has been judged as good but this was as part of the literacy moderation. The RE Coordinator shows a good understanding of the further developments which are required in RE, especially with regard to assessment. She monitors the teaching regularly, provided updates and training for all staff. There is sufficient capital funding available to buy resources for RE lessons.

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

The headteacher has a clear vision for the development of the school. In her work she actively models the values of the school. She is determined all children will succeed and has a very good understanding of the needs of the local community. She is highly regarded by all staff and parents. Since her arrival she has had an impact upon the school, simplifying the mission statement with the strapline 'opening doors for the journey of life' which is understood by all. The school's self-evaluation is mostly accurate but the school has not undertaken any evaluation among pupils, parents, staff or governors of its distinctiveness as a church school and this is not included in the development plan. The school is currently heavily involved in planning for a move to a new site. It is aware that the move away from the proximity of the church will raise challenges but it is determined to maintain the strong links. Arrangements for RE and collective worship meet all statutory requirements. The governing body play an important part in the life of the school. It is very supportive of the school but it holds the school to account well. It was fully involved in the preparation of the self-evaluation. It takes its own development seriously and has had training from the Diocesan Board of Education. Links with the local community are very strong. Members of the governing body sit on the local Church council and report back on matters of interest at the school. Work from the school is displayed in the local church and children from the school attend messy Church and some are choir members. Members from other local churches also are fully involved in the life of the school. The Methodist Youth Worker takes collective acts of worship and has provided good support for a newly qualified teacher. The school takes staff development very seriously. They have had training on a variety of topics and the headteacher and deputy have attended a number of conferences. Parents are highly supportive of the school. They consider the values which the school gives their children influences their and their children's lives strongly. A number have had their children baptised as a result of the Christian ethos of the school.

SIAMS report March 2014 St Mark's CE VA Primary Swanage BH19 2SA