

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Mary's Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Junior School

Belle Vue Road, Old Basing, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG24 7DE

Diocese:	Winchester
Local authority:	Hampshire
Dates of inspection:	23 June 2014
Date of last inspection:	23 March 2009
School's unique reference number:	116350
Headteacher:	Mrs Caroline Welch
Inspector's name and number:	Mrs Dianne Christopher [731]

School context

St Mary's CE (VA) Junior School is a larger than average junior school with 360 on roll, situated on the outskirts of Basingstoke but within a village setting. It serves a mainly rural community and most pupils are of white British heritage. Pupils eligible for free school meals are well below the national average at 5.3%. 13.1% (FSM6) of pupils qualify for Pupil Premium funding (Service Families, adopted children and FSM).

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of CE (VA) Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

- The inspirational leadership of the head teacher, together with dedicated governors and committed staff, are highly effective in promoting the Christian vision of the school.
- The whole school environment which clearly demonstrates the commitment to the Christian ethos, along with high quality teaching and learning, religious education and collective worship.
- Each child is valued and their uniqueness is celebrated, encouraging them to be thoughtful, confident and resilient learners.

Areas to improve

- Provide further opportunities for all children to explore links between the RE concept being taught and their own personal beliefs.

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

The distinctive Christian character and ethos in the school is immediately apparent and permeates every aspect of school life from documentation, symbolism, displays through to classroom practice. The school's Christian vision and values are clearly articulated by all stakeholders. Pupils' personal development is outstanding because learners feel safe and support one another, leading to high standards of achievement, excellent attendance (97.1%) and a common purpose. Learners are valued as unique individuals and benefit from the nurturing atmosphere within a Christian family environment. The school's main overarching value is 'Love' and the ethos statement is 'One Family – Achieving more together.' Learners'

behaviour is exemplary because expectations are clearly underpinned by Christian values. Harmonious staff relationships provide excellent Christian role models. Learners are well cared for, feel secure and know who to ask for help. Prayer boxes, 'The Rainbow Group' and 'Chatter Matter Boxes' provide opportunities for learners to share their concerns with adults. The spacious school environment is exceptionally well planned with high standards of learners' work displayed, as well as interactive displays to engage pupils. Through a range of activities, including the support for a child in Uganda, children are made aware that Christianity is a global world faith. They understand the need to help others less fortunate through Christian service. Spiritual awareness is nurtured through prayer and reflection, with well-established, designated prayer spaces in every classroom and quiet spots located around the school's extensive grounds. Sport and music are highly valued aspect of school life and learners expressed their pride in the trophies and awards achieved at local events. Pupils are proud of St. Mary's and commented, 'We are all part of a big family here', and 'We're a team!'

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

Collective worship is excellent, is inclusive, affirming and makes an outstanding impact on the life of the school. Learners' spiritual, moral and social development is well supported through worship because teachers' planning is structured carefully and based on the school's very distinctive Christian values, taking account of the major Christian festivals in the Anglican calendar. The school worship observed was outstanding. Pupils entered the hall respectfully and calmly. The dedicated display area provides a reflective environment and learners clearly enjoyed the sense of family togetherness that prevailed. A pupil commented, 'Worship gives me time to talk to God.' Pupils regularly take an active part in worship through reading prayers, planning the content, singing in the choir and sharing their views. There are opportunities for learners to lead and evaluate acts of worship. An example of year six worship was observed. It was independently planned and led by pupils, based on 'Families' mirroring the format of whole school worship. All staff lead acts of worship, as do clergy and other Christian visitors, offering a wide variety of activities that support children's spiritual development. The learners have an excellent understanding of the Anglican traditions, knowledge of prayer and responses as well as modern and traditional hymns. Many pupils can articulate what the Trinity is because it is taught through units of RE work and they are familiar with the concepts through worship. Parents respond positively to invitations to share in worship both in church and school. Pupils enjoy collective worship and their comments are considered. Formal evaluation and monitoring of the impact of worship upon pupils by foundation governors is rigorous and effective, so the quality of worship offered is excellent.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.

Religious education has a high profile and standards across the whole school are excellent, as is evidenced in portfolios and children's written work. Scrutiny of RE workbooks confirms that the quality of work is high and in line with national levels and other core subjects. RE is given a high priority within the School Improvement Plan and resourcing has led to highly effective practice. The subject leader has an excellent level of expertise and has produced purposeful development with focused action plans. Assessment procedures are comprehensive as is tracking and assessing pupils' spiritual development. Teaching and learning in RE demonstrates significant progress since the last inspection. Excellent support and INSET training impacts upon all staff and particularly new teachers. Inspirational teaching and challenging questions encourage pupils to think deeply about the subject matter. On the day of inspection, two outstanding lessons were observed. Year 4 pupils analysed and expressed their views to the question, 'If you are christened does that make you a Christian?' This generated opportunities for some highly analytical thinking. One pupil concluded, 'if you wear a chef's hat, that doesn't make you a chef.' The year six lesson was focused on, 'What is a pilgrimage?' This was explored through drama and discussion. Learners used empathetic vocabulary such as 'despair, anticipation, desperation, elation' to describe the emotions of a pilgrim. RE makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Pupils show a good understanding of the Christian faith. Their knowledge of other faiths is also well developed. Tolerance and empathy

are encouraged through RE, along with an interest in the wider world and its people. Pupil's knowledge of the 'Christian story' is thorough, as well as their understanding and studies of other faiths and cultures, as is evident in workbooks and displays, such as, The India Project.

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

Inspirational leadership by the head teacher and management team who have worked with energy and commitment to develop an explicit Christian vision lived out in the daily life of the school. School improvement plans reflect the school's Christian foundation. All stakeholders ensure that the distinctive Christian values and ethos permeate all aspects of school life and are vital to the school's vision of 'one family.' The Chair and foundation governors are particularly supportive of the strategic drive to develop the Christian distinctiveness. Links with the local churches are extremely strong and very effective in maintaining the Christian character of the school. As a result parents believe that 'the Church is very much alive in the school.' The foundation governors monitor and evaluate the school's progress as a church school, giving account and offering challenge and support to the leadership team. Purposeful and effective systems are in place for evaluating the impact of the distinctive Christian character on academic achievement. Systems of tracking and monitoring of pupil progress is outstanding with all groups making expected or better progress. Distributed leadership has contributed significantly to the success of this school through identified strategic professional development and succession planning. One parent said, 'the school leadership team are brilliant.' Governors and staff have training opportunities for senior leadership roles through the local authority and diocesan courses. The school has excellent links with other local schools and wider community. Parental support for this school is exceptional. Volunteers regularly offer time, skills and expertise providing extra curricular clubs and mentoring pupils, thus enhancing the pupils' life skills. Parents said that St Mary's enables their children to 'flourish and blossom.' All areas for development since the last inspection have been fully implemented. The statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are met.

SIAMS report June 2014 St Mary's Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Junior School, RG24 7D