

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### Stickland's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Evershot, Dorchester, Dorset, DT2 0JP

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Salisbury</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Dorset
Date of inspection	8 February 2017
Date of last inspection	2 March 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	113799
Headteacher	Katherine McCann
Inspector's name and number	Penny Burnside 772

#### School context

Stickland's Church of England VA Primary School is a smaller than average rural village school with four classes and 88 pupils on roll. It serves a mixed catchment area, with a number of children travelling from outside the village. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is above the national average. The headteacher was appointed in September 2012. Considerable instability in staffing has led to several changes in curriculum leadership. A new co-ordinator for religious education (RE) has recently been appointed to lead the subject jointly with the headteacher. There have been several changes on the governing body, and a new chair was elected in September 2016. The vicar will be leaving at Easter.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Stickland's as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- Until recently the school did not have strong enough systems for reviewing its effectiveness as a church school. As a result the school community has been unsure about how to make itself a better church school.
- The renewed focus on Christian values which began in September 2016 is making a positive difference, although most groups in the school community still do not yet talk confidently about the school's Christian character, or about its impact on children's learning and the school has not yet identified ways of talking about its understanding of spirituality.
- Relationships in the school are of a very high quality and these are further strengthened by the recent work on Christian values.
- The committed support of the incumbent and the local church has played a significant part in developing children's understanding of Christianity and in enriching children's experience of worship.

#### Areas to improve

- For the governing body to put in place new systems for ensuring that the monitoring, evaluation and development of the school's Christian character have a high priority and are effective in leading to improvement.
- Ensure all groups in the school community are aware of the school's distinctively Christian values and can identify the difference they make to everyday life including achievement as well as behaviour and relationships.
- Develop a shared language for the school community to talk about spirituality so that leaders can identify strengths in the school's existing provision as well as areas for further development.
- Ensure that the new RE leader is supported in her role to ensure that all teaching continues to be good and so that all groups of children continue to find RE challenging and exciting.

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

The school has ensured that it now has a set of six Christian values, which are known by the school community. This recent work on values is helping the school to express more clearly its identity as a church school. For example, parents recognise that the Friday routine of awarding a 'star of the week' has now been adapted to link with the school's Christian values. Clear teaching in collective worship prompted one child to explain the values at home, saying, 'That's what God wants.' Although few people make any links between pupils' achievement and Christian values, most members of the school community are quick to stress the impact of the values on behaviour. The recent work is successfully building on some strong but implicitly Christian foundations and can be seen, for example, in the very high quality, supportive relationships between children and adults. Some children summed this up by saying, 'We don't take stuff for granted.' When asked what really mattered in the school, some older children replied, 'Learning. And friendship.' Attendance has improved and school leaders make some connections with the school's Christian character. Children recognise the importance of RE in their lives. They like the fact that it can often be challenging and they enjoy spending extended periods of time on the subject, saying 'RE's pretty important because it helps you understand someone else's point of view.' Helping children to understand how others might feel is a theme running through the school. Provision for spiritual development is not always talked about explicitly and, whilst there are some rich opportunities, these are not always clearly identified. For instance, as part of its work as a Rights Respecting School, the school has created a culture of expecting children to think deeply and planning space for them to do so. Explicit links with spirituality have not yet been made.

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

Children enjoy worship in this school. They like being together and they can talk about the difference worship makes for example after a difficult day, when one child said she could, 'look forward to a joyful song at the end.' Parents recognise the impact of sung worship and give examples of their children researching worship songs online at home. Children enjoy discussing worship themes at other times in the school day, such as whilst helping lunch-time staff set-up the dining-room. The regular support and involvement of the incumbent and the 'Open the Book' team from the church ensures that planning for worship is distinctively Christian. Time in staff meetings is given to ensuring all teachers understand how to plan simple features of Anglican worship, such as a four-part structure, the greeting and the lighting of the candle. Children have a growing understanding of prayer. It is part of the daily classroom routine and there are opportunities for children to write or say their own prayers for particular acts of worship or church services. A small number of children talk about praying at home. Children show good understanding of the relevance of the Bible in Christian worship and they talk knowledgeably about Jesus as 'important,' commenting that, 'He gives second chances,' and 'He looks over us.' They have some understanding of the Holy Spirit, although this is less well-developed. Planning for worship is mainly led by adults, although children have some responsibilities for selecting the music and for leading or writing prayers for special services or class assemblies. For most acts of worship, adults lead whilst children manage the technical audio-visual aspects. Monitoring and evaluation of worship takes place, although this has not yet developed into a strong system. Where it has been effective, children and adults have both been involved and this has resulted in improvements such as changes to seating arrangements and reminding those leading of the Anglican structure for planning worship.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

RE has a high profile in the school and standards are in line with national expectations. It is reported to parents in the annual report. Children clearly enjoy the subject and they can give a range of examples of memorable RE lessons and themes from previous years as well as during the current school year. Pupils' motivation and engagement are evident across the school. Staff teach confidently and with enthusiasm. In one lesson, because of skilful teaching, the very youngest children remained engaged and interested for a sustained length of time. In a Key Stage 1 lesson, children demonstrated excellent listening and respect for each other's ideas as the teacher interspersed reminders of Christian values with a lesson on 'the kingdom of God'. In a KS2 lesson, there was evidence of thoughtful and respectful questioning, both by the teacher and by children. The successful introduction of a commercial scheme of work has provided good support, both for teaching and for assessing pupils' learning. Children's skills of questioning and reflection have strengthened. Although there have been different subject leaders for RE, the transition to the current leadership has been managed well. Both the headteacher and the new co-ordinator have ensured they are well-informed about the latest developments, such as the Understanding Christianity project. Monitoring of RE is

carried out by the headteacher and this has led to improvements. It has not however formed part of a strategic monitoring plan. The incumbent makes a significant contribution to RE, writing resources such as a booklet to support church visits, or a leaflet on spirituality, as well as teaching specific lessons.

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

School leaders have been slow to tackle the areas for improvement from the previous inspection in a sustained and strategic way. This has been partly because of staffing turbulence which has been allowed to interrupt the school's progress and also because the governing body does not have effective enough systems for supporting the school's development of its Christian character. Since September 2016 however, school leaders have shown a much more concerted approach to the school's Christian distinctiveness and effectiveness. The speed with which children and staff have embraced the recent work on Christian values is an indication that the school community learns quickly and is keen to develop further as a church school. Whilst the school's chosen values of respect, friendship, truthfulness, perseverance, compassion and love are sometimes referred to in collective worship and RE lessons, this is still more implicitly than explicitly. School leaders do not yet articulate a vision for the school which is explicitly Christian, but the headteacher's personal modelling of the six values makes a significant contribution. Links with the church have been strengthened further since the previous inspection, with the frequent and sustained involvement of the incumbent and the 'Open the Book' team. Parents comment on the fact that the vicar knows the name of every child. Good links exist with local schools and, in particular, the other church schools within the Beaminster Pyramid group of schools, which provide a wider range of opportunities for further professional development for staff. The school's involvement of parents and the community in helping to improve reading is an example of its holistic approach to raising standards. Leaders recognise opportunities in the community to provide memorable experiences for children such as carol-singing in the estate chapel and singing at the big house. The school's connection with a school in Africa was started by a governor. Arrangements for collective worship and RE meet statutory requirements although current policies for RE and Collective Worship were not available during the inspection. School leaders are addressing this.

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