

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

### Dilton Marsh Church of England Primary School

High Street, Dilton Marsh, Westbury, Wiltshire, BA13 4DY

**Current SIAMS inspection grade** Outstanding

**Diocese** Salisbury

Previous SIAMS inspection grade Outstanding

Date of academy conversion 1 September 2014

Name of multi-academy trust Acorn Education Trust

Date of inspection 12 October 2017

Date of last inspection 12 November 2012

Type of school and unique reference number Academy 141148

Headteacher Jill Farndale

Inspector's name and number Neil Revell 894

#### School context

Dilton Marsh has 206 children on roll. Since the previous inspection the school has become an academy, part of the Acorn Education Trust. Since the long-standing headteacher left in 2015 there have been two changes of headteacher with the current headteacher taking up post in September 2016. The school serves the parish of Dilton Marsh. The proportions of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or in receipt of pupil premium funding, are lower than national averages. These percentages have fallen since the school was last inspected. Most children are of White British heritage.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Dilton Marsh as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The headteacher, senior leaders, governors, staff and children live out the school's Christian vision and values daily, placing love, care and the worth of every person at the core of each decision which is made.
- Inspirational acts of worship successfully and purposefully encourage children and adults to reflect on a range of spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) questions, applying them to their own learning and living.
- Children demonstrate a deep respect for, and understanding of, the beliefs and practice of a variety of faith groups.
- Religious education (RE) is inspirationally led; children consistently enjoy their learning in this subject which has motivated them to make decisions that have transformed the lives of others.

#### Areas to improve

- Ensure that the vision statement concisely reflects the school's broad aspirations so that all leaders demonstrate how it shapes every policy and decision.
- Share outstanding practice in terms of church school distinctiveness and effectiveness with other trust schools.

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

'Everyone at Dilton Marsh is in the same team, we always try hard and we respect everyone' is how the children refer to their school and what it stands for. The school's eleven Christian values are lived out and celebrated across all aspects of school life. Values are linked with months of the year and, at the end of a month, every class debates who should be given the class 'Christian value' award. Children share how the richness of the debate strengthens their appreciation of the value. Parents, though, are not all sure of the value being considered each month which means that they are not always able to explore the value with their children out of school. Particularly powerful for children is that they all belong to house groups and each house chooses a charity to support from their learning in RE and collective worship. As children gain house points for demonstrating the school's Christian values, the house points are converted into money which the school sends to the chosen charities. It is the charities, rather than self, which children describe as their driving motivation to gain house points as, through charities, 'we can really help to change the lives of other people for the better'. The children also reference their Christian values, most notably friendship, when talking about the weekly lunch which a group of children prepare for members of the local community. They share the way that discussions with the lunch guests deepen their respect and care for others. Through very high quality RE children learn about a variety of world faith groups and confidently talk about different beliefs and diversity, again with a high sense of respect. In addition, children produce the weekly 'Dilton Times – by children, for children' newspaper which includes articles and children's insights about world news. Taken together these all foster an exceptionally strong sense of community cohesion which was a focus for development in the previous inspection. They are also part of a rich range of opportunities for children to develop personal spirituality. Adults and children have a shared understanding of spirituality which provides a very effective structure to facilitate depth of reflection. Every class has a 'we wonder / I wonder' board where children pose spiritual or philosophical questions and respond to them. In Year 4 the current weekly question is, 'Is it always possible to tell the truth?' and children have shared very thoughtful responses to this challenge. In Year 6, where children are considering whether the biblical and scientific views about creation can be reconciled, one child responded, 'The Christian story of creation is about how God formed the earth and placed forms of life and items on the earth; it does not say exactly how the earth was created and therefore there is no reason why the two cannot be reconciled'. This response is typical of the depth and passion for SMSC development which children display in all areas of the curriculum. Central to the school's Christian ethos is the worth which it attributes to every individual. This means that children's progress is carefully tracked with well-targeted and focused additional support as appropriate. Standards achieved in all year groups are consistently above national outcomes, with a dip in outcomes in Year 6 in Summer 2017 being comprehensively addressed.

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

Collective worship is highly valued by everyone as an important time in the school day which children and adults describe as 'spiritually moving', 'change-making' and 'a special time when the presence of God is with us'. Staff, clergy and children plan and lead worship, and feedback about the impact of worship is regularly sought from all groups of the school community. It was feedback from children which led the school to change the time of worship in the school day to just before break so that they had longer to reflect on the messages and content. Parents praise the fact that worship led by children, 'is always a religious service and not a show'. Children are animated when talking about acts of worship. All worship is planned around the school's Christian values and children confidently share Bible stories and examples of Christian teaching which support their understanding of the values. The quality of, and engagement in, worshipful singing is exceptional with songs being sung with gusto and in rounds. As part of worship, the school has sung with the 'Military Wives Choir', the impact of which those present have described as 'beyond amazing', noting that, 'it is so powerful that it brings you to tears'. Children are challenged to deeply consider the words and lines in songs which they sing and to use these for self-reflection about school values and their own SMSC development. Collective worship is used as a time to consider the range of charities which the children may choose to support through their houses. Worship about the current value of 'thankfulness', for example, has linked the story of Noah's Ark to water-aid charities, helping children to have a greater appreciation of their access to water while reflecting on how they could support a charity which brings clean water to others. Children participate enthusiastically and confidently in prayer, using the school prayer as well as composing prayers of their own. They describe prayer as being 'when you think about what you want and hope for deep inside without being selfish'. The fact that children's prayers are rooted in Christian teaching is referenced in regular monitoring of worship. A focus for development from the previous inspection was for governors to establish processes to monitor, evaluate and report on collective worship. This is now in place which has enabled governors to be secure in their self-evaluation of worship. Three candles representing God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the focal point in all worship and the concept of the Trinity is often discussed, being linked with the name of the neighbouring church, 'Holy Trinity', on a regular basis. Children readily share their appreciation of the Trinity and say that the Holy Spirit is 'when God is with us, not always expecting anything back in return'. As well as worship being led

regularly by the vicar of Holy Trinity, it is also led by representatives from other Christian groups. Children have high respect for, and awareness of, a variety of approaches to worship and readily ask questions to help extend their understanding of this diversity.

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

The Christian vision of Dilton Marsh is at the heart of all of its endeavours and is a highly positive, shared, driving motivation lived out in all aspects of school life. This vision now incorporates the vision statement agreed by the community and is enhanced by the more recent 'learning together, growing together' motto. This very strong, distinctive clarity of purpose underpins the leadership of the school, resulting in exceptional levels of care and well-being for children and adults alike. Ahead of national statutory assessments, the headteacher writes personally to every child, emphasising their special God-given talents and personalities, reassuring each child that he or she is being held in the staff's prayers and should confidently be 'ready to take on the world'. Parental feedback about such personal attention, as well as staff feedback about the care which the headteacher and key stage leaders show for their well-being, is overwhelmingly positive. Everyone recognises such actions as the outworking of the school's Christian vision which shapes and forms the character and ethos of the school. There is an established open-door policy which enables outstanding communication and partnership with parents. Parents use the word 'happy' to describe the impact of the school on both them and their children. Typically, children's achievements are above national standards in all year groups which reflect the high expectations which are prominent in the school's vision. The school enjoys a close partnership with the neighbouring parish church; the vicar is regularly in school and the school holds services in the church several times each term. Links with the diocese are strong with staff and governors regularly attending training and events. Leaders have an excellent understanding of highly effective church school leadership. Governors confidently challenge and support the school to ensure that it is forward-thinking and are robust in their self-evaluation of the school. Feedback from children and parents is used to inform governor decisions. This has led governors to allocate some school funds to support the charities which children choose through their house groups. Since 2014 the school has been an academy within the Acorn Education Trust which has helped to secure stability during successive changes in headteacher. It has also enabled the key stage leaders, one of whom also highly effectively leads RE and collective worship, to be supported as developing church school leaders however there is not a specific focus on sharing aspects of church school distinctiveness within the trust. The school meets statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report October 2017 Dilton Marsh Church of England Primary School, Westbury, BA13 4DY