



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

### Semley Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Semley  
Shaftesbury  
Dorset  
SP7 9AU

#### Diocese: Salisbury

Local authority: Wiltshire

Date of inspection: 16 May 2014

Date of last inspection: 6 July 2009

School's unique reference number: 126439

Headteacher: Julia Stokes

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

#### School context

Semley is a smaller than average rural primary school with 121 children. The large majority of children are of a white British heritage and from varied socio-economic backgrounds. A significant number of children come from outside the school catchment area. The number of children with learning needs is broadly in line with the national average as is the proportion eligible for the pupil premium. Children enter the school with levels of attainment generally in line with national expectations. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. The headteacher had been in post for only a few weeks before the inspection.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Semley as a Church of England school are good

- Children articulate with confidence their views on matters of faith and belief in an environment in which their opinions will be listened to with respect.
- Acts of worship are an important part of how the school community expresses its Christian ethos.
- The determination of the school's leaders and managers to develop the Christian ethos so that it makes a greater impact on the lives of all children.

#### Areas to improve

- Involve children in revisiting the core values to link them more explicitly to the school's Christian ethos and in articulating them for the whole school community.
- Develop the programme for collective worship so that themes more clearly reflect an explicit Christian interpretation of the school's values and develop a deeper understanding of how they make a difference to the lives of the whole school community.
- Refine the current self-evaluation process so that leaders and managers identify more accurately areas for improvement as a church school. Ensure that the self-evaluation process is an integral part of overall school improvement.

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

The school has a long established set of four core values. They are respect, aspiration, adventure and wonder. The arrival of the new headteacher has provided the impetus to look afresh at these values to explore in greater detail their links to a distinctively Christian ethos. This process has begun and is allowing children and adults in school to reflect on what they want to be as a church school and to identify those values they can share together as a whole community. Children know that stories from the Bible help them to understand how the current core values have links to Christian teaching and can help them in both their learning and in everyday life. Teachers ensure that opportunities to use these values as part of the teaching and learning are identified and this contributes to the children's overall academic attainment, which school data indicates is mainly in line with national expectations for the majority of children. However, the school is keen to explore how well these long established values reflect the school community as it is today. A particular strength of the school is in the creation of an environment in which children feel that they can confidently express their views on matters of faith and belief knowing that their opinions will be listened to with respect. This openness to explore and question contributes to the children's overall spiritual development and makes a difference to some aspects of their learning. For example, a Key Stage 2 class produced some excellent writing in which they were encouraged to empathise with characters in a story so that they were able to respond in considerable depth. Children explain the importance of showing respect for one another regardless of who they are. They speak with conviction and passion about treating each other equally explaining that we do so because 'God loves us all'.

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

Children talk about collective worship as an important aspect of what it means to them to be a church school. They explain clearly how Bible stories and learning about God are what make acts of worship a special and distinct time in the school day. Collective worship is a time for the school community to come together and hear about the Christian message. It is also a time for joy and celebration when children's actions in living out the Christian message are recognised. The headteacher has begun to link acts of worship more closely to the school's core values and this has given them a greater focus and sense of direction. This is still at an early stage and the school is aware of the need to develop their worship programme so that children have more opportunities to reflect on a deeper meaning of how Bible stories and values have relevance to their own lives. The lighting of a candle and special words of welcome that recognise Jesus as the light of the world help to create an atmosphere of calm to which children respond with an appropriate respect and reverence. Prayers are an integral part of worship and are related to the main message. Children have a very mature understanding of the purpose of prayer and consider that God listens to anybody who prays whether they have a faith or not: 'it doesn't matter, He loves us all'. Children have a growing understanding of the Trinity and can discuss their views on the nature of God and Jesus. Acts of worship provide good opportunities for children to be still and reflect. They respond well to these times although there are not many opportunities for children to do so in the more intimate setting of smaller groups. Members of staff work with local clergy and members of the local church to plan and lead acts of worship on a regular basis. Governors have carried out some monitoring of the quality of acts of worship and have identified where improvements could be made. These have been fed back to the governing body but not included in a systematic plan of action for improvement.

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

Standards in religious education (RE) are broadly in line with national expectations for most children by the time they leave the school at the end of Key Stage 2. They compare favourably with other core subjects in the school and children of all abilities make at least expected progress in RE. The overall quality of teaching is good and children have a good knowledge of

RE and are able to apply this in their developing understanding of RE. A particular strength in the teaching and learning of RE is when teachers have a clear and focussed learning intention that is explored through the lesson by asking questions that challenge the children's understanding. The recent implementation of a new RE scheme of work is giving teachers the framework to deliver RE in a more creative way with greater confidence. As the new scheme of work becomes more familiar to teachers, the school should ensure that there is consistency across the school in the use of focussed learning intentions that lead to clearly identified progress for children of all abilities. The school is in the process of developing the way that it assesses children's attainment and progress in RE. A move towards ongoing assessment rather than end of unit tests is an area that the school is exploring and one that still needs to be developed. Current assessment procedures are not sufficiently detailed to track the progress of all children. The recently appointed headteacher is the RE leader. She has a good understanding of the place of RE within the overall curriculum of a church school and is keen to see the subject grow and has a clear grasp of the actions needed for the further development of RE. Religious education makes a good contribution to the Christian ethos and opportunities are made in lessons that promote the school's values where appropriate.

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

The headteacher has already begun to develop the school's Christian ethos by making it more explicit around the school and by developing the children's understanding of the core values through collective worship. She has a good understanding of the purpose of a church school and shows a commitment to the development of the children's spirituality by putting it at the heart of everything the school does. She is fully supported in this by the chair of governors who knows the school well and is keen, along with the school's leaders, to put children at the centre of leading a review of the school's values and ethos. The leadership and managers, including governors, have a strong commitment to the ongoing development of the school as a church school. The recent church school self-evaluation exercise carried out by a team of governors is a very effective example of how they are successfully involved in the monitoring and evaluation process. This provides a good model for how the school can build on its self-evaluation by gathering evidence which, when analysed, can more accurately identify priorities for improvement. The school has a close relationship with the parish church which is used very regularly for collective worship and to celebrate major Christian festivals. The commitment of the church to the school is reflected in the weekly 'Open the Book' worship led by a team of parishioners. The school has an excellent partnership with parents who consider that the school looks after and cares for their children well and that the Christian ethos makes an impact on them. One parent described how children are 'uplifted' by the hymns they learn in school. The school meets the statutory requirements for religious education and collective worship.

SIAMS report May 2014 Semley CE VA Primary School Shaftesbury SP7 9AU