



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Verwood Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

Howe Lane
Verwood
Dorset
BH31 6JF
Diocese: Salisbury
Local authority: Dorset
Dates of inspection: 23rd May 2014
Date of last inspection: 1st July 2009
School's unique reference number: 113779
Headteacher: Mr Adam Parsons
Inspector's name and number: Sally Naish 780

School context

Verwood Church of England VA First School is larger than most other first schools. The number of pupils with additional needs is average and most pupils are white British. The number of pupils eligible for pupil premium is below average. There have been recent changes to the leadership team due to promotion.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Verwood VA First School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

- The commitment to spiritual and learning values shine out ensuring that every child feels cared for and loved as a child of God.
- The enabling leadership of the headteacher and governors, supported by dedicated staff, results in excellent relationships, behaviour and learning.
- The work of governors enriches spirituality and affects every aspect of school life.

Areas to improve

- Identify ways for adults and children to formally document their reflections of worship so that its impact can be assessed and used to inform planning.
- Give children opportunities to develop reflection areas themselves in order to grow in responsibility and Christian character.

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

The school's culture of inclusion, openness, learning from mistakes, forgiveness and commitment to improve affects the whole school community. The Fruit of the Spirit form the spiritual values which are steeped into the fabric of the school. Together with learning values they enable excellent development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural attitudes as well as skills for learning. As a result children are confident learners, attainment is high, attendance has improved and exclusions are rare. The school has identified the need to incorporate a related Bible verse into each of the 'R's' in the school's 6 R's approach to learning to align spiritual and learning values more closely. Parents value the Christian ethos as well as the nurture and academic teaching their children receive. They note that Bible stories are 'lived and breathed', quoting their child, 'It's like Daniel in the Bible; I'm learning trust and courage from him'. A governor on a

learning walk around school looking for signs and symbols of being a church school reflects on children's confidence and maturity, echoed in a written comment by a parent, 'My child is moving on to middle school with a confidence we did not know she possessed.' Reflection areas around the school identify the fruit of the Spirit, although children currently have limited ownership of these spaces which reduces their effectiveness in growing children's understanding of Christian character.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is central, highly valued and focuses on Biblical themes. All staff lead worship in key stage groups as do members of different churches who bring with them a variety of styles and traditions. Children particularly enjoy the surprise of whole-school Praise Worship that includes lively reflections of the past week which incorporate values learnt. They reflect that Bible stories help you learn to do the right thing, explaining that the story of Noah helps us learn that God gets upset when we do the wrong thing and we should respect the world He has made. Children lead prayers spontaneously and confidently. They value prayer as a means of talking to God, commenting, 'It's like God is in your head. He can tell you what to do.' A weekly prayer meeting is held and prayers are requested for God's wisdom in decision making. Worship is carefully planned and informally evaluated. Children are mature enough to lead worship themselves and are able to reflect on the value of worship and spiritual learning, but do not yet have the opportunity to evaluate worship. Children fundraise enthusiastically for a variety of causes although they do not necessarily understand 'charitable giving' as a Christian imperative. They understand some Anglican traditions like baptism and there are close links with St Michael's Church where members regularly pray for the life of the school.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The effect of religious teaching permeates the school. The recently developed enquiry-based religious education (RE) curriculum, focusing on developing questioning skills, is creative and engaging. Under the enthusiastic leadership of a new coordinator with support from the spirituality governor, the subject is well planned, staff confidence has increased and children are fully engaged and reflective. Teachers skilfully weave learning about religion with learning from it and apply it to children's lives. As a result standards are above national expectations and in line with core subjects. In a discussion about caring for God's world, younger children ponder on how God might have felt having finished making the world and plan their own ideal world, reflecting on how they might feel if someone damaged it. Teaching support is used effectively to promote inclusion. Class journals document learning and attainment is monitored and evaluated with other core subjects. Bible stories and spirituality boards around the school help children reflect on Christian values and 'help us learn about things like goodness or self-control'. Speakers from different faiths and links with schools at home and abroad help children understand different value systems and practices.

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

Governors describe the headteacher as 'servant hearted' and this is echoed by parents who say that the Christian ethos shines through and leads all decision making. Governors and staff continue to reflect on their practice, for example at a two day residential they examine why they chose to work in a church school and the skills and attributes they bring. Governors both support the school and act as critical friends and because of this are highly valued. The leadership of RE and worship has been honed by the new coordinator through training and staff support, which is increasing confidence and improving practice. New staff are coached and nurtured and everyone is valued equally and is not afraid to take risks and make mistakes. This results in an adventurous curriculum and a sense of joy and fun in the school. Parents value the open door policy and governor coffee mornings after class worship which, together with newsletters and suggestion boxes, give them the opportunity to express their views. The school has addressed developmental areas from the last inspection and is continuing to improve its effectiveness as a church school through constant self-evaluation.