



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

**Emmanuel Church of England Voluntary Aided Middle School,
Howe Lane
Verwood
Dorset
BH31 6JF**

Diocese: Salisbury

Local authority: Dorset

Dates of inspection: 20 June 2014

Date of last inspection: 23 June 2009

School's unique reference number: 113894

Headteacher: Mrs Jill Watson

Inspector's name and number: Marcia Headon 761

School context

Emmanuel Middle CE VA provides for 433 pupils aged 9-13. They come largely from Verwood although an increasing number are from neighbouring areas. A number of pupils leave to go to secondary schools at the end of Year 6. Almost all the children are from a predominantly white British background. There is a small group of traveller children in the school. The proportion of children who have special educational needs is just below the national average. The proportion of children in receipt of free school meals is well below the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Emmanuel Middle as a Church of England school are good

- The strongly demonstrated caring ethos of the school which is based upon the mission statement
- The participation of pupils in the singing in the collective acts of worship
- The leadership of the headteacher which models the school's values and fosters a good community spirit
- The links which exist with the local Church and community
- The developing strength among the governing body in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that pupils understand the three core values of the school and how they are underpinned by Christian teaching
- Involve pupils in the evaluation of collective worship, giving them more opportunities to be involved in the planning of whole school worship.
- Increase the rigour, depth and pace of teaching in religious education (RE), making

marking more detailed and carrying out regular moderation of assessments with other schools

- Ensure the governing body regularly considers and judges the distinctiveness of the school as a church school.

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

The school has a long-standing mission statement which is well known by pupils, staff and parents and which guides its actions. Its links to the values of Christian love and forgiveness are understood by most pupils. However, they identify less readily with the school's three core values of excellence, enjoyment and endurance and their link to Biblical teaching. The school's ethos is about caring and compassion and this is clearly lived out in its daily work, for example care is taken to ensure pupils who are vulnerable are given special support. The school is fully inclusive. Pupils enter the school with average attainment and by the time they leave in Year 8 their attainment is generally above national averages. Predictions for 2014 show an expected increase in attainment. Progress in 2013 was good between Year 2 and Year 6 and between Year 4 and Year 8 was outstanding in writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 8 the gap for those pupils in receipt of pupil premium had narrowed when compared with Year 4. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good and is influenced by the school's mission and by the strong emphasis upon reflection in RE lessons. As one member of staff commented 'based on the ideas of redemption we do not look at mistakes but how to move forward and our behaviour policy is modelled on this'. Pupils know this and behave well. They respect one other, listen to different points of view and show care for those in difficulty. Relationships between staff and pupils and between staff are excellent and based on a strong Christian moral framework. Pupils are given many opportunities to reflect and to talk through issues of faith. In science pupils freely discuss with teachers differing theories about creation and evolution and on a display board pupils had posted questions about faith for everyone to see. 'Discoverers Club' where pupils learn about Bible stories also allows time for reflection. Respect and tolerance for other faiths and those of no faith are evident and one pupil remarked, 'I am a non-believer but everyone here listens equally to my point of view'. Pupils show some understanding of the Anglican church worldwide. The school's values develop their ideas of social responsibility well and pupils consider it important to help others. They support a variety of charities both in Britain and abroad. Pupils generally see religious education as an important subject which is helping them to develop their ideas.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship has a considerable impact upon the daily lives of the pupils. They talk enthusiastically about the music provided by the worship group in whole school assemblies and explain how worship gives a message which they carry with them through the day. On the day of the inspection the pupils enjoyed singing in collective worship. They came in silently, were attentive to the lighting of the candle and introduction which was led by a group of pupils, and to a Bible reading and talk by the deputy headteacher. They responded well to the invitation to reflect on the message about priorities and challenge. It was evident that they were used to this format of worship and to making responses to prayers and the whole atmosphere was one of calm and reverence. Pupils often plan and lead worship in their tutor groups and year groups and write prayers for these acts of worship. They also play a significant role in services at the local church which take place at major festivals. Eucharist services held for year groups are well attended. There is a growing understanding of the idea of the Trinity. Planning for worship is very thorough and undertaken by the headteacher in conjunction with the local clergy. Pupils are not yet involved with this planning. The themes are linked to Christian values, however, the school's core values are not explicitly covered although the themes are linked to the school's 'well-being' teaching. Patterns of worship follow the Anglican church calendar but include events such as the week of prayer for Christian unity. Local clergy regularly lead whole school worship although the pupils were unsure of the different traditions from which they

came. Governors attend whole school worship regularly and have now begun systematically to carry out an evaluation of its impact. Pupils and staff are not yet involved in any evaluation of collective worship. The school has a prayer tree which is well used by pupils who come to it to reflect when they feel in need. The school values prayer, using it before governors' and parent teacher association meetings and before staff appointments.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

Pupils enjoy their RE lessons and the many opportunities which enable them to discuss their ideas at length and to reflect upon issues. The school meets national expectations in that all pupils have one discrete RE lesson each week and within the teaching at least two-thirds of the time is spent on the study of Christianity. Other religions are covered, for example pupils have been considering the prayer rituals of Hindus, and the creation stories of different religions. Standards in RE are satisfactory but generally not as high as in other subjects. Pupils make good progress in developing their ideas on belief and meaning but less progress on developing their knowledge and skills of enquiry. There is inconsistency across the department in the depth to which topics are taught. The scheme of work is currently being rewritten to meet revised national requirements and to make it more rigorous. Marking in RE does not always give pupils sufficient guidance on how they can improve their work. The pace of learning is not always fast enough and in the lessons observed the pupils spent too long recapping previous learning before they moved on to new areas and generally there was not sufficient match of work to the ability of the pupils. The head of RE is passionate about her subject and strongly upholds and promotes the values of the school in her teaching. She has conducted visits to the lessons of those who teach RE and has viewed the work in the books. However, currently the department does not monitor the teaching in the department tightly enough although there are plans to do so from September. Nor has there been moderation with other schools to assure the department of the validity of its assessments.

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

The school is proud of being a church school. The headteacher has a very clear vision of how she wishes it to develop as a strongly Christian school, building on the current warmth and values. She articulates this to all in the school community. She lives out the values of the school strongly in her day to day work and all speak of her approachability and care for them as individuals. The school monitors its own work closely, its self-evaluation is accurate and the governing body possesses a strong understanding of its own development needs. The new Chair of Governors has drawn up a very incisive governors' improvement plan. Governors visit the school frequently and are very supportive of its work. However, they do not regularly consider what makes the school distinctive as a church school. The school has addressed the areas for improvement from the last inspection although there is still more work to do on the evaluation of collective worship. The school takes the professional development of staff seriously and teachers have attended courses run by the Diocesan Board of Education. There will be a considerable change in staff in September and plans exist for the professional development of these colleagues. The current head of RE is leaving and her successor has been working alongside her to ensure continuity and development. The RE department is well resourced. Partnerships with the local community and Anglican, Baptist and Methodist churches are strong. The school uses the Anglican church for services such as its leavers' service. Three governors sit on the local Parochial Church Council and liaise with both bodies. The Chair of Governors is a licensed lay minister and through his professional career has wide ranging links with the local community and other churches which he uses for the benefit of the pupils. Parents are very strong advocates for the school, speaking of the staff leading by example and that religious faith is at the centre of the whole school. One parent said that on leaving school the pupils had been given a cross by the school and her daughter treasured this.