



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### **Symondsburry CE VA Primary School**

**Symondsburry**

**Bridport**

**Dorset**

**DT6 6HD**

**Diocese: Salisbury**

Local authority: Dorset

Dates of inspection: 16 October 2014

Date of last inspection: 7 January 2010

School's unique reference number: 113815

Headteacher: Mrs Emma Roberts

Inspector's name and number: Marcia Headon 761

### **School context**

Symondsburry Primary CE VA school provides for 103 pupils aged between 4 and 11. Almost all the children are from a predominantly white British background. The proportion of children who have special educational needs is at the national average. The proportion of children known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The school has 10% of children for whom they received pupil premium money. A new headteacher took up her post in September 2014.

### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Symondsburry Primary as a Church of England school are good**

- The Christian values of the school underpin and guide all areas of its work and are supported by all.
- The close relationship with the local church makes a significant contribution to the Christian character of the school.
- The new headteacher demonstrates passion and commitment to develop further the Christian ethos of the school.
- The school has a strong, caring and nurturing atmosphere and parents appreciate the 'family feel' of the school.

### **Areas to improve**

- Ensure that pupils are given the opportunities in the curriculum to reflect on how the topics learned could influence their lives.
- Increase the rigour of assessment in religious education (RE), carrying out regular moderation of assessments within school and with other schools.
- Enhance the centrality of prayer in the life of the school; ensuring pupils fully appreciate

the nature of personal prayer.

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

The school's six values of respect, responsibility, relationships, reflection, rejoicing and reaching are fully understood and embraced by the school community. They are integral to the everyday life of the school. The pupils easily link these with Parables from the Bible and one pupil suggested that the values should be in a certain order, explaining that as it was God's aim for us all to reach for the best; we did this through the other values, but reflecting at each stage. Even the younger pupils could explain that the behaviour policy of the school was linked to the values of respect and responsibility. The school is totally inclusive and meets the needs of all learners. Pupils enter the school with average levels of attainment and by the time they leave in Year 6 the attainment of pupils is consistently well above national averages. In 2014 this was especially so in reading, writing, spelling, punctuation and grammar, and mathematics. Pupils did significantly better than the national average in mathematics at higher levels. All groups of pupils make good progress. Attendance is high and behaviour is excellent. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. Pupils are given many opportunities to extend their cultural awareness through activities such as music and art. Class 3 has written and produced a Harvest song and Year 6 worked with an artist in residence to produce two stunning canvasses based on the stories of the Sower and Ruth and Naomi, which are displayed in the hall. Relationships between staff and pupils and between staff are excellent. Pupils are encouraged to be reflective and each classroom has a 'reflective corner' where pupils express their views. They have particularly enjoyed being able to place 'their dreams' on a board in the entrance after hearing the story of Joseph. Pupils show some understanding of the Anglican church worldwide through the ideas of 'Churches and Schools under Trees' in the Sudan. They appreciate their duty to help others less fortunate and support charities such as the Shoebox Appeal, Children in Need, Dahlicious for seriously ill children, and aid for people in Rwanda and Srebrenica.

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

The pupils enjoy collective worship both in school and in the weekly service at church, which is led by the vicar. The impact which it has upon their lives is evident and all remembered clearly the message about good relationships and kind words which was graphically illustrated by the headteacher trying to put toothpaste back into a tube! On the day of the inspection a suitable atmosphere was created for worship in the school hall with the lighting of the candle and music. The pupils sang enthusiastically and engaged with the messages about relationships. Readings from the Bible always form part of the pattern of worship and pupils listened attentively responding well to questions asked. Pupils sometimes lead the worship, for example at the Harvest assembly. They also have recently begun to play a part in the services at the local church which take place at major festivals. Pupils are beginning to understand traditional Anglican practices and make responses to simple liturgy. However, although they know the school prayer and have begun to write class prayers, there is less understanding of the nature of personal prayer and prayer is not seen by the pupils as central to the school. Although there is some understanding of the idea of the Trinity among the older pupils this is at a very early stage. Planning for worship has recently been revised to link more directly to the school's values. It encompasses the Anglican church calendar. Some governors attend worship in school and have recently begun informally to evaluate its impact. Others attend the worship in the church. Pupils in the upper years are now routinely involved in an evaluation of each collective acts of worship judging how far it has inspired them, and what impact it has had.

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

Pupils enjoy their RE lessons because they are offered a range of learning activities and teaching is generally good and sometimes better. Class RE portfolios as well as the pupils' books show the variety of the work undertaken. In one of the lessons observed, pupils were

making a Jewish Mezuzah. The teacher skilfully asked about the prayers that the pupils had placed in their decorative cases and why they had adorned them in the manner they had. In another lesson pupils were comparing a Jewish Bar Mitzvah with a Christian Baptism. The pupils could recall many details about Judaism which they had learned previously. The teacher in a very adept manner drew out the similarities and differences between the two events. The pupils were well supported by the teacher and the excellent subject knowledge of the teaching assistant in this class enabled the pupils to extend their knowledge further. However, from the books seen from pupils across the school, work is not always well enough matched to the needs of the pupils, especially at the higher levels. Teachers do not always allow pupils enough time to explore the meaning or relevance of the topic covered deeply enough. Standards in RE are at national averages but generally not as high as in other subjects. Pupils make good progress in acquiring knowledge but less progress is made on understanding or exploring ideas on belief and meaning. Assessment in RE is developing but currently there is no moderation of the work with other schools to assure the validity of the assessments. The school meets national expectations in that sufficient curriculum time is spent on RE 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 studying Judaism, Hinduism and Islam. The school follows the Dorset Agreed Syllabus in RE. The headteacher, who is the RE coordinator, has already monitored the work in this subject. The governors' RE task group has just begun to monitor the work in RE.

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

In the six weeks that the headteacher has been in post she has made a considerable impact and the school is now on a rapid journey from an already strong position. She has given a very clear vision of how she wishes it to develop, firmly based upon the distinctively Christian values. She has high expectations for the school and has introduced new ideas and opportunities to the staff, openly and with sensitivity. The staff are all fully committed to the learning and well-being of all pupils in the school within a distinct Christian ethos and speak openly of the uniqueness of the school. The school evaluates the effectiveness of its work carefully, is accurate in its assessment of its work and the headteacher has already added to the school's development plan to make it more rigorous. The headteacher is keen to promote the spirituality of the school even further and governors' 'spiritual walks' have just been introduced. The governors work closely with the school, know their school well and hold it to account for its effectiveness as a church school. They accurately comment that 'our values are our strength'. Their role in evaluating and monitoring the school is carried successfully out through their committees but they have also recently established an RE task group to look specifically at the teaching of RE. The introduction of their new 'monitoring diaries' will enhance this work further. The school has addressed the areas for improvement from the last inspection and the involvement of pupils in the evaluation of collective worship has led to changes being made. The school takes the professional development of staff seriously with teachers having attended courses run by the Diocese. The headteacher has prioritised the importance of professional development in RE in the revised school plan. The school has good links with the Diocese. The RE department has recently audited its resources and is well resourced. The school has very strong links with the local church and the vicar is a very well-known figure to the pupils. The school uses the church extensively not only for its weekly collective act of worship but for work in RE and art. The Chair of Governors is the deputy churchwarden and other governors also have strong links with this church and other churches locally. Parents are highly supportive of the school, reporting that all staff live out its values in practice and meaning. They say any issues, however minor, are dealt with very quickly. Parents consider that the school is like a family. They feel very welcome in school and the high number of parents who attend the weekly celebration collective act of worship is testimony to this.