



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

### **Durweston Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Church Road  
Durweston, Blandford Forum  
Dorset DT11 0QA

**Previous SIAS grade: Outstanding**

**Current SIAMS grade: Good**

**Diocese: Salisbury**

Local authority: Dorset  
Dates of inspection: 30 April 2015  
Date of last inspection: 19 May 2010  
School's unique reference number: 113798

Headteacher: Liz Wesley-Barker  
Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

#### **School context**

Durweston is a smaller than average rural primary school with 143 children arranged into five mixed age class groups. The large majority of children are of a white British heritage and from varied socio-economic backgrounds. They come from two local parishes. The number of children with learning needs and/or disabilities is above the national average as is the proportion eligible for the pupil premium. Attendance has improved and is now above the national average. The school has recently undergone significant changes in leadership and management. At the time of the inspection, two teachers from within the school have been appointed as temporary joint acting deputy headteachers to lead the school.

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

- Links between the 'Fruit of the Spirit' and other aspects of school life create a supportive atmosphere which contributes to children's learning and wellbeing.
- The central role of the parish church in the worship life of the school means that children understand the link between church and school.
- Children are confident to share their views on matters of faith and belief.

#### **Areas to improve**

To empower children to take greater ownership of the development of their personal spirituality:

- Develop a shared understanding of spirituality across the whole school community so that there is a more cohesive approach to the way that children are challenged when exploring big questions in religious education and other subjects.
- Develop the quality of opportunities for children to reflect and explore their spirituality across all areas of school life both within the overall curriculum and beyond.
- Ensure that children have opportunities to develop the language to allow them to

express their thoughts and ideas with greater precision.

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

A strength of the school's Christian ethos is the link between the values forming the 'Fruit of the Spirit' and other aspects of school life. Individual class charters have been created that are based on the nine different fruits of the spirit and these are referred to by children when talking about relationships in the school and behaviour in class. Children also make links between the Christian values from the 'Fruit of the Spirit' to the UNICEF rights and responsibilities as well as the Ten Commandments. Together, these links have created an environment in which children feel safe and have positive attitudes towards their learning. This contributes to the children's academic achievement which is above national expectations. The school has been using reflection diaries for some time and these have helped to take the school's understanding of spirituality forward. Work around the school, and listening to children talk, show that children now have the confidence to express their thoughts and ideas in more creative and open ways. Class reflection areas do not provide sufficient opportunities for children to take greater ownership of their own spiritual journey and explore this in ways that are personal to them. Equally, although children are confident and comfortable to talk about spiritual concepts, they lack the more precise language to express their deeper thoughts clearly across all areas of the school curriculum. Overall, there are a number of opportunities to empower children to take greater ownership of their spiritual growth that have yet to be developed. Children do have good opportunities to explore their moral, social and cultural development. Through subjects such as religious education they are able to articulate their ideas about justice and equality and listen with respect to the views of others. Children are aware that Britain is a diverse country with many different religions and feel strongly that everyone should be able to make up their own mind and be treated with kindness and gentleness regardless of who they are. Relationships between teachers and children are firmly based on the 'Fruit of the Spirit' and children themselves show goodness and patience in the way that they treat each other.

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

An important aspect of collective worship, and one all members of the school community regard as being central to the daily life of the school, is the use of the parish church to celebrate acts of worship three times each week. These regular visits to the church, which is next to the school, means that children feel that the church is a natural part of the school and is in fact 'their' church. Children feel comfortable in the church and, because they see him regularly, respond well when the rector leads an act of worship. Acts of worship contain elements of prayer, Bible teaching, time for praise and reflection that make them a distinct time in the school day. Worship planning is thorough and covers a broad range of themes that are linked to Christian values and the 'Fruit of the Spirit'. Children articulate well how these themes have a relevance to their own lives because they help them to 'be a better person'. Children have a good knowledge of a range of Bible stories and are developing their understanding of the Trinity. Younger children, for example, understand that Jesus came in human form but 'died on the cross' and is now 'alive in heaven' where 'He is with God'. They are less sure about the nature of the Holy Spirit. Children have good opportunities to pray in the life of the school both formally in acts of worship and at lunch time and at the end of the school day. Although there are reflection areas in each classroom, they are not used specifically for prayer so there are not many other areas around the school for children to use for quiet prayer. Children do have a good understanding of the meaning of prayer as a way to talk to God to give thanks, say sorry or ask for help. They are developing their understanding of the purpose of prayer. Older children, for example, explain that prayer can help someone by 'bringing love into their heart'. Children are engaged and responsive in collective worship with good opportunities to be involved in services such as Easter and Christmas which are important to the whole community. There are less frequent opportunities for them to plan and lead worship or to be involved in feedback of their views through ongoing evaluation.

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

Standards in religious education (RE) are above national expectations by the time children leave the school at the end of Year 6. Progress in RE is good and achievement is similar to that of other core subjects in the curriculum. The introduction of a new scheme of work has improved the teaching of RE by giving teachers greater confidence to plan more creatively using enquiry and exploration as strategies that engage children more directly in their learning. The success of this approach is reflected in the best teaching which challenges children to think more deeply by encouraging them to explore religious concepts using greater precision in the language that they use to explain their thoughts and ideas. Children relish the opportunities to debate and share ideas in RE and become animated when listening and responding to the opinions of others. At its best, these discussions significantly enhance the quality of learning because they develop greater depth to the children's understanding of what they are learning. There is scope for this more challenging approach to teaching and learning to be developed at a consistently high level across the whole school. For example, in a good quality RE lesson with younger children, opportunities to explore children's responses such as 'the Torah is like a big speech bubble from God' or 'why do boys sing the Torah?' are sometimes not followed up. Similarly, learning in a successful RE lesson with older children was not enhanced by challenging children to explain what they meant when saying that prayer will help the people in the recent earthquake in Nepal. The use of RE portfolios in Key Stage 1 is a very effective way of capturing the children's responses and is used for assessment. The quality of work in Key Stage 2 books is good although marking is not specific to RE skills and does not generally help children identify what they need to do to improve further. Assessment procedures are thorough and data is used to identify progress and trends. Some moderation of levelling has been done but not with sufficient frequency for all teachers to give confident assessments of achievement.

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

At the time of the inspection the headteacher was absent and two teachers from within the school were acting as temporary joint deputy headteachers. They were being supported by two advisory headteachers from local first schools. The two deputy headteachers, working closely with governors and with the support of the advisory headteachers, have recently implemented procedures that are giving greater transparency to the responsibilities of the leadership and management at all levels to improve the effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of all areas of school life including its Christian distinctiveness. Improvements in communication between all members of the school community are contributing to higher morale. The current leadership has a clear commitment to developing the Christian ethos so that they include all members of the school community, but particularly children, in being empowered to take greater ownership of the spiritual life of the school. Governors and staff are very clear about the need to ensure that this process continues to develop. The school has established strategies that carry out some monitoring and evaluation of RE and collective worship and as well as procedures that ensure priorities for development as a church school are an integral aspect of overall school development. Links with the parish church is a particularly strength of the school and the rector plays an important role in the life of the school both as a pastoral support and through membership of the governing body. The commitment of the church community is reflected in their ability to recently appoint three foundation governors following a number of resignations. The strong focus by school managers to establish stable leadership is a reflection of the school's Christian ethos underpinned by the 'Fruit of the Spirit'. Parents feel that the school has a strong family atmosphere in which teachers model values such as honesty and kindness which are 'threads' running through their relationships with children. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship. The school has addressed the areas for development from the previous report.