



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Downton Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School

Gravel Close

Downton, Salisbury, Wilts

SP5 3LZ

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Salisbury

Local authority: Wiltshire

Dates of inspection: 14 May 2015

Date of last inspection: 26 November 2007

School's unique reference number: 126475

Headteacher: Alison Small

Inspector's name and number: Linda Windsor (747)

School context

Downton CE is a smaller than average school where most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average whilst the proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of need is above average. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. The school runs a breakfast and after-school provision that both have a good take-up. The headteacher has been in post since January.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Downton CE Primary as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Relationships across the school are excellent and reflect the love and care for all pupils as unique individuals in God.
- The school, local churches and clergy and the wider community are closely linked to the benefit of all stakeholders.
- The Christian ethos underpins all aspects in the life of the school and impacts positively on teaching and learning
- The importance and rigor given to Religious Education as a core subject ensures standards are high and that pupils are engaged and interested.

Areas to improve

- When the school's values are next reviewed, make explicit the links between these and associated Christian values
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to plan and lead whole school worship.

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

The Christian vision and values of the school underpins everything that happens in the school

and enhances all aspects of school life. The values, whilst secular in wording, are related closely to biblical teaching and pupils are clear about their impact, both on the school as a church school and on their own personal and academic development. This implicit approach is not always as clear to all stakeholders. One pupil described how 'aiming high' means not only do her best but to contribute to a school environment where everyone else can do their best too. As a result attainment and progress of all pupils in school, including those with who are vulnerable or have learning difficulties, stand above the national average and parents attribute this to the Christian ethos of the school and the recognition of each child as a unique individual. One parent explained this as the school helping each pupil to "find the best person they can be." The school also recognises and encourages talents and interests other than academic ability. Relationships across all stakeholders in school reflect the Christian ethos, being supportive, collaborative and inclusive though not shying away from challenge. Spiritual development is excellent with opportunities through the class worship sessions entitled "Something to think about", through the Forest School and in other aspects of the curriculum that support and encourage moments of awe and wonder, reflection and prayer, along with a growing awareness of the world around us. Pupils discuss matters of faith and belief with confidence and understand that these may be different for different people. They are clear that such differences are respected. A pupil, currently studying Sikhism said, "Learning about Sikh beliefs have helped me with my own attitudes. We can learn a lot from others." Prayer is an integral part of school life and a number of pupils talked about prayer within their lives wherever they may be. One Year 1 child described how, at bedtime, she gets her parents to "press pause on the television" so she can say a bedtime prayer with them. The school supports a number of charities and pupils have responded quickly to the Nepalese disaster, not only by raising funds but by asking the Downton Parents School Association to match the monies raised to support those in need, showing themselves to be both compassionate and enterprising! Parents are united in their support for the school. One parent said, "What is beautiful about this school is that it extends well beyond the school gates and into the whole community."

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship draws everyone together and offers space for quiet reflection and prayer, bringing to it a real sense of community gathering. It is very well planned and incorporates the ideas of all stakeholders, especially those of the pupils. As a result, pupils really enjoy and engage in the school's acts of worship, participating in a range of ways including selecting hymns, lighting and snuffing the candles, acting out stories and reading prayers, although there are, as yet, limited opportunities for pupils to plan and lead whole school worship. A wide range of people from the community do lead worship, including local clergy, foundation governors, staff and representatives from various charities. School worship focuses on values, making links between moral issues and stories from the scriptures. This is extremely well supported by visits from the Open the Book team. The vicar leads worship in line with the Anglican calendar and pupils are introduced to Anglican practices that enhance their understanding of their Anglican heritage. When they have services in church, this understanding transfers across so they feel comfortable in the more formal setting and services. One foundation governor reflected that, as numbers attending churches decline, the school hall has become the community church and, as such, is much valued. The worship observed, lead by one of the local clergy (Baptist minister) supported the value of truthfulness and was outstanding. Local clergy lead on theological learning, such as the concept of the Trinity, thus enabling pupils, especially the older ones, to be able to talk about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit with a deepening understanding and interest. Prayer is seen as an important element, not just in worship, but throughout the day. Many pupils write their own prayers and a number of pupils said they "talk to God" quite regularly. Class worship focuses on pupils' spiritual development and pupils thoroughly enjoy these sessions. Each pupil is able to do a presentation to their class to give them "Something to think about." One pupil asked what if there was no God, another discussed the power of imagination. All agreed that such presentations do, indeed, make them think. There are excellent systems to gather feedback on the impact of collective worship that inform the direction and planning for the future. The

most powerful driver for change is the feedback from pupils, via the Worship Council. One of the local clergy declared his leading of school worship has much improved as a result of staff feedback! The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The high priority the school places on the teaching and learning of RE is very well reflected in the high quality of the planning and in the work produced. Pupils make good progress and they cover an excellent breadth of study with Christianity at the core. Pupils like RE, explaining the range of creative approaches used by teachers makes the subject alive and exciting. They enjoy debating aspects of RE and their responses are thoughtful and considered. They show respect for the opinions of others and understand that other faiths and cultures have very different ideas and practices. They like finding out more about others and recognise that their increasing understanding will help them in their own lives and in empathising with the diversity in the world around us. Pupils are able to make links from RE to their daily lives, applying Christian values to their own context, both in and outside of school. The subject leader is passionate and knowledgeable about the subject. She has an excellent understanding of the requirements of the subject. Thorough monitoring processes, reported to governors, ensure that standards are high and continue to improve. The RE action plan is comprehensive and is regularly assessed and evaluated for progress and impact. This is shared with foundation governors in the termly meetings that focus on all aspects of the school as a church school. Foundation governors meet on a termly basis to look at RE as well as other aspects of being a church school. They confidently act as critical friends, challenging when appropriate. A governor, for example, felt that the RE syllabus needed supplementing in terms of reflecting the Anglican nature of the school and a need to emphasize the understanding of the Trinity. This is now in hand. The school meets, and often exceeds, the statutory requirements for RE and the expectations of the National Society's statement of entitlement.

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

At Downton, all staff and governors share a real commitment to promoting the Christian ethos and values of the school. They understand that these impact positively on all pupils and are pivotal in ensuring harmonious relationships across the school, in securing excellent academic outcomes and in promoting the good attitudes and behaviour of all pupils, including those with social and emotional difficulties. The headteacher, in post since January, has a firm grasp on where the school sits, acknowledging its good practice but clear about the need to 'aim high'. There are exceptionally good links with the wider community, with one governor describing how the edges between the churches and the clergy, the wider village community and the school are blurred so it's difficult to see where one finishes and another starts. The links with the local churches are highly beneficial with both the Anglican and Baptist clergy closely involved with the school, helping plan and lead aspects of collective worship and supporting the school in its mission to be an outstanding church school. Recruitment procedures are robust and ensure all new staff are in sympathy with the school as a church school. Foundation governors now sit on all teaching appointment panels and have a clear idea of what is needed to enhance the school as a church school. On-going professional development is well used to support all staff and links with the diocese are good. The RE leader, especially, has made use of these to increase her knowledge and expertise to ensure that both RE and collective worship are continually improving. Rigorous systems for the monitoring and evaluation of the school as a church school are in place, governors are confident in their roles as critical friends and, as a result, the school is on a trajectory of continual improvement. Parents value the school for its care and inclusiveness and were clear that, not only do their children do well academically, but that they are happy and safe in an atmosphere that provides Christian love and care for all. All issues from the previous inspection have been addressed.