



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### Wimborne St Giles Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

Wimborne St Giles, Wimborne, Dorset

**BH21 5LX**

**Previous SIAS grade: Good**

**Current SIAMS grade: Good**

**Diocese: Salisbury**

Local authority: Dorset

Date of inspection: 18 May 2015

Date of last inspection: 5 July 2010

School's unique reference number: 113819

Headteacher: Duncan Baxter

Inspector's name and number: Carole McCormack (224)

#### School context

The school is smaller than average, having 61 children on roll of mainly White British ethnic origin. The number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average; and the number of children attracting pupil premium is below the national average. The Headteacher joined the school in January 2013 and since that time two new teaching members of staff have been appointed. The school is physically close to the church, which is used for worship four times per year. The rector leads worship in school weekly and a group of church members, including a foundation governor, regularly bring 'Open the Book' to the school.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Wimborne St Giles as a Church of England school are good

- Strong leadership at all levels, determined to bring about robust church school improvement
- Effective relationships between all stakeholder groups, which support the well-being and learning of each individual child
- A striking sense of family within the school community, which enhances the security and confidence of all children

#### Areas to improve

- For governors, staff, parents and children to reach a shared understanding of spirituality within the context of their own school
- For all children to be given planned opportunities to reflect upon worship themes so as to evaluate the impact on their own lives and actions
- To introduce structured opportunities for staff and governors to explore with children their developing spirituality

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

The Headteacher has introduced tracking systems and a range of effective intervention strategies that provide a consistent approach to learning and support the individual attainment of each child. The school follows its highly inclusive Christian character by investing pupil premium in measures which represent the best educational practice for all; and the impact that staff interventions have upon children's progress is monitored by the assistant Headteacher. As a result, children currently in Years 3 and 4 are on track to leave the school with higher than expected levels of attainment; and learners attracting pupil premium achieve more highly than national averages. The school is consistently exploring a number of values which are theologically identified with the Christian faith within their distinctively Christian context. This process is thorough and effective but has yet to result in an explicit statement of the schools core values. Because of the strong relationships and family identity of the school community children are nurtured by all to become self-confident human beings with a growing autonomy in their learning. The policies of the school reflect the Christian values at its heart and practices relating to exclusion and attendance are informed by these values. The first development point from the last church school inspection has been addressed by the school, enlisting support from the diocese. However, much more discussion between all stakeholder groups needs to take place in order to develop a shared understanding of the term 'Spirituality'. This will give momentum and focus to the considerable amount of effort that has been invested in threading opportunities for spiritual development throughout provision. It will also support each individual learner in developing a personal spirituality. Learners have a growing awareness of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith, due in part to the visit of a bishop from Sudan; but this needs to be further developed. The respect, tolerance and warmth that mark the school community enable the children to bring these qualities to learning about diverse cultures and other world faiths.

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

Children understand that the daily act of collective worship 'makes you want to be a better person'; and is important because 'we want to be the best school we can'. Its impact can be seen in the harmonious relationships throughout the school and the children's understanding of the values explored within worship. Routines surrounding provision before worship have recently been changed and as a result the children were a little unsettled; but they were engaged with the act of worship, which was interactive, and gave some thoughtful responses. Although opportunity to reflect was given, the end of the act of worship was hurried and as result the opportunity for children to reflect on the impact of worship on their own lives and actions was curtailed. Children expressed their desire to 'have more time', through structured opportunities, to reflect and respond to a worship theme. Evaluation of collective worship is effective overall. Collective worship is well-planned and led by the Headteacher, with input from the Worship Team – a recently formed group of children who plan, evaluate and present to governors. 'Values for Life' is used as a planning resource and Bible stories, Christian festivals and traditions are celebrated/explored. A variety of worship experiences is given to the children, including the very popular sessions led by the incumbent and the 'Open the Book' team. Reflection areas in each classroom are very effective and cherished by the children as places where they can be quiet and experience peace within a busy school day. The children write prayers and these are held in books in each reflection area. Prayer is important to the children and they have sound age-appropriate theological understanding. For example, one child explained how the Holy Spirit 'helps us to follow Jesus; and is all around us'.

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

The third focus for development in the last denominational inspection was: 'The development and refinement of RE assessment to bring about church school improvement.' This has been well-addressed – but only over a relatively short recent timescale. The dedicated RE leader

has worked closely with the Headteacher to replicate his rigour and consistency in planning, resourcing, delivering and assessing the subject. A corporately-produced action plan ensures that all staff members have had input into the improvement and development of RE, and consequently have ownership of the subject. The 'Discovery' scheme is used and opportunity for investigative learning is at the heart of teaching and learning which is specifically monitored to ensure consistency of delivery and impact. The criteria under each attainment target have been analysed and identified and the school is well set to move to assessment of children's learning as being emerging, expected, or exceeding expectations. Active partnership work with other local first and primary schools includes regular moderation of work, liaison meetings and learning walks. The performance of all children in RE is in line with the other core subjects and includes a variety of creative outcomes. The sensitive support for the progress of individual learners ensures that all children, irrespective of need, are given the opportunity to reflect upon the subject and to grow spiritually. The quality of teaching in the subject is mainly good with outstanding aspects, which stem from the strong Christian values shared by the school community. The curriculum focuses on Christianity for approximately two-thirds of teaching time; and devotes the remaining third to the study of other world religions including Hinduism and Judaism. Children's knowledge and understanding of Christianity is good; but their knowledge of the other religions studied, although enthusiastic, is sometimes confused. The school meets statutory requirements for RE and fulfils the National Society statement of entitlement

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

The Headteacher has thoroughly revised and revitalised provision in the seven terms he has been in post; and has set in place the robust building blocks for effective 21<sup>st</sup> century church school education. His strong leadership has been very well-supported and challenged by his dedicated and experienced governors, who have made the decision to make church school effectiveness the concern of the full governing body, rather than assign it to a committee. As a result, there is a powerful momentum behind church school improvement. However, the sound practices and policies have not yet had time to become embedded in the life of the school. Central keynote practices that the Headteacher has established are consistency and cohesion and these unifying principles ensure that the Christian vision which is strongly held by the school leadership is threaded through provision, supporting both academic achievement and the well-being of each member of the school community. As one foundation governor, who is also a parent, expressed it: 'At this age, children need to feel love all around them.' Governors have established sound monitoring practices, which feed into the school's self-evaluation (the second focus for development in the 2010 denominational inspection). They visit regularly, in pairs, to monitor the Christian distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school; the ethos and children's behaviour; and report the outcomes of their monitoring visits to the full governing body. Governors have started to explore the children's understanding of spirituality, but this needs to be extended and broadened. One child explained the impact of the reflection corner in his own life by saying to a governor: 'You come here when you are feeling 'Grrr!'. Governors have started to make visits to other schools in their research to identify what constitutes the elements of an outstanding church school. The partnerships that Wimborne St Giles has established with the church and church community, with the diocese and other local schools are strong. It is, as one parent said, 'a wonderful place to have an education' and is set fair, because of the robust improvement strategies securely in place, to continue to develop further as an effective church school in the years to come.

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