



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

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

Augustan Avenue, Shillingstone, Blandford Forum  
Dorset DT11 0YX

**Previous SIAS grade: Satisfactory**

**Current SIAMS grade: Good**

**Diocese: Salisbury**

Local authority: Dorset

Dates of inspection: 13 November 2015

Date of last inspection: 14 October 2010

School's unique reference number: 113813

Headteacher: Jane Whitehouse-Sharpe

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

#### **School context**

Shillingstone is a smaller than average size rural primary school with 101 children arranged into four class groups. Nearly half the children come from outside the school catchment area. The large majority of children are of a white British heritage and from varied socio-economic backgrounds. The number of children with learning needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average.

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

- Children speak with confidence about matters of faith and belief and this contributes to their growing spiritual awareness.
- Explicit Christian values make an important contribution to the quality of relationships in the school and increasingly to the children's learning.
- The headteacher, supported by other senior leaders, has ensured that the school has made good progress since the previous inspection in developing a Christian ethos that has greater meaning for the whole school community.

#### **Areas to improve**

- Improve the quality of opportunities for children to explore the core Christian values so that they have greater ownership of how they are interpreted and made relevant to their own lives.
- Develop the use of high quality questioning in RE so that children are encouraged to explore concepts in greater depth and which leads to raised standards.
- Develop the skills of the ethos committee so that they more effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of all aspects of the Christian ethos.

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

The school has made good progress since the last inspection in articulating a distinct Christian ethos underpinned by core values. The identification of nine values based on the Lord's Prayer have become well established and are used throughout the school community to model and live out the high quality of relationships that exists between adults and children. Links between these core values and the curriculum have been identified and they are helping to embed the values into the children's learning. Further links to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of the children is enhancing the impact of the values to school life. The impact that the values are making to the children's learning has not been fully explored particularly in relation to the children's own interpretation of how they explain the relevance of the values to their own lives both within the formal curriculum and beyond. However, through two whole school values days in 2013 and 2014, children and their families have explored a common understanding of what the nine values mean to them as a school community. Parents are aware of the values and have opportunities to explore them at home through regular newsletters sent by the school. Parents say that this gives them the opportunity to talk about values with their children and discuss faith as 'a natural part of life'. Reflection areas in classrooms provide good opportunities for children to think about themes from collective worship and write their own prayers in response to what they have heard. This makes a good contribution to the development of their spiritual awareness. There are some links to spirituality identified in curriculum planning but this is an area that has not yet been fully explored. Plans to develop the outside area to provide opportunities for spirituality are a reflection of the school's determination to improve this aspect of church school distinctiveness. Religious education makes a valuable contribution to the children's appreciation of the diverse nature of British society and the school has identified the need to provide more opportunities for this to be developed.

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

The identification of nine core values have given greater focus to collective worship themes and has allowed for the exploration of their meaning through the Lord's Prayer and Bible stories. Children appreciate that God and Jesus are at the centre of these stories and that the Lord's Prayer somehow underpins them. They are less clear about how the links between values and the Lord's Prayer actually happens in practice but do know that they help them to be better people. Children are also less clear about the nature of the Holy Spirit. Acts of worship are important and distinct times in the school day. They contain specific elements that make them times of worship. Simple words of liturgy to open and close worship, along with the lighting of candles and prayers, all contribute to a sense that this is a special time in the school day. Planning is well thought through and based round a good blend of values and events in the Christian year. This gives children a good understanding of the main festivals celebrated by Anglicans as well as Anglican practice. Weekly class based worship, called 'start of the day', give teachers the opportunity to explore worship themes at a level appropriate for the age of the children in the class. These have a more intimate feel to which children respond well. They listen to the views of others and are willing to participate or just take the time to be still and hear the views of others. Children have opportunities to plan and lead the main end of term worship and other festivals in the church year. They

do have regular times to write their own prayers. However, there are fewer times for children to plan and lead worship on a more regular basis. The school is currently exploring ways to engage children in worship more frequently. There is some monitoring and evaluation of the impact of worship and these are effective and inform future improvements. The recent introduction of a book to gather feedback from children is proving to be useful. These systems have yet to be embedded.

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

Outcomes in RE are close to the national average for most children and this represents good progress from their starting points when they join the school. Children have a good knowledge of RE and are developing the skills to interpret and learn from that knowledge. The introduction of a new scheme of work to support the RE agreed syllabus has given teachers greater confidence to deliver RE in more exciting and creative ways that places more emphasis on exploration and enquiry. This approach to teaching is helping to enhance the quality of the children's learning and children respond well in class to the increased opportunities to participate in their learning. At its best, teachers use questioning well to provide opportunities for children to use their knowledge and are effective in asking follow up questions that offer some challenge that develops the children's understanding. However, there is not yet a consistently high level of challenge across the school that encourages children to think about their learning in depth. Assessment has improved since the previous inspection and children's attainment is currently levelled against national expectations. The use of assessment data to track children's progress and identify further improvements is not as well developed. Children have positive attitudes towards RE and are engaged and enthusiastic in their responses. They share their views confidently and listen with respect to those of others. Through the opportunities to explore religious concepts, RE makes a good contribution to the children's moral and cultural development. They have a good understanding that there is a range of different world religions and that faith in modern British society reflects this. The RE leader has ensured that the subject has a high profile in the curriculum and that it has made good progress since the last inspection in becoming a more vibrant part of the curriculum. She is committed to the ongoing improvement of RE and makes a valuable contribution to the overall leadership of the school as a church school through her role on the ethos committee.

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

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection in developing a Christian ethos that has greater meaning and purpose for all members of the school community. The strong church school leadership of the headteacher has ensured that areas for development identified in the previous report have been fully addressed and that a distinct Christian character has been securely established. Moreover, the headteacher has a very clear grasp of what needs to be done to continue to improve as a church school. She is fully supported in this by the RE leader who is committed to the ongoing promotion of Christian values through RE and collective worship. The establishment of an ethos committee has provided an effective system for the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of RE and collective worship. Regular feedback from the RE and collective worship leader to this committee, using evidence from interviews with children and scrutiny of work, have helped to identify actions for further improvement in these areas. Where appropriate, these actions also form part of the overall school

development plan and this ensures that all governors are aware of progress being made as a church school. Evaluation of the impact of the broader Christian ethos, including the core values, has yet to be fully developed particularly with regard to the skills needed by the ethos committee to gather and analyse evidence gathered. However, governors are fully supportive of the school and make a good contribution to the Christian ethos. The involvement of a foundation governor in formulating the 'thought for the week' is a very good example of their commitment and involvement. The school has a close relationship with the local church and, although the school is some distance from the parish church, there are beneficial links between the school and church communities. For example, some festivals, such as Mothering Sunday, are held in the school. At the time of the inspection, a new vicar had very recently been installed. Parents say that they value the links with the church and appreciate the extent to which the school encourages their children to explore faith and to understand that modern Britain is a diverse society. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

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