



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



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

### **St Stephen's CE Primary School**

Hunters Chase  
South Godstone  
Surrey RH9 8HR

**Previous SIAS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: Southwark**

Local authority: Surrey

Dates of inspection: 20 and 21 June 2016

Date of last inspection: 9 May 2011

School's unique reference number: 125187

Headteacher: Amanda Blackburn

Inspector's name and number: Daphne Gibbs 210

### **School context**

St Stephen's is a smaller than average primary school with specialist provision for 12 pupils who have visual impairments. It serves the village of South Godstone. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium is in line with the national average and of those with special educational needs is slightly higher. Approximately 5% of the children are from Church families. A nursery on the site became integrated into St Stephens in September 2015. Both the head and the incumbent have been appointed since the last inspection, the incumbent only weeks ago after a long interregnum.

### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Stephens as a Church of England school are outstanding**

- The strong leadership and management proclaims the school's Christian values and constantly seeks ways to encourage spiritual and academic growth for all members of the school community.
- The warm, calm Christian ethos inspires respect for each other and a love of learning.
- Collective worship is deeply relevant, and promotes and supports the school's Christian values.

- Religious Education (RE) stimulates reflection which grows deeper as the children get older.

### **Areas to improve**

- Embed new SDBE schemes of work to enrich the delivery of RE, increase confidence in subject knowledge and challenge the more able
- Make sure all reflective areas have an impact and support the children on their spiritual journey.

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

It is evident as soon as you enter St Stephen's that it is place of warmth and calm where all are welcomed and Christian Values are celebrated. The explicitly named school's values of equality, tolerance, honesty, courage, hope, compassion, love, peace, thankfulness, forgiveness and patience underpin all that goes on in St Stephen's. The school's philosophy of 'Building Learning Power' complements. The children are inspired to learn from an early age and their responsible behaviour and resilience demonstrates this. It has resulted in strongly improved standards. Children are now working at expected levels or above. Improvement in attainment and progress has been rapid. Every child is valued as a unique individual regardless of faith, belief or ability. The children themselves respect differences and say they are eager to learn from and ask questions of those of different faiths. The school council pledges to carry out its duty under the banner of 'rights, respect and responsibility'. The school goes to great lengths to integrate the children with Christian love and care. The Thrive initiative is an example of this compassion. The school works with courage and honesty to address issues to be sure of a satisfactory outcome for all. Attendance has improved as a result of the very strong promotion of the value of learning. Attendance is now in line with the national average. Relationships are strong. Members of the school community have a genuine respect for each other and show that the children always come first and are cherished and empowered to reach their potential. Around the school inventive displays and uplifting quotes (e.g. 'Hope is faith holding out its hand in the dark', George Iles) endorse biblical teaching and values. However all reflective areas, inside and out, need to have an impact and support the children on their spiritual journey. RE and collective worship are powerful components of the distinctive Christian character of the school. There is time for reflection and an opportunity to express thoughts, feelings and beliefs and so encourage spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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

St Stephens's RE and Collective Worship policy declares 'In the busy and uncertain world in which we live it is both a privilege and of huge importance to consider and explore the more profound questions of life and faith with our children'. Collective Worship is all encompassing – 'I feel God next to me, behind me and all around me' says one of the children. It is relevant, inspiring and challenging and gives the Bible a significant role in the act of praising God. The anti-social behaviour of football fans was considered when discussing tolerance. Children were asked to come up with a solution to the problem and were subjected to further in depth questioning when suggestions were made. A parent recalled how much she personally learnt from watching Collective Worship. Collective Worship brings the school community together as a family. All participate in confirming St Stephen's Christian values. It promotes 'healthy wellbeing' suggests one of the governors, and illuminates the 'meaning of life' observes a child. It fosters positive relationships and influences behaviour. As expressed by a Year 4 child 'it makes us think and care more for others'. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are seen by the children as 'flowing elements inside us to help in times of trouble'. Staff and pupils pray out loud together, discuss together and sing heartily together. Quiet times are

offered for reflection and prayer throughout the school day encouraging the development of personal spirituality. A children's prayer team has been formed. The impact of Collective Worship is monitored by the RE coordinator, the adult Faith Team and the Incumbent. Children also monitor and make suggestions. In response to comments made during pupil interviews separate Key Stage acts of worship have been introduced. A newly erected cross is made up of children's thoughts. Altar cloths have been created by the Mothers' Union following designs submitted by the children and illustrating the school's values. The themes for Collective Worship are drawn up well in advance and delivered in a set but varied pattern each week. Parents appreciate being informed what the subject will be via the school's newsletter. Pupils are encouraged to be fully involved. The children's Faith Team plan and deliver an act of worship each term. Years 5 and 6 organised and delivered the Christmas service.

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

The focus for development from the last inspection – 'monitor and develop learners' levels of attainment and progress in RE to raise standards' - has been met. Pupils' progress is now tracked by class teachers using Target Tracker and moderated referring to a portfolio of work to give staff a greater confidence in levelling. Results are recorded using assessment ladders which refer to both learning about RE and learning from RE. Next steps are identified. There is a rolling programme of lesson observations and book scrutiny where good practise is recognised and points for development shared. Comparative data has been established. RE levels are in line with other subjects. Attainment has improved rapidly and for the large majority of learners is in line with national expectations and sometimes higher. There is not as yet enough evidence of sustainability over time for all groups of learners. Creative planning is in place. RE is a driver for one of the termly linked learning topics each year and strongly reinforces the Christian values of the school. The new SDBE schemes of work now need to be embedded. The majority of teaching is good or better. Opportunities for reflection are impressive. It starts from confident beginnings in the Reception class and grows deeper and more complex as the children get older until Year 6 are able to share honest observations on their own spiritual journey. In depth questioning challenges. Higher expectations are raising standards. RE is led with expertise and attention to detail. The curriculum leaders are driving improvement. They have a clear vision and are prepared to take risks and introduce new initiatives in order to enable learners to acquire a thorough knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith and other faiths through a wide range of learning opportunities.

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

The bold leadership and management of St. Stephens is the school's great strength. Difficult decisions are made with compassion. Christian values unite thinking and with courage, honesty and commitment they strive to equip the children with the tools to contribute to the creation of a more just society. 'God is central to their thinking' say the governors. The head teacher has provided inspirational guidance resulting in strong improvement in standards and creative strategic planning. The children say she is 'calm, never raises her voice and always has a smile on her face'. The parents feel she is 'grounded, understandable and approachable' and they themselves are now more interested in the school. There is a consultative style – views are welcomed, assessed and considered. Diverse groups within the school community are involved in monitoring and evaluation. A recent initiative of trust and honesty saw St. Stephen's involved with other local Church schools in monitoring each other's practice. This has led to effective strategies for improvement being considered. The specific school values now in place were developed and selected by the whole school community and are lived out throughout the school day and during highly effective RE and collective worship. These values have a significant impact on the Christian distinctiveness of St Stephen's and on the wellbeing of all within the school community. Preparation for leadership opportunities are very strongly supported through opportunities offered by the Southwark Diocese. During the head teacher's maternity leave, the deputy head was appointed as acting head and a teacher was

internally promoted to acting deputy (a place has now been secured for them on the Aspiring Headteacher's Course). There is an excellent partnership between church, school and community. There is a willingness to support each other and become involved. The incumbent from a local church gave unstinting service to the school during the interregnum. Parents are now more enthusiastically engaged. The areas for development from the last inspection have been fully addressed in a bold and creative way. RE and Collective Worship are given high priority and are led with commitment and imagination. All this, combined with a real desire to guide and to inspire so the children at St Stephen's can achieve, means the school has the capacity to improve, develop and grow even more as a Church school.

SIAMS report June 2016 St Stephen's CE Primary School, South Godstone, Surrey RH9 8HR