



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St George's Church of England Voluntary Aided Infant & Nursery School

Jackets Lane, Northam, Bideford EX39 1XT

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Exeter

Local authority: Devon

Dates of inspection: 5 March 2015

Date of last inspection: 4 May 2010

School's unique reference number: 113456

Headteacher: Tricia Palk

Inspector's name and number: John Rudge 704

School context

The school has 220 mainly local children aged 2 to 7 on its roll. They comprise a wide social mix, mostly from white British families. About a quarter of all children at the school are covered by the pupil premium. Almost all the children at the school move on to the nearby St Margaret's Junior school (also voluntary aided), and both schools are supported by the same local parish church. They work in close partnership with the Atlantic Coast Co-operative Trust.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St George's School as a Church of England school are good

- A strong sense of the importance of Christian faith pervades the school and encourages children to work well together and enjoy learning
- Both collective worship and religious education (RE) provide effectively for the children's spiritual development
- A close relationship with the parish church and its community adds to and supports children's awareness of the Christian focus of the school

Areas to improve

- Extend the impact of the school's values, so that they meet the needs of all learners
- Involve all stakeholders more fully in school-based worship, to further enhance the spiritual life of the whole school community
- Strengthen children's familiarity with Christian teaching and practice, to support their growing understanding of the school's distinctiveness

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

Children continue to make good progress in their learning. This is because the school's Christian character and ethos features strongly in supporting their sense of being valued as individuals. Their growing confidence from an early age is a key factor in nurturing their sense of well-being. Children interact well together, and with members of staff, and they feel secure and well-supported, including particularly children with identified learning needs. This is a strength of the school's provision, which includes support from outside agencies. It is also a good example of how the school's Christian values are expressed in practice. Those children who enter school with a low level of achievement also make good progress because of the very good provision in this school to meet their needs. The school strikes a very good balance between its role in the local community, where it is popular and over-subscribed, and its role as a Christian school. The values which the school promotes focus strongly on the quality of relationships. Children are aware and confident that when relationships break down, staff will ensure that issues are quickly resolved. This strengthens their enthusiasm for learning in a secure environment. The distinctive Christian focus of these values, and the Christian teaching which supports them, are gradually becoming more firmly embedded in the daily life of the school community. Collective worship and religious education both contribute to this development. The values also help children to have a wider sense of community by encouraging them to acknowledge and celebrate diversity. For example, children are interested and enthusiastic about their support for schools in Kenya, with which the school has links, and for local charities.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Children respond positively to their experience of collective worship. They are aware of its importance and centrality both as formal occasions when they gather for worship and as the more informal opportunities they have for quiet reflection and prayer. They make their own contribution to this through the prayers they write and through the ways in which they support each other in both play and learning. They do so also in the way they take part in collective worship. This helps to create a thoughtful and reflective atmosphere and sense of occasion. Children join in naturally with the various elements of the worship. In conversation afterwards they are clear about the value of the occasion and how it draws the whole school community together. Music, words, pictures, actions, prayers and stillness all help to strengthen the educational context of worship. The focus of worship on Jesus helps to keep the school's values firmly within their Christian context. All these elements were evident in the act of collective worship during the visit, and were strengthened by a very effective, clear presentation of Open the Book. Collective worship is planned in partnership with St Margaret's school ethos group, ensuring that the children have a developing and progressive experience of worship. The school also enjoys strong links with the parish church ensuring that children have positive experiences of being in a Christian church, for example through special services held there to mark important occasions in the Christian year. A further link with the school's values is affirmed in special assemblies where children's achievements are celebrated, including examples of achievements where they have set their own examples of putting Christian values into practice.

The effectiveness of RE is good

Religious education is thoughtfully planned and taught. It is led by an experienced co-ordinator with a very good understanding of the value of RE. Teaching in the subject is good. A stimulating curriculum is drawn together from the Devon agreed syllabus, diocesan guidance and local needs, particularly in exploring the Christian teaching which underpins the school's values and ethos. This becomes evident in their learning, where children often help each other to complete tasks. Aspects of learning in RE are also well integrated into the wider Early Years & Foundation Stage (EYFS). Their early steps in the subject provide the children with a sound platform for their later progress. The curriculum for older children is demanding, and enables them to take part in challenging tasks, such as those observed during the visit. In a Year 2 class, children were able to engage sensitively in exploring a moral dilemma about what it means to 'treat others as you would wish to be treated.' The quality of questioning by the teacher

helped the children to probe, discuss and reflect on the issue of responsibility. Consequently, children enjoy and are challenged by what they learn. Their overall achievement is at least in line with their progress in English, which is above national expectations. All those who teach RE are well prepared and guided by the subject co-ordinator, including higher level assistants. They also benefit from sharing subject training with the staff of other local schools. As well as the clear emphasis on learning about Christian faith, children at St George's are developing a sound understanding of Jewish faith, as a contemporary living tradition. This gives them a balanced sense of the importance of other expressions of religion and of how people who follow different traditions can also share the same basic values. The quality of RE teaching, including assessment, is also enhanced by the school's ongoing programme of monitoring and evaluation.

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

School leaders are committed to the promotion of the school's values. The head teacher provides a strong sense of direction in ensuring that the values support the quality of learning and the community life of the school. Both St George's and St Margaret's Junior School share opportunities for improvement. A mutually supportive ethos group strengthens the spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimension of the school. It also draws on the support and expertise of the Diocese and other outside bodies. Foundation governors are active in their support and practical service to the school, as well as in monitoring the effectiveness of the school's Christian ethos, including collective worship. Consequently, the school has an accurate sense of the quality of its ethos and distinctiveness, and plans carefully for the future, including detailed succession planning. Leaders have thoroughly addressed issues raised in the previous inspection report. Extending relationships with parents and with community groups is a current focus for development. The school's environment, both in public spaces and in classrooms, is used effectively to affirm its ethos and distinctiveness. However, leaders are aware of the need for clearer external expressions of its status as a church school. There is an ongoing focus on embedding the school's Christian values fully in the daily life of the whole school community. The potential for further development is therefore good.

SIAMS report March 2015 St George's Infant & Nursery School Northam EX39 IHT