



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

: Upton St Leonards Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School

Bondend Road, Upton St Leonard's, Gloucester, GL4 8ED

Previous SIAS grade: Outstanding

Current SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Gloucester

Local authority: Gloucestershire

Date of inspection: 6 March 2015

Date of last inspection: 23 February 2010

School's unique reference number: 115658

Headteacher: Cottia Howard

Inspector's name and number: NS009 Christine Hammant

School context

Upton St Leonards School is a two form entry primary school serving the village and local area. There are currently 414 pupils on roll, ten percent of whom qualify for pupil premium support. The staff team is stable with few changes over recent years and is well supported by the board of governors. A recent Ofsted report graded the school to be good.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Upton St Leonards as a Church of England school are outstanding

- This is a school community steeped in Christian love which has a significant impact on all.
- The pupils demonstrate attitudes that are thoughtful and mature and their approach to life and learning is firmly based on Christian values.
- There is inspiring and totally committed leadership of the school by the headteacher, senior staff and governors.
- Religious education (RE) lessons engage, inspire and challenge children to think deeply about faith and belief as expressed by the Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Hindu religions.

Areas to improve

- Engage children in thinking that is theologically based in order to deepen their spirituality. Monitor the impact of this on children's attitudes and development.
- Create a school motto and redesign the school badge so that together they truly reflect the distinctive Christian character of the school.

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

The distinctive Christian character of this outstanding school makes a visible impact on the positive attitudes and approaches of children to their learning and relationships. Christian values such as courage, trust, perseverance, service, compassion, respect and truthfulness are named as values that underpin the high quality of teaching and learning. As a direct result of this, levels of attainment in reading, writing, mathematics and religious education are very high. Christian values are embedded in the daily life of the school and are a natural part of pupils' conversations. As a result, there is clear evidence of respect and care in the way children behave towards the adults in school, other children and visitors. In an expression of the school's distinctive Christian character, support is provided for children with learning, moral and social difficulties through the work of a specialist member of staff. Children are confident, articulate and thoughtful across the full ability range and are ready to embark on deeper theological thinking that will further develop their spirituality. Relationships in the school are based on love and centre on the understanding that all are made in the image of God. The pupil self-portraits in the entrance hall exemplify this. One of the school's aims is to 'foster a love of learning, a love of life, a love of one another, a love of God'. This distinctive Christian ethos shapes relationships and empowers pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In RE pupils are developing a deeper understanding and respect for the diverse communities in the world and there is a desire to build upon this learning through contact with a range of different school communities. There are reflection areas in each classroom and prayer corners in each key stage. Outside a spiritual garden and worship area similarly provide a place where children can think and pray.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is at the heart of daily life in this distinctively Christian school. It is in worship that children begin to learn about the Christian values of their school and the impact they make on their relationships, attitudes, work ethic and behaviour. Bible stories are used to illustrate each value and opportunities for spiritual development are evident throughout worship, from the Kyrie at the start to the quiet singing as children and adults leave. Staff and children find worship to be a time for their own spiritual growth and speak eloquently of the impact it has on their daily lives. Children confidently speak of what they learn in worship about the symbols of Christianity, such as the candle with three wicks that represents the Trinity and the cross that represents the death of Jesus. Collective worship successfully engages all pupils through the use of specific questioning to each age group about, for example, the issues in a dramatised story and through the use of Talk Partners. It is also a reverent time as individual pupils lead prayers using their own thoughts about the value in focus. Children speak of worship as a time when they can connect with God, speak to Him and listen to His voice freely and at ease; they know they can ask for help and guidance from Him. For example, one child said that in worship they had no scared feelings inside and another that however big a problem is 'we can always forgive'. Pupils have a good understanding of prayer and know that they can pray wherever they are. Together these experiences show the outstanding impact that worship has both on pupils' well-being and on their spiritual growth. The headteacher coordinates worship and involves class teachers in the planning and evaluation of the impact of worship. Pupils and governors also contribute to this evaluation so that new ideas or amendments can be incorporated into worship. This ongoing evaluation has led to meaningful and relevant worship experiences for pupils. Worship features regularly on staff meeting agendas. As a result it is seen as crucial to all that takes place in school. There are close links with the local parish church. The vicar often visits the school and is a familiar face to the children.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious education (RE) is taught to an extremely high standard and engages and motivates pupils across the full age and ability range. Children demonstrate great enthusiasm for their RE lessons. The RE subject leader is able to fully focus on planning and evaluation of her subject, as well as supporting her colleagues who teach RE, as she currently has no class teacher role in the school. Her evaluation has shown that teaching and learning in RE has resulted in pupil attainment above the already high attainment in English and Maths. The school has made a detailed review of the advantages of teaching RE as a specialist subject in class teacher's Preparation, Planning and Assessment time demonstrating the depth of thought which is a feature of all decision making in the school. However, class teachers are also very much involved with the RE curriculum as it is regarded as a core subject and there are working walls for RE in each classroom. As a result children are fully aware of the importance of RE as a core subject. The enthusiasm and commitment of the subject leader, the ways in which she shares her planning, ideas and evaluation of the subject and her ability to listen to others' ideas all indicate how extremely effective she is in her role. She is able to observe the other teachers' RE lessons to ensure the quality of teaching is consistent and training and support from external specialist RE teachers is welcomed and actioned. In this way the quality and effectiveness of the RE curriculum is maintained and improved. Whilst children learn about and from the Jewish, Muslim and Hindu religions the main focus of the teaching in RE is on Christianity. This is totally supported by the distinctive Christian character of the school and the children's unwavering understanding of the importance of Christian values. The high status of the subject within the school and the expertise with which it is led and managed underpin and exemplify the reasons behind the decision made by the school leadership to request a full inspection of RE as part of this SIAMS inspection.

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

The inspiring leadership by the headteacher of this school motivates, encourages and inspires all who work and learn here. Her Christian vision, which is encapsulated in the Christian values, is the bedrock of learning, teaching and living in this community. As a result of this vision, all members of staff work as a cohesive team and demonstrate respect and care for each other and feel valued whatever their role. The governors wholeheartedly support the aims of the school and regularly watch teaching, carry out Learning Walks, discuss issues with children and share in worship. Despite the publication of the school aims in the Prospectus and on the website, the school badge does not acknowledge the Christian character of the school. Also, a school motto that children can understand and remember is not yet part of the school's public documentation. However, the Christian character has made an enormous impact on pupils' achievements and on the well-being of the whole community. The school development plan, written by staff and governors in collaboration, grows from the belief that every child should experience success and be valued for his/her individual strengths. The school has a very effective partnership with parents who know they can talk with confidence to class teachers and senior staff. The local church welcomes the school for Christian festival services in which pupils take part; these are very well attended by parents and governors. The governors understand the need to prepare for future leadership of the school and do so by sanctioning training for senior staff and subject leaders. The arrangements for RE and collective worship fully meet the statutory requirements.

SIAMS report March 2015, Upton St Leonards Cof E VC Primary School, Gloucester GL4 8ED

