



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### St Nicolas CE Primary School

Locks Hill,  
Portslade, Brighton  
BN41 2LA

**Previous SIAMS grade:** Good

**Current inspection grade:** Good

**Diocese:** Chichester

Local authority: Brighton and Hove

Dates of inspection: 16 March 2016

Date of last inspection: 7 and 11 June 2010

School's unique reference number: 114560

Headteacher: Andrew Richbell

Inspector's name and number: Ruth Cumming 865

### School context

St Nicolas is a larger than average sized primary school having recently expanded from a junior school to a two form entry primary school. The number of pupils who receive support from the pupil premium is above the national average. The school works closely with their parish church. The school is fully inclusive and whilst the majority of pupils do not come from church attending families, those who do attend church represent a range of Christian traditions.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Nicolas Primary as a Church of England school are good

- All school members enthusiastically articulate their distinctive Christian values and the deeply significant impact these values have on their lives individually and as a community.
- The school leadership team, under the strong and passionate leadership of the headteacher, apply their Christian values to demonstrate inclusiveness and unconditional love.
- Highly engaging and relevant collective worship underpins the school's drive and commitment to build curiosity in children which builds positive relationships and impacts on behaviour and learning across the school.

### Areas to improve

- Systematically monitor and evaluate the provision and impact of religious education (RE) on learners, to ensure that strengths are built on and areas for development addressed.
- Evaluate worship regularly to monitor the impact on children and adults in order to develop the role of children as leaders in different settings.

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

An explicit Christian vision permeates every aspect of the school's life. Christian values are introduced as soon as children begin school and they are encouraged to 'Catch a Value,' recording them on slips of paper. The school's Biblical golden rule is 'Treat others as you would like to be treated.' All of these help children to know how to demonstrate respect, curiosity, perseverance and courage, and to take on responsibilities in the service of others out of love and friendship. Servant leadership is deeply embedded: older children, for example, lead clubs for younger children and all are encouraged to take the initiative in organizing a range of fundraising events, including for the charity 'Purple People Kitchen' which provides food for local people in need. The behaviour policy, founded on the gospel message of respect and love, has a restorative justice foundation; one child said 'Saying sorry makes me feel lighter'. Following a miserable event when an arsonist destroyed the new outdoor classroom, one class used their restorative justice approach to write a letter to the local press expressing both disappointment and forgiveness. They were delighted when members of the community voluntarily rebuilt the outdoor classroom, exemplifying servant leadership. Children and staff consistently check behaviour against school values and as a result, it has moved beyond compliant, showing significant improvement over time with particular benefits for some individuals. Staff nurture curiosity and perseverance in learners and this, together with high expectations, has resulted in improved attitudes, progress and outcomes in learning. Children feel safe and enjoy coming to school as attendance data reflects. The well-being of all children is a priority: photographs of staff appear on posters around the school encouraging children to speak to them as they are 'here to listen'. Diversity and inclusion are tangible strengths and the school responds appropriately to issues which arise. The school created a film, using the values of respect and love to teach against homophobic bullying, which was used as a national exemplar for resolving difficult issues. A Muslim child explained how she appreciated being able to share her religion with her friends in an RE lesson. Her friends explained how much they had learned about her faith, saying that their respect for her had grown further. Learning in RE, spiritual moral, social and cultural education (SMSC) and other curriculum areas supports children's understanding of Christianity as a global faith. For example, a rich range of traditional Palm Sunday celebrations was shown to Year 1 children to extend their understanding of a variety of Christian cultures.

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

Worship is inspiring and transformational. Careful consideration is given to content and visual stimuli to ensure children are inspired and appropriately challenged. There is a weekly structure which engages children in different styles of worship and in groups of various sizes. Parents praise how difficult events are sensitively dealt with in an age appropriate way, for example the Shoreham air disaster and the Paris attacks. Spirituality is nurtured through an enquiry-based approach centering around deeply thought provoking spiritual and moral questions. For example, 'Is it always right to forgive?' Outdoors, a white board and marker pen enable children to jot down their thinking and respond to other people's ideas. Notions are teased out as children learn from each another, sometimes changing their own viewpoints. Staff notice this is impacting on lessons as children ask increasingly probing questions. The teaching of the Bible and the person of Jesus is central to collective worship. Advice an older child said they would give a newborn child was, 'Believe in only one God, which is made out of Holy Spirit, the Son and the Father,' demonstrating his understanding of the Trinity. Thoughtful images are used to deepen children's understanding and to give context. For example, next to a large display on British values children are encouraged to see themselves as unique whilst all similar. The accompanying biblical quotation 'Though we are many we are one body' supports this. Key Christian festivals are celebrated and give children the opportunity to plan and lead services, including the Leavers' Service which they report as a highlight. Whilst the headteacher is the key leader for collective worship, leadership is shared with other staff,

children and the clergy. The local vicar is much loved by the community and is an intrinsic part of the school. Children obviously enjoy worship and are keen to be even more involved in leading. A Prayer Spaces event, led by 'City Mission', generated a number of interactive activities to support children's understanding of the purpose and place of prayer. A Jewish parent praised the impact of the school on her child 'giving thanks' at home for his food. Reflective areas include a space to be quiet and think created with cushions, children's own prayers and sparkly lights. Two older boys enthused about using this space and were delighted with the new Bibles. A wooden stump circle has been created outside with trees; a child explained that this was a space they now use to sit quietly if they need time. One four-year-old explained that a portrait in their classroom reflection area was of 'Jesus, who died on the cross.' Whilst there is little recorded formal monitoring, children's views are valued. At present the evaluation of worship and its impact on children is informally collated and used to influence further plans.

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

The standards attained by learners in RE at the end of each key stage and the progress for individuals and groups of learners are broadly in line with attainment in other subjects. Gaps in performance for different groups are being addressed, as teachers use increasingly effective techniques to feed back to children about their learning. A new curriculum was implemented following a period of monitoring and evaluation, together with thorough research into the right curriculum to match the needs and interests of pupils. Since then, impact has been informally reviewed. A systematic process of monitoring achievement and progress is in its early stages. Monitoring by the new RE curriculum leader of planning, teaching and learning is becoming established and positive outcomes are evident. For example, a Year 4 class considered the first words a father might say to their new born child, learning from the Islamic 'Shahadah' and children's responses were deeply thoughtful. Evaluation of the provision of RE, and its impact on learners to ensure that strengths are built on and areas for development are addressed, is in the early stages. Confidence and enthusiasm in teaching RE has increased following shared training with local schools in the deanery. The early indications of impact on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are very positive. RE supports the school vision to develop children as individuals in order to pursue productive and fulfilling lives. Year 5 children considered the joint charity response of Christian Aid and Islamic Aid to a flood disaster, powerfully engaging with the disaster through a carefully structured drama based activity, which enabled them to empathize with those suffering. RE is playing a vital part in developing the breadth of the school's SMSC, giving children the ability to adapt and succeed in a diverse and evolving global society. Children are engaged in learning both about and from different religious beliefs and practices and learners' enjoyment of the subject has increased. One child enthused about learning about the Islamic call to prayer and pupils enjoyed using their voices outside to communicate over a long distance! Children enthusiastically discuss religious ideas and faith with increasing confidence.

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

Leaders strongly articulate the impact of their vision, built on explicit Christian values, to develop every child. The school communicates this vision in terms of academic ambition, expressed in a refusal to give up on any child. Pastoral support ensures the most vulnerable children are secure and equipped to learn. This is a growing strength of the school. Senior leaders have welcomed the increasing challenge of governors which has accelerated the pace of improvement. The school development plan includes RE as an area for enrichment. Although it is not currently seen as a core curriculum subject, staff and learners have become increasingly inspired by RE being more integrated into cross-curricular work. Evidence of progress and achievement in RE is in the very early stages of being monitored following the implementation of the new curriculum and a new subject leader. Preparing staff for both current and future leadership of church schools is planned strategically and has led to the

promotion of some staff within the school. Increasingly the senior leaders work closely as a tight-knit team, promoting the school's Christian values and working to one another's strengths. The school development plan ensures leadership training is provided at every level, including governance. New teachers to the school, including the newly qualified, speak highly of their induction and very good support, enabling policies and provision to be consistent. Staffing is stable due to the positive relationships. Relationships across the community, including parents, are particularly strong, built on a foundation of trust. Appreciative parental feedback, following the very sad death of a member of staff, recognized that the headteacher, vicar and staff 'could not have dealt with the situation any better.' There are very strong wider community links; older generations appreciate seeing children grow in respect as they attend the local Remembrance Day service. A page on the school website, 'Going Deeper' clearly communicates pride in its foundation, demonstrating a spiritual perspective within the context of an inclusive Anglican school. A rich array of local, national and global links positively influence learning, both in the curriculum and through charity events. For example, Spanish classes introduced children to the concept of 'penitence'. The focus on SMSC is particularly strong, with many opportunities being created and explored to enrich children's learning; from participating in the Brighton Festival children's parade to singing in at the O2. The relationship between the parish and school is very strong and mutually beneficial. Collective worship and RE meet statutory requirements.

SIAMS report March 2016 St Nicolas CE Primary, Portslade PO41 2LA