



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Martin's Voluntary Aided Primary School,

East Woodhay,
East End,
Newbury.
RG20 0AF

Diocese: Winchester

Local authority: Hampshire County Council

Dates of inspection: 7 July 2015

Date of last inspection: 9 July 2010

School's unique reference number: 116356

Headteacher: Mr Peter Shelton

Inspector's name and number: Rev Neil Birkett No 593

School context

St Martin's is a smaller than average Church of England Voluntary Aided in East Woodhay of 120 pupils. The school is situated on a restricted but pleasant rural site. Two attractive new classrooms were built during 2014/15, to cope with increased numbers. The school is oversubscribed with over 65% of pupils from outside of the official catchment area. Pupils are predominately of white British backgrounds. With the exception of Year R and Year 4 all pupils are currently taught in mixed aged groups. The church is used for worship for most of the major Christian celebrations; however, the distance from the school and the need for transport means that more frequent use is not always possible.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Martin's Voluntary Aided Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

- All stakeholders unreservedly support, believe in and contribute to the development of the Christian distinctiveness of the school.
- The very strong and positive ties between the church and the school contribute greatly to the school's distinctive ethos.
- School leaders have established highly effective systems for monitoring the impact of the Christian ethos on standards of academic progress.
- Collective Worship (CW) and prayer are central elements of the school's Christian life and Christian ethos.

Areas to improve

- Develop further the systems for the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of CW and Religious Education (RE).
- Develop a shared definition of spirituality and deeply embed this within the school

curriculum.

- To quickly embed the newly agreed RE syllabus.

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

Academic progress is excellent and this is enhanced by the school's Christian ethos of pastoral care, to enable each child to achieve to the best of their ability. Standards of attainment are regularly above average levels. In July 2014, the school achieved its highest ever results (Fourth in Hampshire) which was acknowledged by the diocese. There is a strong Christian ethos in the school, built and secured through the mission statement of 'Faith in Learning'. This central statement is clearly developed through the general curriculum, RE, displays and everyday life. In addition, CW is an essential element of this process especially through the telling of Bible stories. The pupils of St Martin's primary school are a credit to their headteacher, their parents and the school staff. This is evident in both their behaviour and in the manner in which they portray the essence of the school's Christian ethos in their everyday lives. One parent describes the children as 'Christian Ambassadors' in life. The pupils feel extremely safe, protected and supported by the headteacher and his staff. The school's Christian ethos is highly regarded and respected in the community it serves. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences impact strongly on applying Christian values and pupils' responses are celebrated. There are numerous positions of responsibility for pupils to show their empathy for their fellow pupils, including senior pupils helping Key Stage I children with organised games at lunchtime, as playground buddies. The pupils organise a number of collections for different charities, including Red Nose Day and the local Basic Bank (Harvest Service). One enterprising pupil decided to support Water Aid with a marathon playing of her musical instrument, which enabled her to develop other pupils' interest and to support her venture. The pupils are taught to have a deep respect for the wide diversity of society. Pupils are actively engaged in structured learning about other faiths and traditions. This enables them to explore, understand and respect Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith in a diverse society. This is enhanced through the established links between the deanery and the diocese with the country of Uganda. The school has strong relationships with a Ugandan school in Bukuya, through visitors, letters and photographs. The school has been able to celebrate their shared faith, identify similarities and differences in their culture.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

CW is definitely an essential part of the school's distinctive Christian ethos. It is the main vehicle for conveying the school's mission statement/values based upon 'Faith in Learning'. Parents said that the whole school CW sets the tone for the rest of the week, especially in terms of pupils' thinking and behaviour. The central Christian message is then developed in follow-up sessions within classroom worship. The Holy Trinity is developed as a theme, especially by the local incumbent. The overall plan of collective worship themes is based upon both 'Christian Values for Schools' and 'God's Storyteller'. The pupils expressed great enthusiasm and support for the stories from the latter scheme which enables them to have a broad understanding of many biblical stories. The pupils from Year R talked with great eagerness about stories from their class Bibles. The full school CW was taken by the headteacher and was based upon the theme of Faith and Behaviour in action. The occasion started with a moment of reflection, when a child from each year group lit a candle and said an individual prayer. The school is fortunate to have a strong planning team of the headteacher and the local incumbent. The scheme for the whole year includes a number of traditional services, e.g. Harvest, St Martin's Day, Remembrance Day, Christmas and Easter. An annual Eucharist service takes place in the school hall, which includes an extensive period of preparation carried out with the pupils, the headteacher and the incumbent. The pupils explained some of this work via display boards. This included an analysis of Christian values related to the Holy Communion, such as forgiveness and love. Evaluation is carried out,

primarily, by the headteacher with some involvement from the foundation governors. Prayer is a very essential element of the school's everyday life, especially the children's own prayer books/files in classrooms and around the school. Their prayers are used both in the main CW, classroom worship, church services and within some sessions of the school day, such as at lunchtime and at the end of the school day.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

Across the school, the basic standard for attainment and understanding of concepts within Religious Education is good. A number of lessons were observed across both Key Stage I and 2. Year R reflected upon their visit to their local church through photographs, followed by a class discussion reflecting about similarities between a church and a synagogue. Years 2/3 applied their skills to understanding and interpreting The Ten Commandments, whilst Years 4/5 studied Stewardship and Years 5/6 examined Pilgrimage. In all classes there was good evidence of dialogue and ideas, with a high level of interest, enquiry and reflection. Also, the pupils responded well to the teachers in a quiet and studious manner. RE does provide a platform for both the development and the understanding of Christianity within the school. However, some class exercise books revealed a mixed quality of standards, in terms of written work and assessment over the past year. The leadership and management of RE has seen a number of changes recently, especially the format of the syllabus. This syllabus is being embedded into the school curriculum.

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

The headteacher, the senior leadership team and the governors have a shared strategic vision, which is clearly based on the principles of what it means to be a Church school. The foundation governors are eager to carry out and understand their responsibilities. The development of Christian distinctiveness is a constant item on the governors' agenda. There is evidence to show that the foundation governors are enthusiastically involved with their roles in relation to both CW and RE. The governors understand fully the need for both academic progress and development, alongside a school that enables children to develop and nurture a Christian perspective of life. All stakeholders support fully the efforts of the school to promote the school's Christian ethos. Both the RE and CW arrangements fully cover the statutory requirements. The staff are encouraged to attend diocesan and county courses, which have included RE and spirituality. The church partnership with the school is excellent. It reflects a very high level of mutual understanding and support between the headteacher and the incumbent. They respect each others' endeavours to project the Christian ethos and the ambitions for the school. The headteacher attends the Parochial Church Council meetings and presents an annual report. The church and the school work in close harmony with each other and have a number of joint services, e g the annual Eucharist service held in the school, which gives an open invitation to all parishioners. In addition, the pupils plan and take part in a number of Parish Church Sunday services, such as the Christmas Carols and Mothering Sunday service.

SIAMS report [July 2015] [St Martin's Primary School (VA), East Woodhay, Newbury [RG20 0AF]