



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The Causeway
Steventon
Oxfordshire
OX13 6SQ

Previous SIAMS grade: Satisfactory

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: Oxfordshire

Date of inspection: 1 October 2015

Date of last inspection: September 2010

School's unique reference number: 123160

Headteacher: Judith Spiller

Inspector's name and number: Lizzie McWhirter 244

School context

St Michael's Primary School serves the village of Steventon and the surrounding area. Almost all of its 166 pupils are from White British families. Due to the rising roll, there is a building programme in place. The proportion of pupils who have special education needs or are eligible for free school meals is below average. Currently, the parish church of St Michael's is in an interregnum.

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

- The partnership between church and school is integral to the worshipping life of this school. This is valued by everyone, whether or not they belong to the local Christian community.
- This inclusive Christian family community, based on Christian values, ensures everyone feels accepted.
- Each child is valued and nurtured as an individual within a supportive Christian environment. This enables children to become confident learners who achieve well.

Areas to improve

- Governors to embed the systematic monitoring of religious education [RE] and collective worship so as to be better informed about these key aspects of Christian distinctiveness.
- Embed the programme of visits and visitors to ensure pupils meet people of other faiths to enhance their learning and spiritual and cultural development.
- Deepen pupils' knowledge of the saints, such as St Michael, to enhance their understanding of their own school's Anglican heritage.

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

The vision and values of this church primary school are at the heart of it all it does, underpinning all teaching and learning. The school's commitment to ensure that 'all will be welcomed and valued for who they are' is an important part of its accepting Christian ethos. Relationships and behaviour are good. This is because they are based on the school's chosen Christian values which include hope, trust, forgiveness and friendship within a spirit of respect. Both children and adults, including parents, can explain the importance of these values in their own words and celebrate them together. Pupils feel happy and safe and enjoy coming to school. Consequently, attendance is very good and there have been few exclusions. This is because a behaviour plan is in place, with extra support staff all employing forgiveness. This ensures every new day is a fresh start and every child begins each new day in the same place on the zone board. Parents praise this family-friendly Christian environment, where vulnerable children are encouraged to endure in the same way as everyone else. Good examples include support for children with additional medical needs to attend residential visits. Within this supportive culture, with its focus on the child as a valued individual, progress shows an improving picture over time, which is good. Data shows that results by the end of Key Stage 2 are above both local and national averages. Pupils comment, 'perseverance is carrying on, no matter if you find it really hard, never give up.' Good examples of pupils living out one of their chosen Christian values of service are the many fundraising activities pupils engage in which includes the children's response to the Nepalese earthquake. Pupils raised money by building their own Mount Everest from penny coins and climbing Everest in a sponsored 'stepathon'. In addition, an ex pupil showed compassion and followed Jesus' example and teaching when they acted as good Samaritans by stopping to come to the aid of a member of the church community and 'Open the Book' team who fell from her bicycle. The school grounds are valued by the children who welcome being involved in the design of 'a secret garden' outdoor reflection space. They also welcome more outdoor worship. Pupils enjoy their religious education [RE] and relate the Christian narrative well. They enjoy working collaboratively and know how to improve in their work with steps to success. They enjoy asking important questions, such as 'How do Hindus and Christians show their commitment to God?' RE, therefore, makes a good contribution to the school's Christian character and to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is good. However, the school has rightly identified the need for pupils to visit more places of worship. In addition, the school recognises that meeting people of faith, either at school or in a place of worship, helps deepen pupils' understanding of different faiths and cultures, enriching their spiritual and cultural development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The partnership between church and school is integral to the worshipping life of this school. Church services are well attended by parents, who value the links with the school, whether or not they belong to the local Christian community. Pupils enjoy going to their parish church for worship, saying, 'on the way we chat about God's creation and being thankful'. Pupils go on to say that it is important to know about Jesus. They say, 'if you believe in Jesus, you have to show it, pray and always be loyal and read the Bible'. One of the hallmarks of worship at St Michael's is the Thursday worship, led by the local 'Open The Book' team. This is because the headteacher, RE subject leader and a core church member have worked hard to establish this important pattern of weekly worship. It involves and engages pupils and adults, which includes members of St Michael's Church. Pupils say they enjoy the Bible stories and 'learn about doing what's right for God'. Pupils also say they learned about Jesus and God from the recently retired vicar who was a 'witness to God'. Church members also ran the recent prayer space in school. Pupils found this calming and valued 'writing down their thoughts about God in a bubble tube'. Prayer is an important feature of school life, with pupils saying they, 'like praying as you get to talk to God and say thank you for all he's given us'. They are encouraged to 'make the most of today, there's lots to be glad about'. Parents say their children come home reciting prayers which they model for younger siblings. Parents go on to say that 'collective worship at

St Michael's links to everyday life and what the Bible teaches us'. Adults comment on the children having 'immense pride in leading prayers in church'. Pupils experience worship at Dorchester Abbey and at Christchurch Cathedral, which nurtures their personal and spiritual growth as well as their understanding of Anglican worship. In addition Year 5 and 6 pupils attend The Easter Experience at Trinity Church in Abingdon. However, their knowledge of Ascension and also of St Michael, after whom their school and church is named, is less secure. The school acknowledges that these are areas for development. Children are growing in their understanding of a Trinitarian God. Children speak of God as Jesus' father and the creator of the world. They speak of how Jesus 'committed his spirit' at his betrayal and crucifixion. One pupil explained, 'when you are baptised, the Holy Spirit comes and washes away our sins'. Pupils are involved in planning and leading worship, with each class taking part in church services, which are well attended by parents. However, evaluation is an on-going area for development.

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

The headteacher, RE subject leader and link church member have worked hard together, ensuring the Christian character of this school maintains a high profile. This vision and dedication is strongly supported by governors and staff. Consequently, RE and worship meet statutory requirements and are well supported and resourced. There is a renewed impetus and commitment from everyone, ensuring the school's distinctive Christian character is central to pupil progress. Parents praise the staff who genuinely model Christian values. They speak highly of the headteacher knowing their individual children's characters, helping them to achieve in different ways. Good examples include pupil bookmarks with motivational quotes such as 'all learning begins with the decision to try' which link to the Christian value of endurance. Community links are strong, with parents valuing the links with the parish church. Good examples include Year 5 and 6 pupils taking part in the Remembrance Day service at Steventon War Memorial. Partnership links with local schools are good. This is especially true of the seven schools in the South Abingdon cluster and Abingdon partnership where continuing professional development and training needs are met and good practice shared. The school has addressed areas from the last inspection. Good examples include pupils' work being displayed in church, such as the reflections on forgiveness. In addition, the church treasure hunt enabled parents and their children to enjoy using their parish church together. The interregnum is seen positively in terms of enabling thinking about new ways of doing things. Governors look at pupil progress and have been involved in a diocesan pilot to measure this in the light of the school's distinctive Christian character. Currently the school's distinctive Christian character is not a standing item on the governing body agenda, but governors acknowledge this is helpful to raise the profile with all. Governors promote the wellbeing and development of all staff, which includes succession planning and support for leadership roles and responsibilities. Monitoring of RE has taken place. However, governors acknowledge there is a renewed impetus to carry out the monitoring of this key subject and collective worship more regularly and formally so they are better informed about these key aspects of Christian distinctiveness.

SIAMS report October 2015 St Michael's Primary School, Steventon, Oxfordshire OX13 6SQ