



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Swanbourne Voluntary Aided Church of England School

Winslow Road
Swanbourne
Milton Keynes
MK17 0SW

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: Buckinghamshire

Date of inspection: 28 June 2016

Date of last inspection: July 2011

School's unique reference number: 110451

Executive Headteacher: Carol-Anne McCollum

Inspector's name and number: Janet Northing 792

School context

Swanbourne is a smaller than average sized junior school. Most pupils are White British and the proportion of pupils from a minority ethnic background is below average. The number of children supported through pupil premium is well below the national average. Proportionally the number of pupils with disabilities or those with special educational needs is lower than the national average. The school is collaborating informally with two other schools and one pre-school, under one executive headteacher referred to as 'The Three Schools.'

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Swanbourne Church of England Voluntary Aided School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The Christian leadership of the headteacher promotes a vision that inspires all members of the school to achieve highly within the setting of a caring Christian community.
- The school's values are rooted in biblical teaching and have a profound impact on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) life of the school community.
- Prayer and reflection are regular features of the school day enabling learners to appreciate their value as part of their own spiritual journey.
- Links with St. Swithun's Church contribute significantly to the Christian character of the school.

Areas to improve

- Ensure governors' are more regularly involved in the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the impact of collective worship and religious education (RE) on the Christian character of the school.
- Put in place a programme of visits and visitors to increase children's developing knowledge and understanding of world religions.

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

Children are immersed in a school environment that visually inspires and promotes an appreciation of God's presence in the world. A beautifully decorated reflection room is accessible to children during the school day for prayer and spiritual reflection. In addition, each classroom has a space for reflection with a cross, Bible and prayers written by the children. Similarly, the outside environment nurtures spiritual awareness through a colourful weaving and spirals representing God's wonderful world. 'Seek peace and pursue it,' a text from Psalm 34, is the message on a mural depicting a dove. This reflects the Christian values of acceptance, hope, love, forgiveness and grace that are amongst those lying at the heart of the school. Pupils readily link the school's values to Bible stories. One child explaining that, 'The feeding of the five thousand teaches us to remember to be generous and not to keep what we have to ourselves.' The impact of the strong Christian ethos is evident in improving standards of academic achievement for all groups of pupils. Children enjoy their learning and want to come to school. Consequently attendance rates are slightly above the national average. The school has established a Young Carers Group to provide emotional and practical support to ensure that children in this group also enjoy school and achieve as well as their peers. Pupils understand the importance of behaving well and recognise the positive influence the Christian values have on their decision-making. Relationships are very positive across the school. Adults speak warmly of the supportive and caring Christian ethos, and of feeling valued both as professionals and people. The school's support for a range of national and global charities, curriculum topics focusing on Africa and South America, affirm children's awareness of diversity. In addition, links to the Gambia Schools Project and support for Christian Aid in Bangladesh mean that children have practical experience of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. RE effectively supports the Christian character of the school through teaching that develops both 'learning about' and 'learning from' Christianity.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

All members of the school community recognise the importance of worship as part of their own spiritual journey. Members of staff value worship as a time to reflect at the end of a busy day. Children appreciate worship as a time to feel closer to God. Daily acts of worship in school focus on learning about the values in their Christian context, the church's liturgical cycle and local, national or global events. Biblical teaching is used to deepen children's understanding of the school values. Worship follows a liturgy involving a responsorial Christian greeting, lighting of the candle, biblical teaching, a song, prayer and reflection. Worship ends with the candle being extinguished and a responsorial sending out. As a consequence children are aware that this is a special time in the school day. Members of the children's worship council have responsibility for reading from the Bible and leading a prayer for each act of worship. Pupil's experience of prayer is varied and involves writing and reading their own prayers, the Lord's Prayer and the Three Schools Prayer. A prayer and reflection club meets fortnightly at the start of the school day and at lunchtimes. The rich prayer life of the school means that children appreciate its value as part of their own spiritual journey. The collective worship leader and clergy plan worship jointly. This also involves the worship council on a half termly basis. Children experience a range of leaders for worship including members of staff, local clergy and themselves. Children on the worship council also monitor and evaluate worship and check suggestion boxes in each classroom. This feedback is used to inform the future direction of worship. Pupils express a good understanding of the Trinitarian nature of God. One child explaining that, 'God is the Father who protects us, Jesus is the Son who came to earth as a human, and the Holy Spirit gives us new life.' The regular celebration of major Christian festivals at St. Swithun's Church further adds to children's appreciation of Anglican tradition.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The Oxford Diocese Agreed Syllabus is taught weekly across all year groups. On occasions RE

is taught as a blocked unit of work which allows for enrichment experiences linked to another curriculum subject such as art. This gives a good balance of 'learning about' and 'learning from' religion as well as the correct balance between Christianity and other world faiths. Monitoring and evaluation includes formal lesson observations and informal drop-ins, learning walks, pupil interviews and tracking of pupil's progress and attainment by the subject leader. As a consequence the majority of pupils make good progress and are working at age related expectations, with a few working above. Differentiation is evident in planning and some aspects of the lesson, though this is not consistently reflected in children's written recording. Marking in RE follows the school's marking policy and learning strategies used in literacy are also deployed in RE. This is helping to improve the quality children's written recording and gives RE a high profile within the curriculum as a whole. Children enjoy RE and are excited by their learning experiences. Lesson objectives are designed to engage them in asking questions relevant to living in the modern world. For example, in a Year 6 class pupils considered the consequences of holding certain beliefs linked to environmental issues. Christianity is taught well and supports the Christian character of the school through explicitly linking children's learning to the school's values. Regular reflection time within lessons enhances pupil's SMSC development. The study of world religions means that pupils are appreciative of the practices and beliefs found within a range of faiths. However, their learning lacks regular experiences involving visitors from other religions and visits to other places of worship. The subject leader is passionate about RE, well informed about current developments and effective in his leadership. The RE governor is kept fully informed by the subject leader about the development of RE within the school. However, the governor's role does not include the joint monitoring and evaluation necessary to ensure highly effective practice.

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

The headteacher articulates a clear Christian vision for the school. This involves, 'Giving children a high quality education and helping them to know that they are loved by God.' Staff and governors, who share her vision that the school be a place where children experience the love of Jesus Christ, support her in this. This vision impacts positively on children's achievement in its fullest sense. Each child is given a chance to shine and each achievement however small is celebrated. Academic achievement is good and improving as a direct result of the school's Christian ethos and outstanding pastoral care. Meetings of the full governing body commence with prayer and the school values are implicit in the manner in which the meetings are conducted. School leaders ensure that governors are kept fully informed about the strengths of the school and areas for further development in RE and collective worship. The school has identified the need for governors to carry out more regular monitoring and evaluation for themselves. This will enable them to make their own judgements and offer appropriate levels of challenge to school leaders. The school's self-evaluation as a church school is accurate and supports the identification of strategies for on-going improvement. The foci for development from the last inspection have been well addressed. The development of staff is planned strategically and effectively prepares church school leaders of the future. Leadership of RE is given a high priority and resources support good teaching and learning in the subject. Arrangements for RE and collective worship meet the statutory requirements. Links with St. Swithun's Church are mutually beneficial. The vicar is actively involved in the life of the school as a foundation governor and worship leader. Members of the church run the weekly Galaxy Club after school for children who wish to learn more about the Christian faith in a fun and creative way. Positive relationships with parents are very evident resulting in their support for the school as a church school. This is seen in attendance at church services, Friday celebration worship and their support for fundraising events initiated by the school.

SIAMS report June 2016 Swanbourne CE VA School, Swanbourne, Milton Keynes MK17 0SW