



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church**

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

### St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Somerville Road

Bournemouth

Dorset BH2 5LH

**Previous SIAS grade: Outstanding**

**Current SIAMS grade: Good**

**Diocese: Winchester**

Local authority: Bournemouth

Dates of inspection: 7 March 2016

Date of last inspection: 16 February 2011

School's unique reference number: 113788

Headteacher: Robert Kennedy

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

#### School context

St Michael's is a larger than average size primary school with 591 children on roll. It has increased in size considerably since the previous inspection. The school is situated in an urban area. The number of children who speak English as an additional language, and those that join or leave the school at other than normal times, is above national averages. The number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average as is the number entitled to receive the pupil premium. Attendance is below the national average. The school is currently in the process of converting to academy status. Religious education and collective worship is currently being led by an assistant headteacher.

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

- Explicit Christian values are making an increasingly important contribution to the children's wellbeing and to success in their learning.
- A greater focus on Christian values is giving collective worship a higher profile in the life of the school.
- The good understanding of what it means to be a church school gives school's leaders and managers a firm basis on which to continue to improve its capacity.

#### Areas to improve

- Develop opportunities across the curriculum, but particularly in religious education (RE), for children to explore their spirituality by acquiring the language to express their views in greater depth.
- Enable children to understand how closer links between the Bible stories they hear in collective worship and the core values can impact on the work they do in the

classroom.

- Develop the skills and abilities of leaders and managers, at all levels across the school, to monitor the impact of the Christian ethos in supporting children to engage in their learning in greater depth.

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

St Michael's has made good progress since the previous inspection in developing a distinctive Christian ethos that has greater meaning for all members of the school community. In particular, the recent identification of three core values has given the school a much stronger framework on which to build an understanding of values that have lasting purpose to the children. The school has made a very successful start in doing this because it is building on the existing strong Christian foundation. Peace, courage and respect are recognised by children and adults as the three values that underpin the life of the school. They know that they have roots in Christian teaching and can explain them with reference to Bible stories. As children explore these values in greater depth, they are acquiring the language to develop their understanding of what they mean and how they are relevant to their own lives both in school and outside of it. As yet, they haven't acquired the breadth of understanding of the core values with the language to support their exploration in greater depth. For example, children explain that perseverance can help them find courage and be brave but can't yet explain where this courage comes from and how it helps in times of trouble. Children are very positive about the values and become enthused when challenged to search for deeper meanings to them. This was seen in the best parts of RE lessons when the children's own thoughts allowed learning to extend beyond the lesson outcome. It was at these times that children were most engaged and animated and produced the deeper comments. Relationships in the school are strong. Children say that they make good friends and that adults are there to help them and take care of them when they need support. Religious education makes an important contribution to the children's developing appreciation that everyone, regardless of background or belief should be respected for who they are. Consequently, the school environment is happy and relaxed. This contributes to the children's enjoyment of learning and their willingness to 'be the best they can be'.

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

The use of the three core values as the basis of worship planning is giving greater focus and clarity to the delivery of worship themes with messages that have more meaning to the children. This is because children understand that Bible stories, and the values that they embody, are relevant to their relationships both in school and beyond. As yet, children are less proficient at making the links between this and their learning in the classroom and their academic success. However, the impact of worship on the life of the school is improving and children speak very positively about it. They appreciate that worship is a time to speak to God through prayer and reflection and that, as a church school, this is an important aspect of how they express the Christian ethos. Children respond well in worship when asked questions and are attentive. They participate in prayers and singing and say that they like to be included in drama and other times when they can be actively involved. Children have a good understanding of prayer and how it can help them in their lives. Younger children explain that prayer can 'make the world stronger' because it brings 'peace and calm'. They say that 'God and Jesus together look after the world' and 'help keep us safe'. Older children spoke about the core values providing guidance for 'choosing the right path in life'. The overall experience of worship, through reflection of Bible messages underpinned by prayer, gives children a special time in the school day to stop and consider something different to their normal lives. It is this aspect, of a different time, that appeals to children and makes worship important to them. Children's thoughts from worship have been gathered and inform the approach to its delivery. Children are beginning to develop their appreciation that the nature of the Trinity is a mystery. They talk freely about God and Jesus but with less confidence about the Holy Spirit.

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

The assistant headteacher with responsibility for developing the school's Christian ethos has been successful in developing a more relevant approach to values that engage the whole school community. She has done this by involving them in the process to decide what those values are and by implementing them in a structured way that allows time for them to be understood. The school is making good progress towards achieving this goal particularly in making core values relevant to both wellbeing and learning. The assistant headteacher is fully supported by the headteacher and other senior staff, including governors. Together, they have a very good capacity to continue to develop an aspirational ethos that puts the welfare of children at its heart. Procedures for evaluating the impact of the Christian ethos are accurate and have correctly identified what needs to be done to continue to improve. Governors share in this clear understanding and, as the school is on the verge of converting to academy status, have the future of the children at the centre of any decisions they make. To this end, leaders and managers, including governors, are aware of the need to continually develop their understanding of the ethos so that they can fulfil their role to challenge the school. Parents say that the school's approach to promoting a distinctive Christian ethos is inclusive and is done in such a way as to allow their children to make up their own minds about matters of faith and belief. The school has beneficial links with the local church community through the involvement of the vicar in the life of the school and the support from other church members. Children and their parents see the church as an integral part of the school and value the times when major Christian festivals are celebrated there. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report March 2016 St Michael's CE VC Primary School Bournemouth BH2 5LH