



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Stoke Bruerne Church of England Primary School

Bridge Road
Stoke Bruerne
Towcester
NN12 7SD

Previous SIAMS grade: Satisfactory

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Peterborough

Local authority: Northamptonshire

Date of inspection: 15 March 2016

Date of last inspection: April 2011

School's unique reference number: 121992

Headteacher: Eliza Hollis

Inspector's name and number: Liz Youngman 465

School context

The school is part of the Forest Federation in which four small schools share the same executive headteacher. This is a very small school of 61 pupils, serving a diverse, rural community of villages. Numbers on roll have increased since the last inspection and a new class for the youngest pupils has been opened. Children are taught in three mixed age classes. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or a disability is above average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Stoke Bruerne Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- Distinctively Christian leadership by the executive headteacher is very effective in developing the Christian character of the school, resulting in improved provision since the last inspection.
- Very high quality partnerships between church and school result in distinctively Anglican collective worship that impacts positively on the spiritual development of learners.
- The school's Christian values and effective religious education (RE) means that learners show high levels of respect for diversity and difference.

Areas to improve

- Provide in-service training to improve the subject knowledge of teachers in RE.
- Review the school's spiritual, social, moral and cultural (SMSC) policy and practice to clarify an interpretation of spirituality that is shared by all staff. Then use this to widen opportunities for learners' spiritual development across the curriculum and throughout the school day.

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

Distinctive Christian values, such as forgiveness and peace, are highly evident in this school community and are clearly expressed by the school's leaders. Most members of the school recognise the distinctive characteristics of the school's values. The executive headteacher's Christian vision for the school and drive to improve outcomes, has led to improvements in pupils' academic achievement and the accelerated progress of some individual pupils. The supportive Christian ethos means attendance is above the national average and there have been no exclusions. The school's Christian character and its values, like love and respect, contribute to pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural (SMSC) development and their wellbeing. Positive relationships between all members of the school community are a strong feature of this church school. For example, they enjoy coming together with the wider community to celebrate at special times throughout the year. These include Harvest Festival when the children's gifts are distributed to older people in the village. The 'festival of angels' held in the parish church during Advent, as well as the canal side carol singing and other special services at Christmas are further examples. RE makes a strong contribution to the Christian character of the school and is treated as a core subject within the curriculum. It is jointly led ably and effectively for schools across the whole federation by two teachers working together as subject coordinator. Pupils understand the value of RE and enjoy learning about other faiths in addition to Christianity. For example in describing some new learning on Sikhism's 5 Ks (physical symbols), one child said that it is, 'very interesting to find out why everyday things are so important to other people'. This highlights the strong contribution of RE in developing children's respect for diverse communities. A lack of subject knowledge amongst some staff means there is insufficient attention to Christian concepts and the deeper meanings of Bible stories. Although the school has a clear definition of spirituality that is understood by most adults, some opportunities to engage in high quality experiences to develop learners' personal spirituality are missed.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is distinctively Christian and rooted in Anglican tradition and practice. It enriches the spiritual experience for the school community through focusing on Christian values and festivals. Prayer has a central place in school life with prayers by children in worship and before meals. Children show exemplary respect to each other at such times demonstrating how they value prayer and reflection in their lives. Detailed planning by the coordinator ensures continuity and Christian based themes. Pupils are also involved in planning, leading and evaluating worship. Their feedback, and that of other stakeholders, is used to make improvements. Close relationships between the school and St Mary the Virgin's church are demonstrated in the range of leaders who contribute to a rich worship experience. This includes the church's 'Open the Book' team. The rector has prioritised leading school worship, creating displays in church and school to reinforce learning about the seasons of the church year and liturgical colours. Children have exceptional knowledge and understanding of this, explaining the important features when setting up for worship, 'The cloth is purple because it's Lent' and 'we have the candle so we remember God is here'. Teaching about Jesus enables children to develop their personal spirituality and faith. For example in response to worship about Jesus' suffering, a child explained, 'Jesus gave up loads of stuff for us on the cross'. Members of the school community respond well and show very high levels of engagement with worship. Seeing it as an important part of the school day, they talk about what it means to them personally. For example children say, 'stories from the Bible help us to be like Jesus' and worship is 'calm and peaceful'. They have good knowledge about the Holy Trinity saying, 'God is in three parts, Father, Spirit and Son. It's like there are three parts of us', going on to describe their life at home, school and in out-of-school club. Biblical material presented is related well to the school's values and children's lives. For example they say acting out the story of the good stranger showing compassion, helps them think about putting themselves in another person's shoes.

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

The executive headteacher is passionate about leading this distinctively Christian school within a federation of small village schools. She clearly articulates a vision for the school that is concerned with 'developing children in God's image' using Christian values to be a 'nurturing family at the heart of the community'. This vision has led to improved standards of achievement for pupils. With the assistant headteacher and governors, the executive headteacher has evaluated the school's work and planned strategic improvements including planning more closely for pupils' individual needs and developing new forms of assessment. Work on addressing the areas to improve from the last inspection has led to much improved provision especially in collective worship. Partnerships with the local church are a priority and are highly effective. The rector of the parish church of St Mary the Virgin is instrumental in working closely with the school leadership to develop children's knowledge and understanding of distinctively Anglican tradition and practice. The children show a thorough knowledge of the liturgical year and the Lord's Prayer. The statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are fully met. Partnerships with parents are very strong. The school's Christian values impact positively on relationships between home and school as well as between adults in the school community. Inspection evidence verifies parents' views that the 'very strong leadership' of the executive headteacher who goes 'above and beyond' is key to this. The federation also benefits children with enriched experiences such as the recent joint choir participation in a 'Big Sing' event. Teachers are well prepared for the future leadership of church schools. For example the assistant headteacher is to take on a new appointment as executive headteacher of two church schools within the diocese next term. The school uses the support offered by the diocese very effectively. For example staff attend training events and a support consultant visits termly to advise senior leaders. The school is aware that although school policy is developed and shared across the federation, there are few references to the school's Christian character in key policies like those for behaviour and SMSC.