

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Kennet Valley Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Lockeridge,  
Marlborough,  
Wilts  
SN8 4EL

#### **Diocese: Salisbury**

Local authority: Wiltshire

Dates of inspection: January 28<sup>th</sup> 2013

Date of last inspection: November 26<sup>th</sup> 2008

School's unique reference number: 126446

Headteacher: Mrs Kim Spencer

Inspector's name and number: Mr Andrew Rickett 201

#### **School context**

Kennet Valley is a smaller than average rural primary school with 78 children arranged into three class groups. In 2011 the infant and junior parts of the school moved to its present single site. New buildings were then added to accommodate all the children. The large majority of children are from a white British heritage. Children come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. At the time of the inspection there were significant issues relating to staff illness.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Kennet Valley CE VA Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding**

Kennet Valley has made good progress since the previous inspection in developing its Christian distinctiveness which now has greater impact on the whole life of the school. This is especially evident in the school's approach to learning and in the promotion of children's well-being. The impact of the school's Christian vision extends beyond the school itself and makes a difference to the life of the local community.

#### **Established strengths**

- The extent to which the whole school community lives out the Christian ethos through the empathy shown in their relationships to each other.
- The impact of collective worship both within the school community and beyond.
- The commitment and passion of the headteacher together with other leaders and managers in developing the school's Christian character.

#### **Focus for development**

- Develop assessment of religious education so that it securely informs children's achievement and progress.
- Involve children to a greater extent in planning and leading acts of collective worship.

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

The school reviewed its vision when it moved to its single site to renew its commitment to its church foundation and create an explicit Christian ethos shared by the whole school community. This has been a very successful process both in developing a sense of community within the school but also using this to reach out to the local communities and establish closer and positive relationships with them. The school has been able to achieve this because of the emphasis that the Christian values place on understanding the views and needs of others and putting them before your own needs. This is evident

throughout the life of the school in the way that children are encouraged to have empathy for other people. When listening to members of the school community talk about the school's Christian vision, whether children or adults, they constantly refer back to the need to understand the needs of others and serve them. It is also reflected in the way that the school seeks ways to serve the needs of the local community. This emphasis on empathy is an aspect of the school's approach to learning through asking challenging questions which take children out of their 'comfort zone' and encourage them to explore their own thoughts and ideas, and those of others, freely. For example, older children talk about compassion as an understanding of the other person in order to empathise with them: to stand in their shoes. It is the strength and impact of this approach on the children's well-being and the approach to learning that makes the impact of the Christian character outstanding. This approach also gives children good quality opportunities to explore their personal spirituality. The development by children and a governor of a spiritual garden is an excellent example of the importance the school gives to meeting the spiritual needs of the children. Children talk confidently about matters of faith and belief and listen to the views of others with respect. They freely share their ideas on topics such as prayer. Some children have mature views and express themselves very articulately about the school's values. Some children, for example, were able to discuss whether a Christian might view compassion differently to someone who doesn't have a faith.

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

The impact of collective worship extends beyond the school itself as the messages that children learn from acts of worship informs the school's relationship with the local community and, through empathy with others, inspires their appreciation of the wider world and the need to help others less fortunate than themselves. These messages are explicitly related to Christian teaching with specific Bible passages used to explore values that both reflect the school's vision and have relevance in the lives of the children. Children understand that acts of worship are times when they learn about Jesus and say that it 'doesn't matter if you believe in Him or not' because what He says 'is right for everyone'. The use of the 'Values for Life' material provides a clear framework for the three year worship programme through which the values are explored. Regular evaluation of each value through interviews and reflections with children means that the school has a very clear understanding of how children perceive the values and the extent to which they find them useful in their everyday lives. Although children are very involved in evaluation of worship, they have more limited opportunities to plan and lead them on a regular basis. The bringing together of the school onto one site and the ability to have a designated space for worship means that collective worship is now a time for the whole school to come together and to listen to a more coherent message. Prayer and reflection form an important part of each act of worship and the use of simple liturgy to open the worship helps to distinguish this as a distinct and special time in the school day. The children visit the church regularly to celebrate major religious festivals which help them have an understanding the pattern of the church year.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

When children leave the school at the end of Year 6, achievement in religious education (RE) for most children is above the national average and this is in line with other core subjects in the school. Children make good progress in RE across the school from their starting points. The quality of teaching and learning observed during the inspection was consistently good and this is reflected in the school's own accurate monitoring of the subject. The quality of teaching and learning in RE has improved since the previous inspection as the school has moved towards a more creative delivery of the RE curriculum with more emphasis now being placed on involving children to use enquiry as a way of exploring the subject in greater depth. This has made a positive impact on children's attitudes towards RE and their willingness to engage in discussion about matters of faith and belief. This was evident in the lessons observed during the inspection when children were animated and excited about sharing their ideas and opinions on what makes Jesus a good leader. The whole school approach to the use of open ended questions was particularly successful in the RE lessons seen with teachers encouraging children to 'think outside of the box'. For example, in a lesson with older Key Stage 2 children, there was a good understanding that the qualities of compassion and kindness are more important in a leader than being popular or rich: although one pupil did point out that 'you can be rich in your heart'. The school currently uses a mixture of the old RE syllabus along with elements of the new and integrates this with a creative curriculum where they feel it is appropriate. This provides good coverage ensuring that there is an

emphasis on the teaching of Christianity with sufficient curriculum time to learn about other world faiths. Children say that they enjoy exploring the similarities and differences between religions. The school has begun to address the issue of assessment, which was raised at the last inspection, and has identified that this needs to be further developed. Present assessment procedures are satisfactory but the school is aware that, now staffing is more settled they need to look at establishing secure systems to moderate and level children's achievement and progress in RE.

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

Leadership and management is outstanding because the headteacher, together with the governing body, have ensured that robust procedures have been put in place to ensure that the development of the school's Christian vision remains a priority. The accurate identification of what needs to be done to further improve RE, collective worship and the impact of the Christian vision has been an important aspect of the school's development for a number of years. The leadership and management also have rigorous systems in place to monitor and evaluate the impact of the Christian distinctiveness. For example, regular evaluation of RE and worship ensures that the views of children are fed back to the governing body which leads to further improvement. The headteacher is committed to promoting the church distinctiveness and has an excellent understanding of how this can be used to help children in their academic development and in their well-being. She is fully supported by the governing body which has a thorough knowledge of self-evaluation as a church school through their active involvement in the life of the school. An excellent example of this is the commitment of one of the foundation governors working with children and other members of the community to create the spiritual garden. A particular success of the school has been the development of closer links with the local community and the establishment of a more positive relationship that has put the school more firmly at the heart of the village. The chair of governors, who is the vicar, fulfils her role very effectively as the link governor for RE and collective worship. She is closely involved in the life of the school and children regard the links with local churches as an important part of being a church school. The Advent Star Trail at the local church is a very good example of the close collaboration between the school and church communities. Parents spoken to during the inspection strongly agreed that the Star Trail was a 'powerful way of getting across the school's Christian values in a natural way'. The headteacher is the RE coordinator. She has an excellent understanding of the place of RE within the curriculum and its contribution to the whole school Christian ethos. She has accurately identified what needs to be done to take RE forward. Parents consider that the school has got a good balance between the promotion of explicit Christian values and being inclusive of all members of the school community. They say that their children talk about the values at home: sometimes 'reminding' their parents of them.