



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### Sunningwell CE Primary School

Dark Lane  
Sunningwell  
Abingdon  
OX13 6RE

**Previous SIAMS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Good**

**Diocese:** Oxford

Local authority: Oxfordshire

Dates of inspection: 23 March 2016

Date of last inspection: 12<sup>th</sup> January 2011

School's unique reference number: 123161

Headteacher: Mrs Anita Leech

Inspector's name and number: Robert Simpson 852

### School context

Sunningwell Church of England School is a small rural school with approximately 100 children on roll who are predominantly from a White British background. A significant number of pupils are from service families from a local base. As a result of building improvements at the school all children are now taught within the main school building. Since the time of the last inspection the Co-Head has become the Headteacher and a significant number of staff are relatively new to the school. The Church of St Leonard's is a short walk away from the school and provides a direct and accessible link with the Anglican tradition.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sunningwell School as a Church of England school are good

- Distinctive Christian values understood by all stakeholders underpin a caring community which supports a growing confidence and sense of self-worth in pupils.
- Behaviour and relationships generally within the school are very good and demonstrate Christian values that are being lived out on a daily basis.
- Religious education (RE) makes a positive contribution to the Christian character of the school by engaging pupils in thinking about ideas relevant to their lives and helping them understand and have respect for others within and beyond their own community.
- Effective partnerships between the school, parents, local church and wider community are mutually supportive and help to enrich the lives and opportunities of learners.

### Areas to improve

- Develop a strategy to evaluate the quality and impact of worship. Use the information this provides to inform future planning aimed at deepening pupils' understanding of worship, prayer and the Christian tradition.
- Embed the new RE scheme ensuring that monitoring and assessment in RE properly inform planning to raise standards in RE.

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

Distinctively Christian values are consistently articulated and modelled by staff to support an ethos which positively impacts on relationships, behaviour and outcomes for children. The school's Christian mission is based on James 2:18, 'I will show you my faith by my works.' The school interprets this mission in terms of *friendship, trust, forgiveness, perseverance in addition to thinking of others before yourself*. Understanding these significantly influences the personal development and well-being of all. The children had a significant input in to the choice of the school values including *thinking of others before yourself* as an approach that was relevant for them. As a consequence, there is evidence in most areas across the school of pupils making progress that is at or above the national average and by the time they leave in Year Six pupils have largely attained in line with national averages. Underperformance where identified has led to significant intervention to bring about improvement and this is having a positive impact on progress. The Christian character of the school promotes the inclusion of all pupils and additional funding is used effectively so that pupils with special educational need generally make good progress. Areas linked to the development of the Christian character of the school and RE identified at the time of the last inspection have been addressed. The school values of perseverance and trust underpin the commitment to teamwork shown by staff who model supportive and ambitious expectations for the pupils and in turn pupils respond very positively and with confidence. Older pupils take on responsibilities that are supportive of younger children by working well with them in mixed age classes, by looking after others during play and for the warm welcome given to children who are new to the school. One pupil said that "they felt really safe here" and that all pupils are "encouraged to have a go at something new without being put down by others." The sense of community is palpable and good relationships the norm. This is underpinned by the Christian mission of the school where pupils also identify Jesus as a role model for them. The pupils are positive about the school's Christian identity and can identify values that they live by in school. A range of trips, visitors to the school from other faiths and study in RE have enhanced knowledge, understanding and respect for other faith communities. The school has an approach to spirituality based on the belief that all are created in the image of God and that because they are shaped by their experiences it is important to expose children to opportunities that help them to develop spiritually. Times for reflection where pupils can contribute their thoughts and feelings are seen as important alongside periods of silence and stillness. Periods of reflection have been stimulated by visits to the local church and the use of music and art. This is having a positive impact for the children but it is not yet audited or formally monitored across the curriculum. Consequently the range of experiences provided for pupils to develop as reflective learners is not fully utilised. Learning activities engage pupils with Christian values that help to cultivate in them profound thinking as well as social awareness. The same is true with charitable fundraising undertaken by the children for Sports Relief, Cancer Research, Comic Relief, and Helen and Douglas House Hospice. RE positively supports the development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) by engaging pupils with ideas relevant to their lives and helping them understand and respect religious diversity where they find it. In an observed lesson pupils talked about the Jewish festival of Passover and how it linked to Easter and the Christian understanding of Jesus as the Lamb of God. There was clear evidence of learning, developing knowledge and an ability to empathise with others who were different from them. The focus on the values of friendship and perseverance have also helped the school achieve levels of attendance that are above the national average and to inspire pupils to learn and achieve.

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

Areas linked to the development of collective worship identified at the time of the last inspection have been addressed. Themes for collective worship are generally chosen by the collective worship coordinator, based on a structure provided by the Open the Book team and include the life of Christ and his ministry. This means that collective worship is planned to

include biblical reference and to develop pupils' understanding of Christianity. Collective worship also provides a good focus on the person of Jesus and his importance to Christians. All staff view collective worship as being really important and see it as their responsibility to bring key messages from collective worship back to the classrooms. Key messages are reinforced with the children to support the values of the school and to contribute to the pupils' SMSC development. A theme observed in collective worship related to why we need to pray and included reference to different types of prayer, the Lord's Prayer, forgiveness and to what Jesus had said about prayer, with pupils readily volunteering to take part. In preparation the room including candles and an altar had been set up by Year Six children. The participation and engagement of the children through singing was a particularly strong feature and clearly reflects their enjoyment and familiarity with this approach. Children confirmed that this was a typical experience of collective worship. Pupils are involved in leading and planning some aspects of collective worship and they enjoy contributing. Worship is regularly led by the headteacher. Another pertinent aspect observed during the inspection was the Easter Experience which was largely led by the local clergy and members of the congregation from St Leonard's church. This provided a high quality religious experience that also contributed to the children's knowledge and understanding and offered an opportunity for reflection and spiritual development. Several children identified the contribution to collective worship of Open the Book as their "favourite bit of the week." Evidence of approaches and support provided to assist children's understanding of the Trinity were clearly available in documentation and on display around the school. During the inspection several pupils independently and unprompted confirmed how their understanding of the Trinity was aided by what they had learned in school. Within each classroom there is reference to the school values although there is no obvious focal point for prayer or worship. Pupils develop an understanding of the liturgical year through celebration of major Christian festivals and they experience a range of different styles of worship and pray on a regular basis. Monitoring is currently informal and has led to some refinement of practice. However this is not rigorous as it does not involve staff, pupils and local clergy in the evaluation of the quality and importantly the impact that worship is having.

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

School Leaders consistently articulate and promote a vision rooted in Christian values. Living life based on Christian principles is at the heart of how the school understands relationships in the school family as one explained the importance of "leading a good life [and] influencing family lives for the better." The Christian nature of the school is well known within the wider community and parents confirmed this. Leaders are clear about the Christian foundation of Sunningwell and along with governors and pupils have reviewed the school mission and values to ensure a shared understanding. The four key values along with *thinking of others before yourself* capture the essence of the mission "I will show you my faith by my works" (James 2:18) and help to inform policy and practice. Leaders have worked effectively over time to identify appropriate school priorities through self-evaluation leading to intervention and the further development of good practice and the maintenance of standards. A good approach is now in place to the development and embedding of improvement in RE given the introduction of the new RE Syllabus which also reflects the importance of the subject to the school. The new subject coordinator is making a considerable contribution, has a pragmatic approach to the development of RE within the school and is successfully leading the subject. There is a good appreciation that monitoring and the development of assessment in the new RE scheme need to be rigorous to properly inform planning and to raise standards going forward. Some relevant training opportunities for governors, senior and middle leaders in the church school context and RE have taken place resulting in knowledge and skills development, high morale and career development opportunities. Leaders engage effectively with the local church, clergy, parents and the diocese enriching the Christian distinctiveness of Sunningwell Church of England School.