



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior School

Church Lane East
Aldershot
Hampshire GU11 3SS

Previous SIAS grade: Good

Current SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: Guildford

Local authority: Hampshire

Dates of inspection: 26 November 2015

Date of last inspection: 23 September 2010

School's unique reference number: 116333

Headteacher: Lynne Hignett

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

School context

St Michael's is a larger than average size junior school with 369 pupils on roll. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average as are the numbers who receive the pupil premium. Pupils are from a wide range of cultural heritages. They come from diverse socio economic backgrounds with some from areas of high deprivation. Attendance overall is in line with national averages.

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

- An open and inclusive school environment encourages pupils to speak with confidence and maturity about matters of faith and belief.
- Collective worship makes an important contribution to the pupils' developing understanding that Bible stories can have relevance to their own lives.
- The commitment of school leaders in bringing greater meaning and purpose to the Christian ethos for the whole school community.

Areas to improve

- Improve the use of challenging questioning across the whole curriculum, particularly through religious education, to support pupil's growing spiritual awareness.
- Improve pupil involvement in collective worship by creating opportunities for them to lead the direction in which worship themes are explored.
- Develop the skills of new governors to effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of all aspects of the school's Christian distinctiveness.

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

The school's particular Christian ethos is evident in a learning environment rooted in Christian values and inclusive of all members of the school community regardless of background. This encourages all pupils to explore what faith means to them and develop a personal spirituality and is achieved in a natural way as the exploration of values is integral to the learning. Pupils and teachers refer to explicit Christian values as opportunities arise to talk about them in lessons. This is particularly evident in religious education (RE) and lessons that promote personal and social education. Pupils confidently make links between values such as trust and hope and the Bible stories they have heard in collective worship and use them to enhance their understanding of what they learn in class. In this way, explicit Christian values make a positive contribution to pupil outcomes, which data indicates are broadly in line with national expectations. Sometimes opportunities to deepen pupil's understanding are missed in lessons or in the curriculum for subjects such as RE to take a lead. However, when given these opportunities, pupils respond with enthusiasm to challenging questions and have confidence to openly share their views about faith and belief, knowing that their opinions will be listened to with respect by others. These discussions make a valuable contribution to a growing social and moral awareness. The use of strategies such as 'Philosophy 4 Children' is being introduced throughout the school and as it becomes embedded, makes a considerable contribution to the pupils' spiritual development. The creation of reflection areas in classrooms and an outside spiritual garden enhance these opportunities for pupils to be still and think about life's big questions. Pupils have a very clear understanding that Britain is a diverse society in which everyone should be treated with respect. They appreciate that there are a range of faiths practised in Britain and that Christianity is one of a number of world faiths.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship has improved as planning and delivery has greater clarity through a stronger focus on explicit values linked to Bible stories. Pupils have a good appreciation of this and say that acts of worship are one of the most important ways that the school expresses its distinctive Christian ethos. For example, pupils explain that their 'community is about God' where they learn 'Bible stories about school values such as friendship'. They are clear that time for collective worship is a special part of the school day because it gives them 'space to be still and think'. Pupils respond well to these opportunities both as a whole school or when taking time to reflect together in the classroom. Links between whole school and class based worship have not yet been fully explored particularly with regard to how pupils can be involved in leading the direction in which worship themes are explored in greater depth. Their views have however been sought and used to improve the quality of worship. Progress has been made in structuring a consistent approach to acts of worship. This ensures that distinct elements, such as simple words of liturgy and the lighting of candles and prayers are regularly included. Pupils have a very good appreciation of the meaning and purpose of prayer both in the life of the school and in their own lives. They understand that prayer is not a 'wish list' and may not always be answered in the way they expect, yet recognise that prayer can bring hope and courage at times of need. The inclusive nature of the school's Christian ethos means that pupils of all backgrounds are comfortable to discuss concepts such as the nature of the Trinity. They express their views with humility and listen carefully to the views of others. The leader for collective worship, the RE manager, has ensured that the quality of worship has improved

since the last inspection and particularly over the last two years. Training provided in the elements of worship has been effective in giving teachers greater confidence in their planning and delivery of class worship. Pupils make a valuable contribution to the celebration of major Christian festivals in the local church. They have a good understanding of the meaning of festivals such as Easter and Christmas and say that the church is an integral part of the school and local clergy are part of the life of the school.

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

The school has made good progress since the last inspection in developing a Christian ethos that meets the raised expectations of the inspection criteria. The school has successfully addressed the areas for development from the previous report and strengthened the impact of the Christian ethos as leaders and managers strive to ensure that all pupils achieve well in their learning and personal development. The headteacher has a clear grasp of the actions needed to continue to develop the school as a church school and the time scale to achieve this. She is well supported by senior leaders including the RE manager and together have a good capacity to continue to develop the school's Christian ethos. The school makes particular efforts to ensure that children from whatever background or need are cared for and nurtured. They do this very successfully. The chair of governors is a member of the parish clergy and knows the school well. He is very committed to the school community and the needs of all children and their families. Several members of the governing body recently appointed have yet to acquire the knowledge and skills to contribute to the effective monitoring and evaluation of the school as a church school. The school gives a high priority to leadership of RE and collective worship and ensures that all staff receive regular up to date training. Senior leaders and particularly the headteacher, contribute to diocesan and national initiatives to develop aspects of church school leadership and distinctiveness. Parents say that the school has the balance right in promoting a distinct Christian ethos and doing so in a way that includes all members of the school community. They especially feel that their children are encouraged to ask questions about faith and belief and that they are happy to do so. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.