

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

<b>St Michael's C of E Aided Infant School</b>	
School Lane, Mickleham, Dorking, Surrey. RH5 6EW	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade:</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Guildford</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Surrey
Date/s of inspection	19 May 2017
Date of last inspection	26 March 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	125170
Headteacher	Jeremy Smith
Inspector's name and number	Dr Trevor Walker (NSIN908)

### School context

St Michael's Infant is a small, rural school situated in an area of outstanding natural beauty, between Leatherhead and Dorking. There are 68 pupils on roll who are taught in three classes. Pupils come from predominantly White British backgrounds with only two for whom English is an additional language. The number eligible for pupil premium funding is comparatively low. The proportion who receive special educational needs (SEN) support is just below the national average. The headteacher joined the school in September 2014.

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

- There is a clear and united vision that challenges and enables the school community to provide a place in which pupils openly explore faith and belief.
- The evident commitment from the school's leaders and governors to continue the on-going development and deepening of the distinctive Christian ethos.
- The strong partnership with the local church in developing pupils' spirituality and understanding of the Bible.

### Areas to improve

- Continue to increase the level of challenge for the more able pupils in religious education.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to understand Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith.

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

St Michael's is a church school for the community, one that through its own evaluation: 'has a warm, nurturing and inclusive ethos based firmly upon distinctive Christian values and the teaching of Jesus'. The Christian character is founded on a clear vision and the core values have a significant impact on the policy, life and direction of the school. A revision of the values took place nearly a year ago. Six were chosen in consultation with the whole school community and are becoming deeply embedded in the lives of the children through teaching, reflecting and celebration. Each value forms the focus for the period of a half term and currently is the value of perseverance. Here the children readily draw upon the Biblical connections and relate the value to the broader Christian narrative. In the previous half term, the value in focus was forgiveness and pupils recalled the example presented in the parable of the prodigal son. Because of this, distinctive Christian values are having a positive impact on pupils' academic achievements, personal development and the well-being. Relationships throughout are very positive and accordingly shaped by the Christian character of the school. There is great deal of respect and courteousness between the adults and children and between the children themselves. Pupils are taught kindness and consideration to each other and to the adults who help them. Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is excellent and facilitates productive and successful learning.

Pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion reaching the expected standard in reading and writing is above the national averages and the proportion exceeding (greater depth) is above the national averages in all these core subjects. In the Reception Year the proportion of pupils reaching the early learning goals is high when compared to others nationally. Pupils, overall, are making at least the expected progress and no groups are underperforming. Attendance is above the national average and there have been no recent exclusions. There are varied and regular opportunities for the development of pupils' spirituality and the curriculum provides opportunities for them to explore their ideas through deeper questioning, reflection and thought. Classrooms as places support reflection and wonderment. Learners and teachers are excited and challenged by religious education (RE). The subject makes an important contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development as well as to their religious understanding. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils were learning about what is special for Muslim children. They showed a good level of understanding and talked knowledgeably about what they had learnt in this and previous lessons. Cultural development increases their understanding and respect of diversity and difference. For example, during a themed curriculum day, pupils focused on children in Azerbaijan in order to develop their understanding of the rich culture as well as the challenges of children in that country. The school sponsors a child in India and this again helps them to focus on the life of a child whose experience is very different from theirs. They learn about the festivals that are celebrated in other religions and this helps them acquire empathetic understanding. More could be done however to help them to understand Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith.

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

Collective worship is given a high priority across the whole school community and provides an important moment in every day where both pupils and adults have the opportunity to develop their collective and personal spirituality. The planning of worship is based on the school's core distinctive values. Pairs of pupils recite the call to worship, 'God has given us this new day' and all other pupils respond, from memory, 'and we will help each other to enjoy it'. Children are deeply respectful and fully engaged during worship through singing, acting and reciting prayers. In the act of worship observed pupils were considering those who give unsolicited help to others and one child readily volunteered that the Good Samaritan had done just that. Celebration of personal achievements is carried out within the context of collective worship. Pupils are acknowledged for their special contributions by being awarded certificates that directly link their actions to the school's Christian values.

Although collective worship is distinctively Christian, other religions are respected. Planning shows that the themes are Biblically based and represent the needs of pupils of all faiths and none. Anglican traditions help shape the worship and there is an appropriate focus on developing an understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Prayer spaces are created and resourced in conjunction with the local church, usually focused on special events and festivals, such as Advent. Such spaces are used in the school grounds and consideration is being given to extending these opportunities within the school building. Pause days are a successful feature and provide opportunities for deeper thinking and reflection. The recent Easter pause day provided the opportunity to work in small groups to learn more about the different aspects of the Easter story. They made tee shirts emblazoned with messages for Jesus on his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, while others re-enacted the foot washing that took place at the last supper on Maundy Thursday. Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship is rigorous and systematic and this helps to ensure that there is a focus on continued improvement.

The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship.

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

The school follows the Guildford Diocesan Guidelines for RE and the subject is regarded as a core subject within the curriculum. Leadership of the subject is very strong and this is having a positive impact on teaching and standards. The recently appointed subject leader communicates, and models high expectations. As a result, the monitoring is rigorous and helps to drive the subject forward. The headteacher says that the standard of teaching is good, although lessons observed during the inspection were of a higher standard than this. Teachers show their enthusiasm for the subject and their teaching sustains a focus on developing religious thinking throughout the course of the lesson. In a lesson exploring Biblical images of God, pupils could successfully link new insights to their previous learning in such a way as demonstrated an understanding of God as the good shepherd and a loving parent. They drew upon good Biblical knowledge and showed that they understood the distinction between the old and new testaments. Teachers pose interesting and challenging questions, based on good subject expertise that have become features of the school's enquiry-based approach to the subject. For example, in Year 1, pupils were considering the question, 'how do we know that God is with us?' The pupils were asked, where is God when people are fighting and this elicited from them, some thoughtful and insightful comments.

Standards of achievement in RE are, overall, in line with that which could be expected from pupils of a similar age. There is clear evidence that progression and learning outcomes are continuing to improve through the increased and necessary focus on challenging the more able. There are appropriate links with the school's values and the assessment of learning has developed so that it can be even more effective in teaching pupils of different abilities.

The school meets the statutory requirements for RE.

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

The headteacher is committed to leading the school as a vibrant Christian community serving the locality. Strong leadership from headteacher, the governors and the leader of RE ensures that the school continues to grow as a distinctly Christian school. The teachers, teaching assistants and other support staff are supportive and hard working towards this common purpose. The vision is both nurturing and challenging and staff feel valued and respected in a school where morale is high and improvements are driven by values. An example of this is where the headteacher has had to approach difficult and complex issues requiring sensitive, caring yet robust resolution. This further demonstrates the school's pride in its Christian foundation and its determination to use, to the full, opportunities that these present. It creates, moreover, an enabling culture for good learning to take place. Governors have a clear and well-informed understanding of the school's Christian distinctiveness and this is informed and led by their systematic approach to monitoring. This includes conversations with pupils to gauge their experience and understanding and then incorporating improvements from their insightful observations and suggestions. In terms of their strategic role, the governors are successfully steering the school through a new phase of its development as the headteacher is leaving at the end of this term. The school's self-evaluation is comprehensive and accurate and underpins the school's improvement planning. The plan integrates Christian distinctiveness with all other aspects of school improvement, enabling a seamless view of development.

There are strong links with the local church. The vicar maintains a high profile and is much respected in the school and by parents. Parents are wholeheartedly supportive of the school and have a strong partnership with the teachers to underpin their children's learning and achievements. One spoke of how her child had brought a discussion of God into their home. Another spoke of how their child made reference to the school's values. They say these are threaded through the school's curriculum. They regard the school as a safe and secure place in which their children are thriving. Leaders and teachers have very productive links with the diocese and its consultants.

SIAMS report 19 May 2017. St Michael's CE Aided Infant School, Mickleham, RH5 6EW