



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

### South Marston Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Old Vicarage Lane  
South Marston  
Swindon  
SN3 4SH

#### Diocese: Bristol

Local authority: Swindon  
Dates of inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> June 2013  
Date of last inspection: 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2008  
School's unique reference number: 126358  
Headteacher: Mr Luke Maddison  
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Val Hoskins NS 620

#### School context

South Marston is a smaller than average primary school on the outskirts of Swindon. Children come from the village and surrounding areas and are taught in four mixed age class groups. The majority of children are from a white British heritage. The number of children with special needs is below the national average. The headteacher was appointed in January 2013.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of South Marston as a Church of England school are outstanding**

A strong emphasis on Christian values has created a very warm and welcoming environment. These values make an impact on how all members of the school community care for each other. The headteacher, governors and staff form a highly effective team and ensure that the Christian ethos continues to develop. There are well-developed links with the church and local community.

#### Established strengths

- An environment that nurtures the whole child.
- Christian values that are at the heart of the school and make an impact on the lives of the children.
- Excellent relationships throughout the whole school community.

#### Focus for development

- Ensure that all members of staff have a consistent understanding of spirituality.
- Develop the involvement of children in the planning and leading collective worship.
- Extend the role of governors in the effective monitoring of collective worship and religious education.

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

The Christian ethos places significant emphasis on the individuality of each child. This contributes to the outstanding quality of the care, guidance and support for all children. Christian values are at the heart of the school. They make an impact on the lives of the

children who have a clear understanding that the values are Christian. As one boy said, 'they come from Jesus'. Children explain how these values affect their lives through the need to be thankful as well as the need to say sorry. These values are beautifully displayed in a series of rainbows in the school entrance and are a constant reminder that they underpin life in school. This is reflected in the high quality of relationships throughout the school community and in the attitudes and behaviour of the children towards their learning and each other. The respect shown by children and adults for each other helps build these excellent relationships that are one of the strengths of the school. The friendship bench exemplifies how children understand the need to love and care for each other. For example, they describe how, if there is a problem and someone uses the bench, we 'can usually sort it out by ourselves'. Care for one another is demonstrated in the school's approach to learning which makes an impact on the children's progress and achievement. Opportunities to develop the children's spirituality are included as part of the children's learning. For example, a 'welly walk' with the youngest children encouraged them to reflect on the wonder of the natural world around them. Religious education (RE) supports and promotes the school's ethos and also contributes to the spiritual development of the children. There is a need to develop a more consistent understanding of spirituality across the school. High quality teaching in one lesson helped the children, through the use of props and drama, to show how we must care for God's creation. Another lesson demonstrated how children are encouraged to think and ask questions as they tried to decide who would be the most important person in a new community. There was much animated discussion before most of the groups concluded that everyone is important and needed. Children understood from this that we are all important to God. The very mature attitude of children was shown through the great care to include one child in the discussion who had not participated. This made every child feel valued and special. The behaviour of the children is excellent and is exemplified in the care and help for each other. Children learn about other faiths and cultures in RE through visitors to the school and understand that Christianity is one of a number of faiths represented in modern Britain. Children understand the importance of learning about other faiths. As one child said, 'you might have a friend who has a different religion and you would understand them'. Religious education has a high profile in the school and standards in this subject compare well against other core subjects.

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

Collective worship is central to the school community. The children like being together and say that it is an important aspect of being a church school. Collective worship promotes the school's ethos through the teaching of Christian values that mainly focus on Bible stories and Christian festivals. Care is taken to ensure that Bible stories are told in a way that helps all children understand their meaning. Children especially value the celebration service on a Friday which parents have welcomed the opportunity to attend. During the celebration service certificates are given out for achievement but also a kindness cup and awards for any child who has shown one of the Christian values during the week. This emphasises the school's aim to educate the whole child and further shows how the values are threaded throughout school life. The worship observed saw the hall become a calm and welcoming place through the use of candles and music. This helped children become still and display an attitude of respect. Children were actively involved with the telling of the story of the ten lepers, including having 'spots' put on them which fell off when they were healed. This story was used to illustrate how only one leper returned to Jesus to say 'thank you'. The link was made to the current value of thankfulness and how important it is to say thank you to God. The children were further included in the worship as they made suggestions as to which words could be sung to a hymn encouraging everyone to be thankful. This made the hymn more personal to them before a time of reflection and prayer. Prayer is an important part of the worship. One child said 'prayer is the way you speak to God'. Children understand that you can pray anywhere and at anytime. A prayer tree in the hall has leaves with prayers written on them by the children which make prayer more real. As one child 'He listens to your messages'. Another child described his enjoyment of worship because he learned about God and Jesus saying that 'God is always going to be there for me'. The children's worship council monitor and evaluate worship and describe how, following their suggestions, they now have much more variation in the music and the hymns they sing. This makes elements of worship more

meaningful and enjoyable for the children. The children would now like to be involved in planning the worship so that they can make them 'even better'. The good system of monitoring from the children needs to be extended to the governors to further develop and monitor the impact of collective worship. The school has strong links with the local church and children particularly enjoy the times when they attend the church to celebrate the major Christian festivals. Parents like being invited to these and the school feels that it is an opportunity for everyone to understand and share the special times together. Information about the value being shared with the children in collective worship is sent home on the weekly newsletter which enables parents to be involved with the values as well as extent links between home and school.

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

The leadership and management, backed by a strong team of teachers and support staff, have created an environment in which all children are valued and nurtured. The headteacher, although having been in post for a relatively short time, has built on the existing strong foundations and has enhanced the Christian ethos. The leadership and management team have a strategic overview of the school particularly in how to continue its development as a church school. The Christian ethos is now evident in all policies and documents. The governors need to more formally monitor collective worship and RE. The leadership and management have raised the profile of the school's Christian ethos through greater prominence of displays and symbols. The inclusion of a colourful cross and Bible in the hall are examples of how the school has moved forward in this aspect since the previous inspection. The values are displayed around the school and in the classrooms. Children understand what these are. One child described a value as 'something you have to follow'. There are reflective areas in each classroom which helps develop the children's thinking and gives them a sense of peace in a busy world. Church school self-evaluation now includes the views of all groups in the school community. Parents feel that the children get a lot of support and staff make themselves very available. The school has a cohesive partnership with the parish council and the local church. The vicar comes into school to take worship and these help develop the strong link with the local church. There is also a monthly Saturday Scene held in the church for the children and their parents as well as the family services. The school celebrates major festival in the local church and this further strengthens the children's sense of belonging. The school has good links with the diocese and makes good use of its training courses which enable further improvements to the school as a church school.

SIAMS report June 2013 South Marston Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School SN3 4SH