THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND EDUCATION OFFICE

The Methodist Church

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Vigor and St John Church of England VA Primary School	
Wells Road, Chilcompton, Radstock, Somerset BA3 4EX	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	**Outstanding**
Diocese	**Bath and Wells**
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Somerset
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	N/A
Date of inspection	28 June 2017
Date of last inspection	27 June 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 123861
Headteacher	David Allinson
Inspector's name and number	Alison Appleyard 877

School context

St Vigor and St John CofE VA Primary School serves the communities of Chilcompton and Stratton-on-the-Fosse. It is a smaller than average primary school with 218 children of mostly White British heritage, on roll. The school has well below the national average number of children for whom it receives additional pupil premium funding or children with identified special needs. The school has a relatively stable population and manages 'The Mill' nursery on the school site. It has recently started providing before and after school care. The headteacher has worked at the school for seventeen years and been headteacher for five.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Vigor and St John CE VA Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The powerful Christian vision that every individual is uniquely valuable and made in the image of God, is embedded across the school. It leads to the provision of an inspiring curriculum and pastoral support for the children and is equally supportive of all adults, staff and volunteers.
- The headteacher lives out this vision by leading an innovative and inspiring approach to teaching and learning which supports the development of every individual child's interests, abilities and skills.
- The highly developed sense of Christian community within the school creates a happy family environment. It encourages and is supported by partnerships both local and national.

Areas to improve

- Develop a system of assessment in religious education (RE) that enables pupils to demonstrate what they have learned through a wider variety of response styles and media.
- Ensure that the school monitoring system for Christian distinctiveness is robust and that governors' contribution and challenge is fully recorded to enable more logical challenge and support for the headteacher.

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

Christian values underpin the life and work of the school. Pupils know and understand these values and readily link them with Bible teaching and with famous religious figures both Christian and of other faiths. The school addresses children as individuals and is passionate about the holistic development of each child recognising that every child is created in the image of God. Before and after school provision is in place to support children and their families, and the school runs a forest school nurture group to support vulnerable individuals. The Christian character of the school supports high academic achievement and extremely rich personal development of children. This is being further encouraged by the school's current work towards becoming a Rights Respecting School which will complement its Christian aims by offering even more opportunities to fulfil them. Pupil voice is strong at this school. For example, the pupil steering committee has worked with school leaders on the Rights Respecting School bid and agreed five golden rules for the school which are the right to learn, be unique, be listened to, play and be safe in body and mind. In an innovative approach to the curriculum, topics are replaced by Quests such as 'What can we learn about sustainability in our local environment and the important part we play in it?' Alongside this, termly focus weeks are based upon themes such as 'imagination'. This curriculum approach is providing an extremely rich learning experience for pupils and encouraging depth in their thinking. The whole school community enjoys participating in focus weeks and the excitement of working together in a different way. The appearance of a tree in the entrance hall which was covered in questions about the existence of God for children to ponder and reflect upon and then add to, was much enjoyed and engaged with by parents. In all areas of the curriculum and in daily life, the drive to encourage pupils to be adventurous, ethical, connected and unique is closely linked with the Christian message that each is valuable in their own way. This in turn impacts positively upon pupil behaviour. Relationships across the school between all stakeholders are extremely positive, and this creates a safe learning environment where children feel comfortable to ask questions. A pupil said, 'We are all one big family. We're all friends.' A parent said that she was pleased that her son was being encouraged to make choices and ask questions in school about the nature of God. Pupils understand that they make their own choices in the way they behave and said that they often refer to Jesus' teachings. For example, they try to be like the good Samaritan and help other children when they are unhappy in the playground or in sad times at home. Pupils enjoy considering big questions around faith and philosophy and this contributes to their understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. One pupil reflected that her class had researched varying religious beliefs around life after death. She now has her own thoughts but respects that equally, everyone else has the right to hold their own opinions. Helping in this way to develop in pupils a respect for the value of others, RE contributes significantly to the Christian character of the school. It also supports the highly successful development of pupils socially, morally, spiritually and culturally. Pupils are able to link what they learn in collective worship and RE with their everyday lives.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Daily collective worship is recognised by all stakeholders as being an important and integral part of daily life. Through the themes used they develop a good understanding of the school's twelve Christian values. Having a variety of worship leaders, including visitors who are sometimes members of other faiths and children themselves, helps everyone to understand there are many styles of worship. The 'Open the Book' team sessions are particularly enjoyed by the children and worship often includes drama, singing and pupil involvement. The depth of pupils' thinking about topics such as 'what is a peacemaker?' is demonstrated by the writing and reading of their own prayers and sharing of their personal thoughts with the whole school. One child related this to school life and nominated a school dinner lady alongside Malala Yousafzai. Parents say that children often sing their religious songs at home to the point that parents learn the words. Worship includes elements of Anglican liturgy and pupils sign their greetings and responses. A period of reflection is included within collective worship and those who wish to do so join in with a prayer. To encourage stillness, hands were folded into peace doves and put into pupils' laps during prayer. What is learned in worship is often taken home. Pupils say that they often pray at home especially when they are upset. They use the school's yellow rooms to reflect and pray. Some of these have pebbles with values written on them which children hold when they feel the need to. Children are very familiar with the major festivals in the Christian calendar and celebrate these, led by the local vicar, at their two local churches as well as in school. Parents enjoy attending these church services with their children. Daily worship includes Bible stories and pupils are increasingly becoming familiar with the life and teachings of Jesus. They also have an understanding of the Holy Trinity. Children, staff and governors evaluate collective worship and this helps to support worship planning. Pupils particularly enjoy worship when it is led by their peers. 'It gets almost everyone involved and curious.' The recent Manchester bombings prevented pupils going on exchange to a Muslim school in London. This inspired a pupil-led worship which illustrated the depth of the children's empathy for other school children. 'They talked about the cancelled trip and made us all think about our values of love, peace and hope, and about how lucky we are.' A governor wrote that the children were amazing, relishing the opportunity to lead worship with no input from staff.

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The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The progress of learners in religious education (RE) is exceptionally good. Standards are at least in line with, and generally above, age-related expectations. Teaching in RE is consistently good or better. Pupils find the lessons inspiring and enjoy them very much. They develop a high level of enquiry and analytical skills, thanks to the school's questioning approach in the subject. However, the headteacher is developing the assessment system to provide a wider range of evidence of the subject's effectiveness, for example, through increased use of performing arts. Pupils are encouraged to pose 'big questions' such as 'how do I make everybody happy?' and suggest answers, for example, 'small things help, like a smile.' There is a candle in classrooms to light at quiet times. Pupils say that these times help them to think deeply when everyone is calm. The local vicar contributes enormously to RE in all year groups. For example, he identified that year 3 pupils were beginning to think more deeply and ask questions about death, and so he now works with them each year to produce their own booklet telling the Easter story. This is distributed to parents and to the congregation of the parish church. Bishop Peter said that their work was moving and inspiring. In response to children's questions, the vicar has addressed communion with year 4 and baptism with year 1 pupils when they visit the church. Children learn about the joining of the Christian family as they dress as the vicar and baptise the class teddy bear. Pupils are inspired by their RE lessons and are able to speak freely about religious ideas and about faith. They are proud of their RE books and eager to share what they do in lessons. One such example is their explanation of making prayer chains to show the strength of multiple prayers with the same aim, in this case asking God for world peace. The school follows the locally agreed syllabus, Awareness, Mystery and Values, and this enables the school to provide RE in line with the Church of England's Statement of Entitlement for RE. As a result pupils acquire a thorough understanding of Christianity. Work in RE impacts upon the curriculum through the development of transferable skills such as enquiry, confidence and reflection. Pupils in year 2 produced a welcome brochure for the church to give to a new couple who have moved into the village. They interviewed the vicar with the questions about how the church loves and looks after the people in its parish and then published an illustrated booklet that includes such phrases as, 'In the Bible God said love your neighbour. So we will love you and your family.' RE is inclusive and delivered in a way that is accessible to all pupils of any faith. A visit from a Benedictine monk resulted in the children writing their own rules for life. Following a monitoring visit, a governor commented that children share ideas and have a voice. 'Challenges within the lesson developed their understanding through questioning.'

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

The headteacher is driven by a passion to provide opportunities for all his pupils to develop as well-rounded, confident and questioning individuals. All leaders have a thorough understanding of the school's performance and Christian distinctiveness and their self-evaluation is accurate. All stakeholders are involved in forward planning and leaders have developed a clear, shared, Christian vision to support all members of the school family as individually created by God. As a result, staff are happy, feel valued and enjoy their work. 'We have a great sense of belonging. We are one happy family, including governors and parents.' Reflecting this belief that every individual is of unique worth, the headteacher has developed a curriculum model based on an innovative philosophy for teaching and learning. With his team, he has grown a vision for pupils to develop the key attributes of being adventurous, ethical, connected and unique. These are encouraged through all areas of the curriculum and pupils use them to challenge both themselves and others, for example, in knowledge or by having the courage to do something. All staff and pupils also belong to ranger groups and work together for the good of the school. The Friendship Rangers work on the right of the children to play (one of the school's golden rules) and their work includes role play and dramas. 'Through Friendship Rangers we enact showing love and respect and reflect that Christian value. We link what Jesus said to our lives.' Staff and governors attend professional development provided by the diocese to support the Christian development of the school. The headteacher attended the Understanding Christianity courses this year in Wells which is supporting the further development of the RE curriculum. Religious education is well-resourced and both collective worship and RE are led by the headteacher and meet statutory requirements. The school has exceptionally strong links with its local churches and community. There is a very close reciprocal working relationship with the local church, and the vicar (who is also the rural dean) is a regular visitor and close friend to adults and children alike. A range of parishioners support the school by leading worship, accompanying trips and hearing readers. Parish members have run a pop-up messy church at the last two school fetes and the success of this is leading to the development of messy church within the parish. Parents say that they feel included and are proud of their school. They look forward to attending events at the school. Pupils understand that they are part of a global community. They have built links with Bangabandhu, a mostly Muslim school in London, and their learning and socialising together has encouraged a deepening of mutual respect. One child said, "We all bond and work together to make the world a better place."

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