



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Combe Down Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Church Road
Combe Down
Bath

BA2 5JQ

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: Bath and Wells

Local authority: Bath and North East Somerset

Dates of inspection: 01 October 2015

Date of last inspection: 16 September 2010

School's unique reference number: 109230

Headteacher: Richard Bullard

Inspector's name and number: Jane Tibbs 226

School context

Combe Down Church of England Primary School is larger than average with 404 pupils, in the village of Combe Down, on the south side of Bath. The amount of space per pupil is the lowest in the Bath and North East Somerset local authority area. The buildings are a mix of a log cabin, modernised Victorian building and a modern hall and classroom block. The grounds have been sympathetically developed to include areas for quiet play and forest school. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Combe Down as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Explicit Christian values make a significant contribution to the personal development and learning of all pupils
- The commitment of stakeholders to the development of the impact of the Christian character ensures that the school is continually making progress as a church school
- Collective worship is integral to the development of pupil's spirituality and the life of the school

Areas to improve

- Develop the prayer and reflective areas to include outside areas, to remind pupils of the presence of God in the midst of busy lives
- Extend the use of challenging questions in religious education (RE) and other areas of the curriculum to enhance the pupils' understanding of difficult concepts.

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

It is evident from the moment you enter the buildings that this is a church school. A large mural depicting the church year, recently made by the church and school communities, dominates the entrance area, and this is being developed with the addition of pupils' work celebrating the seasons and festivals. The introduction of a core set of four values and the Gem Project based on Isaiah 54:11-13 has helped to make a distinct ethos based on Christian values more explicit. These values are firmly embedded in the life of the school and pupils have an excellent understanding of how they impact on their personal development and on their learning. For example, one child spoke clearly about how his work was "getting better because I look at the gem project display." Another commented, "I know that I have to persevere with my work to get it right." All members of the school community are aware of these values and talk about the impact they have on their lives. Pupils are able to connect the values to moral and social issues such as the difference between right and wrong. Older pupils are acquiring an understanding of how some values, such as forgiveness or trust, are not always easy to live out. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the school and say that they enjoy their learning. Relationships throughout the school are excellent and pupils say that adults in school care for them and look after their welfare. The school works hard to develop awareness of the range of cultures in Britain and around the world. The developing link with a school in north India helps to create respect for others and a strong moral sense that everyone is equal in the eyes of God. Parents are grateful for the excellent pastoral care shown to their children, particularly following a recent bereavement. Several parents commented on the "real family atmosphere" experienced in the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Acts of worship are times of joy when the school comes together to celebrate and worship God. Collective worship is outstanding because all pupils are engaged and regard acts of worship as an important aspect of being a church school. Having time to be still and think about important things is something that they value as part of their life in school. This is echoed by parents who say that the opportunities for reflection in collective worship give their children a spiritual experience that allows them to have 'free expression' in how they view matters of faith and belief. Acts of worship have explicit messages based on Biblical teaching, but remain inclusive for all members of the community. Pupils say that it "doesn't matter if you are a Christian or not" because everyone can learn from the Bible stories that they hear. Collective worship has been enhanced by the link with the core values. Pupils are able to articulate how the values have roots in the Bible and can link them to the daily life of the school. Prayer underpins school life through the inclusion of morning and afternoon prayers and the saying of grace at lunch time. The vicar meets regularly with the headteacher and a group of parents and members of the church community meet every Friday morning to pray for the school. Pupils have an excellent understanding of prayer and confidently express their views on the place that prayer can have in the life of those who have faith. Pupils also think that prayer is for all, "because God listens to everyone." Through collective worship they are developing a strong understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The development of very thorough planning has enabled teachers to explore worship themes in more depth at a level appropriate for the age of their pupils. Themes help pupils to learn about major events in the Anglican year and respond to events both around the world and more locally. Pupils participate in collective worship through planning, leading and evaluation and enjoy doing so. Pupils experience a variety of worship through the inclusion of a good variety of leaders including representatives of local church groups.

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

The headteacher, together with school leaders, has ensured that the school's Christian character has been further strengthened since the previous inspection. The identification of the core values which also link to collective worship themes, and the development of the Gem project, have made the links between Christian teaching and the school's purpose as a church school, more explicit. This is clearly articulated by the headteacher and staff, understood by governors and appreciated by parents. The headteacher is committed to the ongoing development of the school as a church school and there are systems in place which accurately identify future areas for development. Governors are involved in this process and are aware that, as the school continues to develop as a church school, so they need to continually update the procedures for monitoring and evaluating the impact of new initiatives. Religious Education (RE) is well led, well planned and well taught. Pupils make excellent progress and the introduction of 'thought bubbles' as a means of self-evaluation has helped to improve RE lessons. RE makes an important contribution to the school's Christian ethos through strong links with core Christian values. The Bible Explorer scheme has made a significant difference to the knowledge and understanding of the Bible that pupils have in Key Stage Two. Relationships with the church community are a particular strength. The well-established link between the parish church and school is an example of the two communities working well together. An illustration of this was 'Experience Easter' when interactive activities were planned by church members to help pupils to think about the Easter story. A governor commented, "This had an amazing impact on the whole school community." The school values its relationship with the diocese and the support they give to improve RE and collective worship. The School Council is democratically elected and is a respected voice, being involved in the selection of headteacher and deputy headteacher. Pupils choose which charities they wish to support and react with compassion to world situations. Parents see the school as a caring and inclusive community that puts their children at the heart of its work. They appreciate the moral and religious teaching provided. Arrangements for religious education and collective worship meet statutory requirements.

SIAMS report October 2015 Combe Down C of E VC Primary School, Combe Down. BA2 5JQ