



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Cuthbert's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior School

Keward Avenue
Wells
Somerset
BA5 1TS

Previous SIAS grade: Satisfactory

Current SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: Bath and Wells

Local authority: Somerset

Date of inspection: 22nd October 2015

Date of last inspection: 13th September 2012

School's unique reference number: 123777

Headteacher: Helen Mullinger

Inspector's name and number: Carolyn Banfield - 610

School context

St Cuthbert's has 212 pupils on roll with the vast majority being of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs and/or physical disabilities are above average and so too is the percentage for whom pupil funding is received. A new headteacher was appointed in April 2015 and new deputy in September 2015.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Cuthbert's Church of England school are good

- The strong vision of the headteacher is effectively supported by other key members of the team, engendering a level of commitment and determination to improve standards through the distinctive character of this church school.
- Through a renewed focus on Christian values, the developing Christian ethos has real purpose and meaning for the school community.
- The inclusive nature of the school and the focus given to pupil well-being ensures a culture of nurture and care.
- Worship is a distinctive part of the day and is used effectively to bring the community together.
- The creative curriculum which includes Religious Education (RE), Music, Art, together with the outdoor environment contribute to the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development allowing them to more readily express feelings and ideas.

Areas to improve

- Further embed the school's Christian values through explicit reference and teaching.
- Strengthen the school's distinctive Christian character by including a separate strand to the School Development Plan to be used as a tool that holds all to account and can measure levels of success and impact on the whole community.

- Use Collective worship and Religious Education (RE) to raise pupil aspirations and to develop their understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Extend and formalise monitoring and evaluation so that a more informed process of analysis identifies next steps in moving the school forward in the areas of RE, worship and spiritual development and shows how these contribute to the ethos and distinctive character of the school.

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

St Cuthbert's is a school on a journey of improvement and has made good progress in working to achieve its aims. Following a review of its values last summer, the Christian aspects have been more explicitly presented. This renewed focus has resulted in the six core values of friendship, courage, honesty, self-discipline, justice and peace, being placed at the centre of the school's life. This has brought a new approach to how the school interprets its Christian ethos. The large hall display and those in other parts of the school add clarity and serve to remind the community about expected behaviours and attitudes. Whilst the values still need to be embedded, the Christian vision is much more accessible to both children and adults and becoming more meaningful in their lives. As a result, pupils are more readily linking values with Biblical material and can see how these affect daily routines. Opportunities to proclaim and reinforce the distinctive Christian character of the school to the outside world (e.g. the school website) are not yet being fully exploited. The well-being of each individual is important and underpinned by a strong nurturing culture. Additional funding has been allocated wisely to effectively support all vulnerable groups. Excellent staff training, resources, and an innovative referral process is having a positive impact on breaking down barriers to learning. Pupils and parents articulate the significance this has for confidence, self-esteem, and indeed the overall sense of 'happiness and warmth' projected by the school. As one parent confirmed, "The school is able to find the best bit in everyone." A fully integrated creative curriculum is enhanced and enriched by the outdoor learning environment. Because of the emphasis given to this, and the on-going development of the reflective areas, a thread of spirituality is successfully being woven into the fabric of the school. The house system co-existing with the work, conduct, community and culture mark, successfully provide incentives to work towards. Consequently a sense of 'togetherness' endures and pupils are very keen to take on responsibilities such as prefects and membership of the School Council with all that this entails. A desire to look after each other is clearly in evidence and a range of charitable giving and links made with Fletcher House Care Home, for example, demonstrate how the community successfully extend this quality. As a result, pupils consider that they are "giving something back to society", and are beginning to relate current issues such as migration with the values being shared. Whilst a variation in progress and attainment can be noted, the school meets the needs of its pupils well. RE has a high profile and contributes well to the overall distinctive nature supporting aspects of Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development. A clear and shared definition of spirituality and a greater understanding of the role that RE, worship and SMSC has to play in developing the distinctive Christian character of St Cuthbert's is now required. Greater accountability and the gathering of evidence through planned monitoring and evaluation will help enormously to advance this community as a good church school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship has an important role in bringing the community together. It has a Christian focus and is viewed as a time when the school's core values are promoted and celebrated. The renewed commitment from leadership and a determination to fulfil the requirements of a church school has ensured that much has been achieved to address the issues raised at the last inspection. Aspirations have been raised and because all teaching staff now lead acts of worship, there is a shared vision which is articulated through a variety of formats and styles. The role of the worship coordinator has been key to the success of this and a programme of themes to incorporate the church calendar, Christian values and foci given through SEAL, is

now in place. The school is aware of the need for on-going support through training and the inclusion of worship schemes. Bible stories are regularly part of worship and explicitly linked to the Christian values forming the backdrop for worship. A large wooden replica of the St Cuthbert's cross forms part of the worship display, conveying the Christian message and nature of worship. However, bringing the cross or candle to the forefront of the proceedings would help to define this, aid focus and support the 'worshipful' ambience being created. It would also help to promote greater understanding of the Trinitarian theology of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The links with the church are strong and supported by the celebration of main festivals held at church. The incumbent of St Cuthbert's regularly leads worship and the recognition to develop pupil understanding of Anglican tradition and liturgy is gradually being embraced. Members of the church have consistently delivered 'Open the Book' for many years and this has proved to be an excellent means of sharing Biblical content. As a result, pupils have more easily forged links between the school values and the teachings of Jesus. The spiritual development has been strengthened through the writing of a school prayer, creatively supported by a member of the church. Pupils' positive attitude to worship reflects the quality of daily worship and its impact on their spiritual and moral development. In the worship observed, pupils were engaged and actively involved, including the time for prayer and reflection. Parents appreciate their invitation to join in the celebration assembly each Friday and see it as an uplifting experience, particularly through the 'joy' of hearing the pupils singing. Music and song are clearly valued strands of expressing praise and thankfulness.

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

A renewed commitment by the new leadership team towards establishing and sharing a cohesive approach to developing the Christian distinctiveness of the school, is to be commended. They are committed and enthusiastic about raising standards and are clear about the way in which this is to be explicitly rooted in Christian values. As a result, the headteacher has quickly established a clear support structure that has developed at all levels; church, foundation governance, subject leadership and class teachers. The embodiment of the church at school is noted through the activity of the church youth worker. Quality support through advice and training received from the Diocese is readily acknowledged. As a result, constructive improvements have been made and accelerated in more recent times. There is now greater clarity of vision which has enabled leaders to embark on their journey. They speak candidly about the routes taken thus far and are honest in their interpretations. This has led towards more accurate self-evaluation. Nevertheless, a need to separate the strands of RE, worship and SMSC would help immensely to inform direction and make the journey more manageable. Senior staff and governors make sure the Christian commitment, to nurture each child, is made possible through good systems of pastoral care and well-being. Parents are definite in their opinion that the school listens to them and therefore feel that their contributions are valued. Foundation governors are supportive of the school by contributing to the school's development as a church school through their membership of the newly formed Ethos group, participation in learning walks and the reviewing of action plans. The leader of RE, although new to her role, has brought drive and integrity to the subject. She has set clear expectations in line with the locally agreed syllabus. Recent appointments to the leadership team have demonstrated the conviction of the governing body to recruit leaders who have the passion and skills to develop the spiritual and Christian ethos of the school. For this reason, strides have been made in addressing previously identified issues and the capacity to take on further initiatives is assured. This is why leadership is judged to be good and is now ready to implement more formal approaches to monitoring and evaluation. The assessment of impact on individuals as well as the whole community will help to embed good practice in such a way that the Christian values become an intrinsic part of everyday life.