



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

### St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Linden Close  
Winterbourne  
Bristol  
BS36 1LG

#### Diocese of Bristol

Local authority:	South Gloucestershire
Date of inspection:	18 October 2013
Date of last inspection:	16 July 2008
School's unique reference number:	109225
Headteacher:	Mr Adrian Vye
Inspector's name and number:	Mrs Alison Lock –NS605

#### School context

St Michael's CE Primary School is situated in the village of Winterbourne on the edge of the city of Bristol. It has 206 pupils on roll, accommodated in modern buildings surrounded by well-maintained grounds. Children are mainly white British with the number from ethnic minorities below national average. The number of pupils with recognised special educational needs is also below the national average but there are a higher proportion of pupils with statements of special need.

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

- The headteacher leads a school where the care and nurturing of each individual child is at its centre and in which a united staff team has developed good quality educational experiences for all pupils.
- The strong Christian ethos which is valued by all members of the school community.
- The ethos and values of the school are reflected in the quality of the behaviour and relationships of the pupils.
- The religious education (RE) subject leader is highly effective in leading RE throughout the school.

#### Areas to improve

- Prioritise the review of the school's vision statement to include the whole school community, identifying its distinctive Christian values.
- Develop the skills of foundation governors so that they systematically monitor and evaluate the Christian distinctiveness of the school as an integral part of whole school development planning.

- Build on the school's current practice of junior leadership to develop pupils' involvement in planning and leading collective worship so that they take a greater responsibility for its delivery and impact.

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

All members of St Michael's community acknowledge that the school's values are distinctively Christian and recognise that they make a difference to their daily lives. However, they cannot identify which specific values support the development of the pupils' learning and behaviour. As a review of the school's vision statement is due for this academic year, the school plans to include the identification of their core values in the process of consultation with different parts of the community. The school's ethos and values encourage pupils to enjoy their school and respect their learning which makes a positive impact on educational standards which are above the national average. Children say that everyone is treated as a unique being and their individual gifts are nurtured. The mentoring of younger children by older pupils is much valued by all members of the community. Parents remark that it often impacts on secondary school life too as older pupils still recognise younger ones. Attendance is good and the school uses its Christian principles in its approach to dealing with attendance. For example the school recognises that family celebrations are an important feature of the children's lives. Experiences are identified within the curriculum for children to explore their spirituality and these provide children with good opportunities to express their thoughts. Children speak with confidence and clarity when sharing their ideas. The Year 6 residential visit to the Beacon Centre at Lee Abbey further supports this development by giving children opportunities to reflect on Christian teaching. Children recognise the important role of religious education in the school and say how much they enjoy these lessons because they are encouraged to think about important questions. Parents say that this questioning often continues in the home and, from the children's first year in school, ask for answers that challenge parents themselves. Children understand that Christianity is a major world faith and have a good knowledge and understanding of other faith communities. Religious education lessons contribute well to children's spiritual development. This was demonstrated in one child's work who said that 'if God was a flower He would be a bluebell. A bluebell will not hurt like a thorn or a rose. It is calm and helpful. It is beautiful like God's presence. Full of grace. It moves in the wind but does not break its roots'. Two RE lessons were observed demonstrating good levels of knowledge and challenge. In one class children discussed how different religions mark significant events in their lives, such as birth. This was related to how their families mark important occasions in life's journey. The children, through discussion, showed a good understanding of the values that govern their own lives demonstrating a positive contribution to their spiritual and social development. School Bibles are given to all pupils in Year 2 for use both in school and at home. For some children this is the first book that they own themselves. Links between the school and the church are encouraged and have an impact on different aspects of the community. These include church members who help run school events, a parent tasked with outreach for the church who is actively developing joint activities and plans for a church led toddler group in the school.

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

All members of the school community spoken to during the inspection mentioned the importance of collective worship as a daily time for reflection and worship. Children felt that it had most impact when they were involved in its delivery. They are very willing to participate. Collective worship is co-ordinated by the headteacher and all members of staff lead at different times of the term. Planning has been adapted as a result of feedback from pupils and staff. Christian values are used as part of the planning process but, following the feedback, there is now a stronger emphasis on Biblical stories and inspirational people from both history and modern times so that children are able to relate the message to their own lives. The structure of each act of collective worship includes welcome, worship, prayer and a sending out with the

words that 'as our service ends so our service in the world begins'. Children take the concept of service to others seriously. This is evident in the way that older pupils mentor younger ones and in children often initiating activities for local and national charities. Fundraising for the Pappa Fund, a charity supporting a school in Southern India was initiated by a member of the community and led by the church but now children wish to be the leaders for it in the future. A worship table is used as a focal point for worship to encourage pupils to think about the particular message or theme. This often displays a representation of St Michael which has special meaning for the school. The school celebrates major Christian festivals and uses the church on these occasions. Parents value these celebrations in the church and they are well attended because they are seen as an important feature of the school's ethos. Pupils have a developing knowledge and understanding of the Trinity. On one occasion the headteacher used the making of a chocolate milkshake as an illustration of the Trinity because there are three parts to make the whole. This is well remembered by the pupils because it helped to develop their understanding. Prayer is an important part of the school day. Formal prayers are used at different times, including the Lord's Prayer and a school prayer. Children are also encouraged to construct their own prayers which are used regularly in worship. This is linked sometimes with other areas of the curriculum. For example, one child led the school in a prayer that had been written as a Haiku. Children do not as yet plan and lead collective worship but to do so would enhance the children's role as Junior Leaders and also deepen their understanding of worship. An ecumenical team of adults lead worship regularly throughout the year as well as a member of the retired clergy who is also part of St Michael's Church. The children value these visits as they are often interactive and involve them in drama. They said they bring the Bible alive! A member of clergy reported that, following one act of collective worship when she was asking pupils for feedback, a pupil challenged her by asking how she knew that there is one true God. Foundation governors have monitored the impact of collective worship in the school but this has not systematically been used as part of future whole school development.

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

The headteacher, together with the governing body have a clear vision, "Learn-Care-Enjoy" for the development of this school. They articulate and promote this vision to all the school community and it is shared by all stakeholders. They believe that, through its Christian values, the school should serve its community. Governors are actively involved in the self-evaluation process which promotes these high standards. The subject leader for religious education is well supported by the school leadership and is outstanding in her understanding and leadership of the subject. In consultation with others, she has created a curriculum based on the locally agreed RE syllabus that encourages deep questioning and contributes well to the spiritual development of the children. Work is carefully levelled against clear learning objectives and standards are in line, and sometimes above, other core subjects. Foundation governors are very active within the school resulting in a good knowledge of most aspects of school life. They care well for staff and pupils and support the residential visits which deepen their knowledge and understanding of the school. Foundation governors have evaluated the standards of reading in the school at the request of the staff which gave them a deeper insight into the curriculum and a closer relationship with the children. Between them, they have a very good range of experience that is being used for the benefit of the school. They attend regular training but, they need to further develop their own skills and understanding of the Christian distinctiveness of the school so that they can both support and challenge its effectiveness within the school. The church is encouraged to lead events for the pupils including "The Star Trail" and the forthcoming "Earth Connects" which centres on caring for God's planet and links with the school's Eco award. At a recent church holiday club, that drew from a much wider community, over 50% of the children were from St Michael's school. The school has also initiated pupils taking roles in leading the services within the church.