



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Witley Church of England Voluntary Controlled Infant School

Church Lane
Witley
Godalming
Surrey GU8 5PN

Previous SIAS grade: Outstanding

Current SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Guildford

Local authority: Surrey

Dates of inspection: 12 March 2015

Date of last inspection: 9 February 2010

School's unique reference number: 125159

Headteacher: Jo Fraser

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

School context

Witley is a smaller than average size village infant school with 113 children on roll. The number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average as is the number entitled to receive the pupil premium. The majority are from a white British heritage with varied socio-economic backgrounds. Attainment on entry is broadly in line with national expectations. Attendance is above national averages.

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

- Christian values are at the heart of the school's ethos and underpin the high quality of relationships throughout the school community.
- Acts of worship are special times in the school day that make a significant impact on the children's wellbeing.
- The commitment of the leadership and management team to the development of the whole child ensures that the Christian ethos has meaning and purpose for all members of the school community.

Areas to improve

- Extend opportunities for children to develop their responses to times for reflection so that they engage in discussions that explore their own spirituality in greater depth.
- Increase opportunities for children to plan and lead collective worship so that they are more involved in how worship messages are explored in greater depth.
- Ensure that, as the school's Christian character continues to develop, so leaders and managers, including governors, develop the skills to monitor and evaluate new initiatives effectively.

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

An outstanding aspect of the school's Christian ethos is the extent to which children and adults in the school make links between the school's values and Christian teaching. Excellent opportunities to explore these links in lessons and in collective worship, encourage children to develop their understanding of the meaning of values such as kindness and respect and how they become part of the way they can lead their lives. In turn, this is expressed in practical ways such as charitable work and links to classroom teaching and learning.

The Christian ethos at Witley works in a gentle way but one which makes a significant impact on the learning and well-being of children. On occasions this produces some remarkable insights from children. For example, children responding in a religious education (RE) lesson to a work of art showed how previous knowledge helped them to interpret the meaning of a picture at a very mature level. Opportunities to link the Christian ethos with the children's learning are a natural aspect of the curriculum. Some of the youngest children, for example, quite naturally use the story of Noah's Ark to explore scientific properties of floating or counting in twos. Through these natural links, RE makes an important contribution to the children's learning and personal development. These opportunities for children to explore make a significant contribution to their overall academic attainment which is at least in line with national expectations at the end of Year 2.

On occasions children could be given more time to be still and reflect on their learning in greater depth and be further challenged through discussion and questioning. Relationships throughout the school are based on the values expressed in the school's rules. Politeness and friendship are virtues which are at the heart of the way that people treat each other regardless of who they are. There is a mutual respect and kindness towards others and young children are quickly learning how to share and listen to each other.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Acts of collective worship are times when children learn about stories from the Bible which teaches them that Jesus shows how they can interact with other people. Collective worship is outstanding because children act out these teachings in the daily life of the school and explain how important they are in their friendships. For example, children talk about love and forgiveness being essential aspects of friendship and know that Jesus died because He loves us and always forgives. Acts of worship provide excellent opportunities for children to be still and reflect on the messages they hear and the meaning they have for them. Children value these times because they help them think about the way to treat others and themselves. One child explained how worship helps them when they are angry because 'it helps you to calm down'.

The collective worship programme is thoroughly planned and uses a broad range of resources and themes that give children a very good variety of experiences that contribute to their personal and social development, as well as encouraging them to distinguish between right and wrong. Children respond with enthusiasm when given the opportunity to answer questions in worship or to participate in drama. There are more limited opportunities for children to be involved in regular planning and leading of worship particularly with regard to how aspects that interest them from worship themes can be explored in greater depth.

Collective worship is distinctively Christian in character with elements of prayer, teaching, song and reflection that focus on the Bible. Children are able to explain the meaning of Bible stories and are confident to share their own interpretation of them. The lighting of a candle to represent Jesus as 'the light of the world' and other symbols are clearly understood by children to reflect their school's connection to the church. A particularly impressive element of the children's understanding is their confidence to explore links between Jesus as 'light' and the Holy Spirit. One child explained that 'Jesus had to die to give light inside us'. Another child replied with 'that's why He will always be alive. He's in us'. Children also have a very mature understanding of prayer and its purpose. They respond with an appropriate reverence to prayer and value the opportunities to pray around the school. There are some excellent examples of where governors have monitored and evaluated the impact of collective worship over time.

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

The headteacher is fully supported by the senior leaders and staff in promoting a Christian ethos that has meaning and purpose for all members of the school community. Together with governors and parents, school leaders have created a vision that underpins the school's approach to the welfare and learning of the children. This vision is clearly articulated by adults and children across the school who have an excellent understanding that an explicit Christian ethos based on Bible teaching is at the root of all that the school does. This ensures that decisions made have the welfare of children at their heart.

The collaborative approach to leadership means that self-evaluation as a church school is accurate and based on high quality reflection from the headteacher and her team. Therefore, the school very effectively identifies areas for future improvement as a church school, which ensures that continual development is challenging. The collaborative approach also means that there are good opportunities for staff to develop their leadership roles in a church school. Since the last inspection, governors have developed their role in supporting and monitoring the Christian ethos and have done so in some innovative and outstanding ways. The three year survey that gathered evidence of children's growing understanding of prayer, carried out by a long serving foundation governor, is an excellent example of the high quality of monitoring that informs leaders.

As new governors join the governing body, with a new vicar and RE coordinator soon to be in place, leaders and managers are aware of the need to ensure that as the Christian ethos develops, governors' ability to challenge the Christian distinctiveness of the school also needs to develop. Close links with the parish church and clergy have a special importance for all members of the school community, whether they have a personal faith or not. Children regard the church as an integral part of the life of the school as do their parents. During the current vacancy at the church, a retired vicar has ensured that the links have not only been maintained but have grown. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

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