



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St. Matthew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School.

Drift Road
Blackmoor
Liss
Hampshire
GU33 6BN

Diocese: Portsmouth

Local authority: Hampshire

Dates of inspection: 11th November 2015

Date of last inspection: 10th November 2010

School's unique reference number: 116352

Headteacher: Sue Bowen

Inspector's name and number: Lorraine Pugh 819

School context

St Matthew's is a smaller than average primary school with 196 pupils currently on roll. The majority of its pupils are of white British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is also below average. Since the last inspection and within the past three years, the school has had a significant number of new staff including a new Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. Matthew's Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

- The school's leadership is highly effective in promoting a Christian community that enables all learners to have a secure understanding of Christian values and how these can influence our lives.
- There are clear links between the school's Christian values, collective worship and religious education, each having Jesus and the teachings of the Bible as their focus.
- Pupils are encouraged and supported extremely well in striving to be the best they can and their achievements are celebrated within the whole school community.

Areas to improve

- Further development of the school's monitoring systems, which will allow governors to extend their role in evaluating the effectiveness of the school as a Church school
- Extend the teaching of other religions through increased provision for first hand encounters with other faith visitors and visits.

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

The Christian character of St. Matthew's Primary school contributes very strongly to the

academic achievement and personal development of all its learners. Standards of academic progress and attainment are high when compared with national figures. St. Matthew's has extremely caring pupils who support each other in all aspects of school life. The school accurately describes itself as a happy, stable and secure place where children grow and flourish. Pupils are very successfully supported in developing self-esteem, confidence and ambition. Pupils with special educational needs make especially good progress due to the efforts made by the school in addressing their individual needs. Parents speak enthusiastically about the school's important place within the community and a recent parent questionnaire was overwhelmingly positive about the school's Christian work and its inclusive ethos where everybody is valued. Pupils, staff, governors and parents articulate clearly the Christian character of the school and the significant impact of the distinctively Christian values. The values were selected following a detailed consultation with all stakeholders and are presented in a way that promotes understanding. This is clearly evident when pupils describe how values guide their behaviour. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning of other faiths and they are very aware that Britain has many faiths. Opportunities for first hand encounters of other faiths are limited at the moment and the school is aware of this. Behaviour is excellent and the consistently applied Behaviour Policy has been guided by the Christian values of the school. The concept of forgiveness and reconciliation is central to behaviour management and there is a focus on developing rather than punishment. This results in a culture of praise and reward throughout the school. The contribution of high quality experiences in religious education (RE) and collective worship supports pupils with their own spiritual development. Christian festivals are celebrated through the year and pupils, as a result of their active participation, are able to explain their meaning. Older pupils' Christian development is supported through high quality experiences such as The Youth Alpha Project led by the Vicar. For some pupils this has strongly influenced their decision to become confirmed into the Anglican Church. Pupils are able to describe how they use the school's reflective spaces and how this supports them emotionally and spiritually. The Remembrance Service, held on the day of inspection, included poppies being scattered throughout the school. Pupils described how this made them think of sadness, beauty and an appreciation of life. By the end of the day many messages and prayers had been written on the poppies. Some children chose to take them home and some were placed on the prayer tree. Mutual respect and positive relationships are clearly evident across the whole school community. Pupils show strong concern for people in the world less fortunate than themselves and their commitment to helping others is evidenced in their 'Tearfund' charity work. They are very excited when sharing pictures of successful charity projects they have supported.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

Collective Worship is an outstanding strength of St. Matthew's and forms a central part of each day. Detailed planning and prominent displays support the reinforcement of the worship themes. Pupils value worship as a special time and confidently describe how it impacts on their daily lives. Bible stories are a strong feature and pupils are able to clearly relate the themes to the school's values and their own lives. One older pupil commented, 'The Bible says that instead of trying to get revenge you should always forgive people and this isn't always easy.' Parents say they look forward to sharing worship and Church services with their children. The close working between church and school is exemplified by monthly church Family Services held within the school hall. The commitment of the vicar is instrumental in achieving this very close relationship and it is highly appreciated by parents. Members of the school staff also choose to attend with their families. The Headteacher leads aspects of regular church services. Information Technology, stimulating resources and regular visitors ensure that pupils gain a rich experience that captures their attention and interest. Year 6 pupils maturely describe their responsibilities in worship planning and delivery, clearly proud of the school's trust in them. A strong emphasis around the work of Jesus and his central position within Christianity enables pupils to refer confidently to his teachings. Anglican traditions are used within worship with pupils fully understanding their meaning. Pupils have an understanding of the Trinity at an

age appropriate level because the adults leading worship and RE make sure that explanations are within their understanding. Pupils say that the Holy Spirit supports them in making the right choices. Worship themes, linked to the school's Christian values, support the positive behaviour throughout the school. Personal prayer and reflection are used in worship and support spiritual development. Pupils are able to explain what prayer means to them and how they use prayer in their lives. Formal monitoring by school leaders and stakeholder feedback analysis ensures worship remains highly effective in its impact on the whole school community.

The effectiveness of religious education is outstanding.

Standards of Religious Education (RE) are consistently high across all age groups and compare well with other core subjects. Pupils make good progress due to the high quality of teaching and learning. Pupil work shows a good balance between the gaining of knowledge and pupils' independent ideas. Lessons observed during the inspection judged attitudes towards RE to be very positive with teaching well supported by resources that enhance and enrich the subject. Teachers use questioning skilfully when extending pupil thinking. The school follows the Living Difference curriculum and RE teaching is blocked for one week each half term, which ensures its maximum impact and status. Lessons are creatively planned, giving pupils a range of ways to explore RE concepts. As a result, pupils express their enjoyment of RE and are happy to share their experiences with interest, maturity and enthusiasm. One pupil commented, 'RE teaches you to love God and how to be better people'. Pupils are confident when expressing their ideas and opinions as they realise that what they say will be valued. Teaching styles effectively create supportive and inclusive learning environments that enable deep understanding, respectful listening and thoughtful responding. Pupils say that they enjoy learning about other faiths and their understanding of them allows connections to be made between shared values and practices. RE provision benefits from the RE leader's high level of subject knowledge. Very effective monitoring and assessment analysis ensures high quality RE continues to develop within the school.

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

The Headteacher, together with her governors and staff provide a very strong and effective leadership team. The Headteacher is passionate in her commitment to the school, placing its Christian ethos at the heart of their vision. The school's distinctively Christian character is clearly articulated by all members of the school community. Involvement of all stakeholders in the establishment of the school's core Christian values and Mission Statement ensures there is a deep understanding of the school's Christian ethos and what it means to be a Christian school. Monitoring and evaluation by school leaders contribute strongly to the school's effectiveness and supports the schools commitment to further development as a Church school. Governors are very well informed and highly supportive of the school's work. The recently established Christian Distinctiveness Group is further deepening the relationship between the church and school. The school benefits from its links with the diocesan advisors and relevant training. High quality RE and worship learning experiences are well managed by the very knowledgeable subject leader. Regular evaluations ensure RE and collective worship effectively impact on the pupils' Christian development. RE and Collective worship are very well supported by an excellent range of resources. The school is in the process of developing further its provision for personal spirituality and plans are detailed in their self- evaluation documentation. Local and international links established by the school contribute to the pupils' understanding of other communities. The school has very successfully addressed the development areas identified in the previous Church school inspection. RE learning is now a strength of the school. Parents are very positive about the school and they recognise the school's work in giving opportunities to encounter faith in a way that allows their children to discover beliefs for themselves. Statutory requirements for collective worship and RE are met.

