



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Oakhill Church of England Primary School

Oakhill
Radstock, Somerset
BA3 5AQ

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: Bath and Wells

Local authority: Somerset

Dates of inspection: 11 February 2015

Date of last inspection: 08 February 2010

School's unique reference number: 123771

Headteacher: Bethan Foister

Inspector's name and number: Jane Tibbs 226

School context

Oakhill Church of England Primary School is a small village school with 139 pupils, situated on the main road in Oakhill. 70% of pupils live in the village, with the remaining children travelling from the surrounding area. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium, supported at school action plus or through a statement of special needs is below average. The school is set in attractive grounds adjacent to the parish church.

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

- The outstanding leadership by the headteacher together with the good teamwork of governors and staff provides strong direction for the development of the school's distinctive Christian character
- Pupils speak openly and with confidence about matters of faith
- The school community is committed to ensuring the Christian ethos is continually evolving
- The relationships between the school, church and community are excellent and to the benefit of everyone

Areas to improve

- Develop existing opportunities for pupils to engage at deeper levels in open-ended dialogue that raises their spiritual awareness
- Enable staff to use Philosophy for Children (P4C) as a tool for developing pupils' skills
- Identify opportunities within the whole curriculum to explore concepts at a spiritual level

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 way that it uses its creative strengths to express its core values through artwork and other visual displays. This brings a vibrancy and sense of purpose, and gives understanding and application of the church foundation. For example, involving the pupils in deciding on the core values for the school has brought together different aspects of the school's mission, ethos and values into a coherent message. This message has been interpreted by pupils through banners, in reflection areas and explored in religious education (RE), a Spiritual Arts Week and a spectacular Values Tree. The outcome of this is that pupils and adults in school are able to articulate clearly what the school's core values mean to them personally and what they mean to the school as a community. These values are explicitly linked to pupils' academic achievement, through high expectations of teaching and learning, and contribute to their attainment which has been consistently above national average. The values are covered in depth through collective worship, as an integral part of the curriculum and reinforced by the example set by adults in school. The school shows strong awareness of providing extra support for vulnerable pupils by close tracking of each individual and early intervention, so demonstrating its caring ethos. Behaviour is excellent and can be attributed to the way in which everyone understands the Christian values and wishes to live by them. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is supported through the school's strong Christian ethos, collective worship and RE teaching, and enhanced through Forest School. Parents appreciate the way that their children support each other and collaborate effectively in their learning, demonstrating a Christian responsibility for the whole school family. Pupils are active in a number of charitable activities which demonstrate that they want to make the world a better place. Pupils know that their involvement with these charities means that they are helping people locally and around the world who are suffering, and understand that their contributions demonstrate God's love and care. Pupils have a good awareness of Christianity as a global faith and the school recognises that pupils need to have an understanding of cultural diversity in this country. British values are demonstrated through democratic elections for the School Council.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is explicitly Christian and central to daily life at Oakhill. This is because it is highly effective in promoting the school's Christian values. It is important to the school community because it brings everyone together to worship God and demonstrate their care for each other as a school family. Clear expectations of the content and format of acts of worship give a consistency which ensures that pupils experience specific Christian teaching and have time to reflect on the messages they learn about. An explicit focus on the school's Christian values is explored each week through clearly identified themes which give worship a great sense of purpose and meaning for pupils. They say that through Bible stories they hear about Jesus' teachings tell them how "we learn to do good things". Opportunities to reflect and be still have emphasis both in collective worship and at other times in the school day. For example, the reflective areas in each classroom give a clear focus for class-based acts of worship and also provide opportunities for pupils to respond with their own thoughts. One pupil commented, "Not everyone believes in God, so the House and Class workshops make them feel more connected." Anglican patterns of worship are followed and pupils are able to identify different parts of the worship that mean most to them as individuals. Examples are the lighting of three candles, the responses between the pupils and the person leading worship and the focus table. Pupils are able to explain the symbolism of the three candles as representing God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and an informative display allows pupils to investigate the Trinity for themselves. Pupils have a mature understanding that prayer isn't about asking for material things but an opportunity to give thanks or say sorry. Collective worship is well planned, monitored and evaluated and pupils are integral to the planning of worship and have excellent opportunities to take part in worship. They are encouraged to respond through

artwork, by writing their thoughts, and through drama. One pupil commented, "I like worship. I like being told things I don't know." At the end of collective worship the Peace is shared and pupils asked, "Are you ready to take the Peace out into the world?" Staff commented that pupils always return from worship calmly and respectfully. The school celebrates major Christian festivals in church and these events are well supported by parents and governors and allow the local community an opportunity to join the school for worship.

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

The headteacher's Christian vision for the school and her strong commitment to this vision are inspirational. School leaders and governors have a well-established understanding of how the Christian faith underpins all aspects of the school's life. Through regular visits to the school, governors have a good knowledge of strengths and areas that need further development. The headteacher, staff and governors are united in their desire to strive for continual improvement which benefits all members of the school community. Actions taken are sharply focussed and the benefits of diocesan courses are clearly visible. The Priest in Charge makes an important contribution to the life of the school not only through involvement in the governing body, but through acts of worship, being a regular presence in the school playground at the beginning of the day, and encouraging the links between school and church communities. Pupils are divided into four House Groups which helps to encourage a sense of vertical and family identity, the Houses meeting for weekly worship and other activities. Effective processes are in place for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the Christian ethos. For example, parental views are sought and their feedback used to inform future areas for development. In addition governors hold regular surgeries where parents can express their views and concerns. Parents say that they appreciate the emphasis the school places on encouraging their children to explore faith and belief without feeling pressurised. In particular, parents say that the school's values help their children develop empathy which makes a difference to the way they treat others. The RE co-ordinator leads the subject effectively ensuring that it plays an important role in the life of the school. She has an excellent knowledge of the subject and is constantly striving to move the subject forward. Links with the church and the community are excellent with pupils regularly visiting the church and services to which parents and the wider community are invited. The school meets the statutory requirements for religious education and collective worship.

SIAMS report February 2015 Oakhill Church of England primary School, Oakhill, Somerset BA3 5AQ