

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### Nether Stowey Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Mill Close, Nether Stowey, Bridgewater TA5 INX	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Bath and Wells</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local Authority	Somerset
Name of multi-academy trust	N/A
Date of inspection	3 October 2017
Date of last inspection	26 October 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 123789
Headteacher	Rosanna Roberts
Inspector's name and number	Carolyn Banfield 610

#### School context

Nether Stowey is a smaller than average rural primary school. The majority of pupils come from the immediate and surrounding villages and are from a White British heritage. The number of pupils eligible for support from pupil premium funding is below the national average as is the number of pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities. Following the completion of a social housing estate in the village, the school has recently expanded to six classes. There is a children's centre on site. A new leadership team has become established since the last denominational inspection.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Nether Stowey as a Church of England school are good

- The prominence given to the development of the school's core Christian values very successfully underpins the considerate behaviour, respectful attitudes and positive relationships within this church school community.
- Through its distinctive Christian character, the school successfully creates a caring and inclusive environment where all stakeholders have ownership of the vision and are inspired to 'aim high' and develop their strengths and interests.
- The headteacher together with a dedicated team of staff and governors are committed to the continuing development of the Christian ethos so that it continues to have meaning and purpose for pupils.
- A mutually beneficial partnership with the church significantly enhances the school's Christian character and pupils' learning experiences.

#### Areas to improve

- Ensure that a balance of quality experiences, including those using the outdoor environment, are identified in curriculum planning to develop spirituality in a way which deepens pupil thinking and their ability to articulate their reflections in some depth and in different ways.
- Enhance pupils' spiritual journeys through the development of classroom worship to include more regular opportunities for times of stilling and focused reflection.
- Extend the membership and remit of the foundation group so that all stakeholders are represented and monitoring activities include sufficient depth of evidence to demonstrate the impact of the school's

distinctive Christian character in all areas of school life.

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

The school has successfully developed and strengthened its distinctive Christian character since the last inspection. This is primarily due to the resolute focus leaders have given to establishing a vision which is rooted in Christian values and works in tandem to define and convey the school's mission. Because all stakeholders have contributed to this process they are inspired to actively promote it. The school prayer, written by the pupils, clearly exemplifies this intention and unites this community on its journey as a church school. The six values have become embedded and underpin the warm and inclusive ethos shared. As a result, the practical application of the values is interwoven into the fabric of the school. Service to others is taken seriously. Pupils identify responsibilities such as membership of the school council, playtime buddies and roles as peer mediators as key features in maintaining the well-being of their community. A strong sense of justice prevails, which impacts on their social and moral development. Pupils really want to make a difference so appreciate the recognition they receive when values are upheld. Biblical links are consistently referenced so that the teachings of Jesus are contextualised and have relevance. As one pupil described, 'Jesus is a perfect role model. He shows us how we should treat others and helps us to make the best choices.' The impact this has on pupils is clearly illustrated in the considerate and respectful behaviour they demonstrate and the positive relationships enjoyed. Consequently, pupils increasingly recognise the influence of the distinctive Christian character on their personal development, attitudes to learning and academic achievements. With the concept of 'aiming high' as a central thread in the school's vision, pupils and staff are wholeheartedly encouraged to develop their strengths and interests. A broad and exciting curriculum is characterised by inspiring opportunities and memorable experiences using the arts, sport, 'Wow' days and an emphasis on outdoor learning. Unique in the sight of God, each individual's needs are sensitively identified and catered for. Staff at all levels, skilfully nurture potential utilising a range of strategies and interventions. The Growth Mindset approach is a good example, contributing to raised expectations and aspirations for all. Therefore, self-esteem is high and pupils speak with some confidence of how the Christian values influence their understanding of how failure and mistakes lead to greater success. As a result, more pupils are working at 'greater depth' and pupils in most year groups make good or better progress, including those from more vulnerable groups. Opportunities for spiritual development are in evidence. However, the school has not defined its understanding of spirituality. This means experiences which challenge pupils to explore their thoughts and inner-most feelings in depth are not a consistent feature of planning across the curriculum. Issues such as attendance are dealt with from a Christian perspective and in a spirit of partnership. Consequently, attendance of vulnerable individuals has significantly improved and is reflected in their levels of achievement. Through religious education (RE), pupils are encouraged to explore Christian values from a range of faith perspectives and the presentation of moral dilemmas. This is leading to a clearer understanding of what motivates belief and the choices people make. An implementation of the Understanding Christianity programme is already having a positive impact on the school's distinctive character. The focus given to global citizenship is an integral part of weekly worship. Using the Christian concept of 'love thy neighbour', links with a refugee camp through Khalsa-Aid, is just one example of how global crisis motivates an expression of personal and social responsibility through charitable giving. As a result, pupils have developed a sense of respect for diversity and recognise the place of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith.

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

Collective worship is fundamental to each school day. The concept of fellowship as a value is fully embodied through the coming together of staff and pupils in an atmosphere of Christian love and respect. This is having a positive influence on the way in which pupils approach worship and interact with the materials shared. It provides an important vehicle for exploring and reinforcing key aspects of the school's vision, ethos and values. Consequently, pupils see this as time to define 'who we are and what we will become.' It is therefore, a unifying and affirming experience providing guidance and direction. Because the whole community is involved in worship, key messages are consistently fortified throughout the school day. Parents comment on how this spills over to influence family life. A cohesive plan ensures that pupils become actively engaged in the celebration of key Christian festivals and this is leading to a greater appreciation of the church year and its associated traditions. This is effectively strengthened by participation in activities such as pilgrimages to The Mount at Easter, and the 'Christmas journey'. As a result, pupils demonstrate a growing understanding of key Christian beliefs and are beginning to describe the implications these have for believers. Some monitoring by the foundation group has taken place but impact is not yet being sufficiently analysed. Pupils appreciate the variety of styles and formats of worship that they are exposed to and can identify with the elements that particularly appeal to their sensibilities. Adults model quality leadership and as a result, pupils are increasingly leading aspects of worship on a regular basis. This is often as a response to local, national or global events which prompt acts of kindness and charitable giving. The gospel message is consistently shared and as a

result, pupils are acquiring a sound knowledge of the life and teachings of Jesus. This is particularly so through the 'Open the Book' programme which very effectively breathes life into the characters and messages shared. High levels of enjoyment and engagement are echoed in the animated way in which pupils describe and reflect on these occasions. Consequently, biblical literacy is good and pupils highlight many stories which have had impact and added relevance to their lives. They therefore recognise how worship influences their thinking, regulates behaviour and informs choices. Individual and collective achievements, both academic and in relation to the school's values, are celebrated in the weekly celebration assembly. As an outward expression, this strengthens and encourages the Christian vision and clarifies the school's mission to its community. Worship is frequently held in church so it has an important place in the lives of pupils. Parents speak warmly of the services held there and appreciate the inclusive atmosphere. Pupils respond well to activities such as 'messy church' and 'urban saints' and this affords them a different experience of Anglican practice. As a result, the partnership with the church significantly enhances and enriches the school's distinctive Christian character making a positive contribution to the social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) development of its pupils. An awareness of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is apparent because of the direct teaching by the incumbent. Simple liturgy, through call and response and formal prayer characterises a growing awareness of Anglican practice. The school and Lord's Prayer feature prominently leading pupils to have a clear understanding of the purpose of prayer and reflection. However, some comment that they would like more time for quiet reflection in order to make greater sense of their own feelings. Pupils increasingly make use of the reflection area in the library where they have an opportunity to contribute to the prayer box. Because the prayers are taken to church each month to be blessed, they see this as a sign that God will hear those prayers and respond to them accordingly.

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

Leadership at all levels is very effective in articulating the vision for the school. The commitment to, and efforts made towards getting it 'right', has ensured that it is 'owned' by all stakeholders and is successful in its delivery. The resolve to raise standards and improve outcomes for pupils is clearly conveyed. This results in a well led Christian community which is welcoming, inspiring and supportive of the wellbeing of everyone. By addressing two of the development points identified at the previous inspection, the church school status is now more clearly proclaimed. This is evident through the school website and key documents. Consequently, a greater understanding of the principles which motivate this community becomes more obvious. Increasingly, the vision and values impact on policy, inform decisions and influence strategic planning. A major overhaul of the behaviour policy and an investment in the social, emotional, mental health programme, are good examples of this and demonstrate how the wellbeing of the whole school is targeted. This has led to the breaking down of barriers and taboos thus achieving positive outcomes for both staff and pupils. Leaders take swift and appropriate action to address areas of underachievement. As a result, increased numbers of pupils work at 'greater depth', and improving levels of attainment across the school can be noted. Parents speak highly of the school and comment positively on the impact of the Christian character on the development of their children and the people they will become. Recognition of how the school inspires everyone to 'aim high' is appreciated and the influence of the values which underpin this notion is unhesitatingly acknowledged. The development of the school's Christian distinctiveness forms a strand on the school development plan. Consequently, actions taken are leading to improvement and indicate growing clarity for the direction of travel. Members of the foundation group are charged with responsibility for this strand and their work is beginning to gain momentum. They combine their obvious passion for the school with their experience as members of the church to provide challenge and support. Self-assessment using the SIAMS framework has helped to increase understanding of church school distinctiveness whilst also identifying next steps for development. As a result, plans are in place to carry out monitoring and evaluation activities which give sharper focus to the impact of the school's distinctive character on pupils. Through membership of the Quantock Community Learning Partnership, wider opportunities are readily accessed. This contributes to the curriculum and further supports the development of SMSC. The relationship with St Mary's Church is a real asset. The incumbent has worked closely with the headteacher to facilitate experiences which enhance understanding of Anglican practice. Increased visits to church allow greater numbers of parents to become involved thus adding to the school's value of fellowship in a very real way. Although the church is without a vicar at present, this is being managed well to ensure a continuation of good practice. This is testimony to the depth of commitment and support the church community has to offer. The school effectively draws on diocesan expertise for professional development for both staff and governors. Within a church school context, staff have been encouraged to grow into more senior roles. The headteacher models church school leadership well and inspires a commitment to live out the school's vision by her team. In her role as leader for RE and collective worship, she ensures that both maintain a high profile within the school. Consequently the school meets the statutory requirements for both.