



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Stone St Mary's Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School

Hayes Road, Horn's Cross,
Greenhithe, Dartford,
DA9 9EF

Previous SIAS grade: Outstanding

Current SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Rochester

Local authority: Kent

Date of inspection: 5th February 2016

Date of last inspection: January 2011

School's unique reference number: 118596

Headteacher: Jane Rolfe

Inspector's name and number: Pamela Draycott 161

School context

The school is larger than average and oversubscribed, serving an area of mixed housing on the outskirts of Dartford. It is in the process of expanding from two to three forms in each year group. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. The percentage for whom extra funding is received, due to social disadvantage, is below the national average. The percentage with some sort of special educational need is above the national average. A small percentage of pupils come from families who attend church regularly outside of their involvement through school. The headteacher joined the school in September 2015.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Stone St Mary primary school as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The school's Christian values are very well known and shared by the school community, impacting positively on school life and the progress made by pupils.
- Pupils' academic and personal gifts and talents are very well celebrated and recognised. Pupils are known as individuals, 'precious to God'.
- The collaborative style of the new headteacher, ably supported by other school leaders, is already impacting positively on refreshing the school's life, work and Christian ethos.
- The worship programme which engages pupils and staff with genuine enthusiasm, warmth and respect is central to school life.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that school leaders adapt the monitoring and evaluation that currently exists as the school expands so that the Christian vision and values maintain their high level of impact.
- Ensure that teaching and learning in religious education (RE) has an appropriate focus on the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic dimensions of Christianity.

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

Stone St Mary's school is a caring and happy place. It has a deeply embedded Christian ethos and well-known values which are evident across all aspects of school life. During its period of further expansion, there is a strong commitment to ensuring that all pupils continue to achieve well and to flourish within its Christian and inclusive community. Based on its valuing of each individual as a 'child of God', the school is working effectively to ensure that pupils thrive both academically and personally. This means that pupils make at least good progress from their various starting points. The gap between the attainment and progress of different groups, including the most vulnerable, is closing. The school's ethos also means that a range of talents and gifts exhibited in and outside of school are well celebrated. This is reinforced through, for example, the worship programme. In the end of week celebration worship, pupils are nominated by their class teacher to be 'pupil of the week'. This is based on a range of criteria, including displaying one of the school's Christian values. Behaviour is very good. Pupils are polite and respectful towards adults and their peers. They speak clearly about how the school's Christian values significantly affect their life, work and relationships in school and beyond. There are a small number of pupils whose behaviour is not as positive as it should be. Such instances are dealt with by showing forgiveness and aiming at reconciliation in keeping with the school's Christian ethos. 'Restorative justice' approaches are one of the ways in which this is expressed. Attendance is consistently above the national average. The school is proactive in working with individuals and their families where there is concern about behaviour, progress or attendance. There is a strong sense of belonging. As one pupil said, 'We all care and respect each other whether we believe in God or not. We need to show care and love to everyone in our community'. Relationships across the school are strong and mutually respectful, reflecting the school's Christian values. Pupils feel safe and cared for in school. There is a sense of treating others well by 'loving each other like Jesus showed us'. RE makes a strong contribution to the school's Christian ethos. This is shown through the curriculum taught which is linked appropriately with the school's Christian values. It also helps pupils to apply religious teachings to their own lives, irrespective of their faith background. It helps pupils to reflect and to ask 'deep questions' such as whether or not God exists and why there are different religions. Pupils see the importance of RE in helping them to learn about Christianity and other world faiths, so that, 'we are informed and respectful towards everyone'. However, the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic nature of Christianity is not sufficiently explored as part of learning and teaching in RE. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is recognised as central to personal, as well as academic development. Charitable giving by the school community is reflective of its Christian concern and love. There is a broad and balanced curriculum. The use of 'mindfulness', an approach to helping pupils reflect deeply on issues and personal experiences is beginning to have a positive impact on pupil's spiritual and moral development. Art work and display is used effectively. An example of this is Year 6 interpreting the school's Christians values through impressionist art.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Great value is placed on the central place of worship in school life. Worship effectively underpins and extends the school's embedded Christian ethos. The daily programme is very well planned and delivered by a range of adults with good pupil involvement. This includes

the 'Leading Lights', pupils in Years 5 and 6 who help with the worship programme. Worship content rightly explores Bible stories and Christian teachings. This includes reinforcing appropriately the idea of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the example and importance of Jesus for Christians. Principal Christian festivals are well celebrated, both in school and in the parish church. Children have an age appropriate understanding of the meaning of the key festivals of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. This means that worship in the school effectively contributes to pupils' developing knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith, irrespective of their own, or their family's faith position. Pupils participate enthusiastically. They sing with gusto and enjoyment, listen very well to what is said, answer questions and offer their ideas and prayers on the topics covered. They recognise that worship is a special time to 'think about God and share as a community'. The importance and enjoyment of worship shown by pupils is shared by staff. It is also shared by parents when they attend. Most pupils know the Lord's Prayer which is said weekly as part of the worship programme. Prayer and reflection areas in each classroom extend opportunities for prayer, as does the reflection garden which is well used by pupils. Parents report that their children talk about what has happened in worship and often sing hymns or choruses or say prayers they have learned in school. Key elements of Anglican practice are embedded in school worship. This includes the use of opening and closing sentences with responses and different coloured cloths for the worship table, reflecting the Church calendar. The regular Eucharist enhances this provision. The worship programme is monitored and evaluated by the faith committee, a sub-committee of the governing body. There are regular staff and pupil questionnaires. Some items raised through these have been incorporated into worship practice in the school.

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

The appointment of the new headteacher has refreshed the established and ongoing effective work of the school, based on its Christian foundation. Her collaborative leadership style is already impacting positively on school life. In developing and enhancing the school's Christian ethos, she is ably supported by the deputy headteacher, the subject leader for RE and worship, and governors. Leaders confidently express the impact of the school's Christian ethos and values on the whole of school life. The school has not 'stood still' since the previous denominational inspection. The issues identified have been consistently and fully addressed. The importance of maintaining the Christian distinctiveness of the school during the period of expansion from two to three forms in each year group has been, and is being, well addressed. Leaders have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. This is demonstrated in its accurate self-evaluation and strategic improvement planning. Governors are supportive of the school as a church school and are appropriately involved in school life. They are provided with detailed information about attainment and progress and about key areas for further development. Their role in interrogating this information to support effective 'next steps' is developing in the light of changes to the curriculum and assessment practice. The faith committee is increasing monitoring and evaluating the school as a Church school, including RE and worship provision and outcomes. It reports regularly to the whole governing body. Both RE and worship provision meet statutory requirements. Parents are very supportive of the school and its Christian ethos. In their opinion, the school 'doesn't just say it – it lives it'. Many parents are well engaged with their children's learning. Since the previous denominational inspection, a monthly 'messy church' has been introduced

after school and a termly school Eucharist has been continued. A very recent innovation is to offer an open worship time for parents and their children, the first of which was very well attended. Confirmation is also now being offered to Year 6 pupils. These opportunities enhance and broaden the worship life of the school and increase further the already very strong links with the parish church. Such links, along with those with a neighbouring parish, aid the school's Christian ethos very well. The parish priest is deeply committed to supporting the school as a governor, through leading worship and being available for pastoral support to the school community. The school provides an appropriate range of opportunities for staff to develop their understanding of working in the church school sector. RE has a high profile being treated as a 'core subject' alongside English, mathematics and science. The RE subject leader is committed to, and effective in leading the subject. She contributes deeply and positively to the school's overall Christian ethos. The school is outward looking and has good links with the Diocese, the Local Authority and with neighbouring church schools.

SIAMS report February 2016 Stone St Mary's CE (VC) Primary School, Greenhithe, Dartford, Kent, DA9 9EF