CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION

THE NATIONAL SOCIETY

The Methodist Church

# National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Margaret's CE VA Primary School
School Close, Tintinhull, Yeovil, Somerset
BA228PX

**Previous SIAMS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Good**

**Diocese: Bath & Wells**
Local authority: Somerset
Date of inspection: 17th June, 2015
Date of last inspection: 24th June 2010
School's unique reference number: 123855
Headteacher: Lesley McDonald
Inspector's name and number: John Angle 119

## School context

St Margaret's is a small, rural village primary school with 103 pupils taught in four mixed age classes. There is a Foundation Stage unit in a newly built extension to the school. The school is set in attractive grounds in close proximity to the local church, playing fields, swimming pool and a National Trust property. Pupils are mainly of white British heritage. The proportion of disabled pupils, those with special needs and those eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average.

## The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Margaret's Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- There is sensitive and nurturing leadership which sustains a strong family ethos.
- There is outstanding behaviour which is supported and encouraged by a strong expression of Christian values.
- There is an effective and permeating Christian ethos.
- There are excellent relationships both within the school family and also with the local community and local church

**Areas to improve**

- Develop more robust monitoring and evaluation procedures for collective worship in order to ensure greater impact on children's spiritual growth and understanding, and to inform the nature, content and style of acts of worship in the future.
- Add to the excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural policy practical and specific ‘Wow Ways’ of expressing and communicating these aspects of children's education in curriculum planning and in the daily life of the school.

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

Distinctively Christian values and a strong Christian ethos are clearly expressed in the daily life of the school through displays of children's work, the attitudes and actions of staff and pupils and through various aspects of the curriculum and school activities. Children understand and appreciate that their way of life, and what is expected of them in school, derives from the school’s strong Christian foundation. Children know they are individuals uniquely valued by God and speak of being loved and in a safe, happy and supportive environment. One girl said "In school we are a big close, caring family." Children are nurtured and encouraged by welcoming, caring and very committed staff. Children enjoy coming to school and learning together. As evidence, punctuality and attendance have improved in the last year. Children develop as confident and respectful young people with a real concern for each other and their environment. In this context of Christian values they have a desire to do their best and consequently achieve well and make good progress. Attainment is in line with the national average. Those with special needs and those supported by the pupil premium make progress in line with their peers. Children encourage each other and enjoy sharing their successes and a wide variety of achievements in weekly celebration assemblies and on special occasions in church.. Children are given many opportunities to discuss Christian values and to reflect on them and their personal relevance. Pupils lead prayers in collective worship and in class often using their own prayers and a holding cross as a symbol of prayer. A group of children readily acknowledged that "God helps us through prayers". They relate values and ideas to Biblical stories. Collective worship, Fun Church (an after school club) and Religious Education (RE) all foster an understanding of Christian values. These, along with aspects of the creative curriculum and the development of emotional literacy skills through circle time and PSHE, encourage and support children's strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The behaviour of pupils and their relationships together are outstanding. Children, mainly through their School Council, have a strong sense of wanting to help others through charitable activities, locally and overseas. For example, they support ‘Bags for Schools’ who send bags to disadvantaged children in schools across the world. They have also raised money for a poorly equipped school in Vanuatu, support Canine Partners and have recently collected for Nepal earthquake victims. Children relate enthusiastically to the local community, taking part in Lenten lunches, visits to the local nursing home and also seasonal village and church activities. There is a particularly strong and mutually beneficial relationship with the local parish church.

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

Collective Worship is highly valued by all members of the school community and plays a very important part in the daily life of the school. Children recognize this and appreciate collective worship which they say strengthens their understanding of Christian faith and practise and the way they should live and behave. "It makes me think," and "makes me feel good", said one boy. In this context children are comfortable talking about God. Values shared in collective worship are displayed around school and in the local church and also shared with families and put on the school web site, for the benefit of the whole community. Children understand the relationship between the values discussed and Biblical stories and the faith and traditions of local churches, because of explicit links made. Worship at major Christian festivals is held in local church and leaders of local churches and members of the community regularly take collective worship and encourage children to take part in local church activities. Children find the variety of leadership style and presentations enjoyable and interesting, and it enhances their understanding of the diversity of Christian worship and practice. The weekly run after school club, 'Fun Church', is well supported and further enhances children's experience. Children enjoy collective worship and are given opportunities to participate. They will regularly talk informally about it. Symbols such as candles, banners, music, holding crosses, a prayer jar and prayer tree help children understand the pattern of worship and prayer. Their understanding of the Trinitarian nature of God is encouraged with a liturgical response following the lighting of one candle with three wicks. Space for reflection and prayer, usually led by children, is always part of collective worship. Children and their parents say that the emphasis on prayer in school sometimes extends to home, for example grace being said at meals and prayers before bed time. "I say a prayer to ask God for forgiveness for wrong things I've done today and to ask for his help not to do it again", commented one boy. Collective Worship is carefully planned on a two year rolling cycle. The school policy states that collective worship is 'a time for shared experience of praise within a Christian ethos of thanksgiving, beauty, wonder, awe, mystery, stillness, sadness and joy . . . and a time to foster the spirit of community." Discussion with children would clearly indicate that this is their experience but a more formal programme of monitoring and evaluation would help to further strengthen children's spiritual development through collective worship.

**The effectiveness of Religious Education is good.**

Religious Education has a high profile in the school community. Standards of attainment are in line with levels in other core subjects. Children make good progress given the fact that on entering the school they are slightly below or only in line with national expectations. In the early years children are provided with opportunities to investigate their feelings and relationships and to explore and wonder at the world around them. The school follows the Somerset Agreed Syllabus for RE. Learning and assessment objectives are progressive, and assessment and tracking is undertaken for individual children or for various groupings, as an ongoing aspect of teaching. The subject is well led . Lesson observations are carried out by the RE coordinator which builds teachers' confidence and subject knowledge, leading to improvements in teaching and learning. Further support for RE is given through in-school and Diocesan INSET. As a result of these strategies teaching is inspiring, enthusiastic and very effective. Teachers use careful questioning which encourages mature responses and interesting, often quite eloquent, confident and thoughtful discussion. A discussion on telling the truth led to some very honest and personal comments from older children who applied the value of honesty to various scenarios. In another class children made simple moral applications to the reasons why some religious people fast. "It would help me to keep control of myself" said one boy. Young children commenting on 'who helps them to be good' were able to identify God, as well as their teacher, vicar, mum, Father Christmas and the Easter Bunny! They understood that God can help through prayer. Religious Education at the school helps children to understand the beliefs of other, and the curriculum offers good insight into the cultural diversity of British society. RE also strongly supports the Christian values of the school and makes a significant contribution to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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

School leaders effectively and enthusiastically promote a vision that is based on distinctively Christian values and children's spirituality and well-being is at the heart of school life. Christian values are recognised by the school community and permeate all aspects of its daily life. Children, parents and governors were involved initially in selecting twelve Christian values to explore over a two year cycle and all continue to review and evaluate how these impact on the daily life of the school. School leaders present the Christian character of the school well, through the school prospectus, displays around the school and communication with parents and members of the community. It is evident in all aspects of the curriculum, circle time activities, and particularly in collective worship and Religious Education. The School Development Plan incorporates an important section on the way Christian values are used to underpin the school's ethos. There are strong and effective links with the local parish and members and leaders of other Christian communities. Opportunities are given for professional development through whole school INSET and Diocesan training courses, ensuring the school continues to develop as a church school. Parents are very supportive of the school's Christian ethos, a number of parents choosing the school and travelling daily from a nearby town. School leaders are keen to encourage greater depth to children's spiritual experience at school and to value prayer and relationship with God as a part of their spiritual life. There is a detailed spiritual, moral, social and cultural development policy which needs further attention to encourage increased impact on children's personal development. Parents acknowledge how well the school is managed and the way staff are approachable, helpful and resolve problems quickly and effectively, in accordance with the school's Christian character.

SIAMS report.  June 2015. St Margaret's CE VA Primary School, Tintinhull, Yeovil. BA228PX