



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### Sonning Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Liguge Way, Sonning,  
Reading, Berkshire  
RG4 6XF

**Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding**

**Current inspection grade: Good**

**Diocese:**

Local authority: Wokingham

Dates of inspection: 3 May 2016

Date of last inspection: 21 June 2011

School's unique reference number: 110016

Headteacher: Luke Henderson

Inspector's name and number: David Shears (423)

#### School context

Sonning Primary is slightly smaller than the average school with 198 pupils on roll. Each year group, including the Early Years, comprises of one class. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. Following the retirement of the previous headteacher, the deputy headteacher became acting headteacher for one term until the appointment of the current headteacher in January 2016. The leader for RE has had this responsibility for one year.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sonning Primary as a Church of England school are good

- The new headteacher has made a good start in developing the monitoring of RE and collective worship by school leaders, accurately highlighting strengths and areas for improvement.
- The distinctively Christian ethos means that the care of pupils is highly effective.
- Pupils demonstrate Christian principles through their positive behaviour and attitudes.
- Links with the local church and parents promote the school's Christian character effectively.
- Both collective worship and RE support pupils' moral and social development well.

#### Areas to improve

- Revisit the school's vision and values with all stakeholders so that there is a clear understanding of the school's journey for improvement as a Christian community
- Establish a shared understanding of spirituality with staff to enable this to be effectively planned in all aspects of school life.
- Deepen pupils' understanding of Biblical stories to strengthen their understanding of Christianity.
- Improve the governing body's monitoring and evaluation of the school's Christian distinctiveness so that it has a clear understanding of its effectiveness in all areas.

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

The core values of the school are made explicit in documentation and are displayed around the school. Pupils are able to identify these values and it is clear that these have a positive impact on them. Consequently, pupils behave well in school and have very positive attitudes towards their learning. They enjoy their lessons and work well together. As a result, pupils' academic achievement is good. Because pupils enjoy school their attendance is above the national average. Pupils find it more difficult to relate the school's core values to Biblical teaching. This is because the wording of some of the values lack clarity in meaning and so pupils find it hard to make these connections. The Christian character of the school contributes particularly well to pupils' social and moral development. This can be seen in the way older pupils care for younger ones. This care also extends to giving support for those outside of school who are less fortunate than themselves. For example, at harvest pupils give donations to the local foodbank and have also donated clothing for children in Africa. RE is supporting pupils' understanding of other cultures and faiths. However, although pupils have opportunities for spiritual development, these are not planned carefully enough. This is because there is not a clear framework for teachers to work within. The school has already identified this as an area for development. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. The care of pupils is a strength of the school and this is recognised by pupils and parents alike. A number of parents during the inspection confirmed that they had chosen this school because of its Christian care and support for both them and their children.

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

Pupils say that they enjoy collective worship and, in particular, the opportunity to praise God through singing and having time to celebrate their achievements during the week with each other. There is an overall theme with a weekly focus, planned together by the headteacher and the local vicar. They ensure that the content is always distinctively Christian in nature. Stories are often from the Bible and are used to illustrate a particular theme. While there is often time for pupils to reflect on what they have heard, this could be further strengthened through careful planning. Members of the Anglican clergy regularly lead worship which enhances the links between school and church. Pupils from Years 1 to 6 take turns to be part of a collective worship group who contribute by leading particular aspects of collective worship, such as reading from the Bible and helping to plan key services that are held in the church, including Christmas, Easter, Saints days and the Year 6 leavers' service. Pupils often write prayers which are then used during collective worship. Pupils also have the opportunity to pray together before their lunch and at the end of the school day. Consequently, pupils are beginning to understand the purpose of prayer. One of the key areas for development for pupils to plan and lead periods of worship has been addressed and the next step for them to do this more regularly for whole acts of worship. As well as meeting as a whole school for collective worship, pupils also meet together as individual classes. However, although there is sometimes a time for pupils to reflect as a class, pupils do not always recognise this as being part of collective worship. Pupils say that in collective worship there is a clear focus on Jesus and God but they recognise that the Holy Spirit is not often talked about. Consequently, their understanding of the Trinity is not secure. There has been a focus on the monitoring of

collective worship since January 2016 and this is reviewed by the leader for collective worship at the end of each term, identifying what has gone well and what needs further improvement.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory**

The school follows the 'Discover RE' scheme which ensures that the appropriate emphasis is given to Christianity alongside the range of other religions that pupils study. As a result the attainment of pupils is at least in line with national expectations with a minority of pupils attaining higher than this. Assessment in RE is well established in the school, although has not benefitted from moderation to ensure that it is consistently accurate. Teachers use the assessment information to plan lessons in RE. However, it is not always clear whether sufficient account has been taken to meet the needs of the different abilities of pupils. Using the assessment information pupils seem to have made expected progress last academic year. This year pupils appear to have made good progress, although this is not consistent in every class. However, the work in pupils' books does not give sufficient information to confirm that this is the case. Work is generally marked, although not consistently in every class. The marking and feedback for pupils is not focused well enough on the quality of RE and so pupils are not told how to improve their understanding in RE. Pupils are able to retell Biblical stories but do not always have a clear understanding of the context or the message behind the stories. There are opportunities for pupils to learn facts about different religions and also to discuss how they can learn from these religions. There are also opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and, in particular, those relating to pupils' moral and social development are strong. The relatively new subject leader has had opportunities for professional development to ensure that she has knowledge of current thinking. She is beginning to monitor the quality of teaching through talking with pupils, looking at books and, more recently, observing RE lessons. Areas for development are being recorded in an action plan for the future.

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

The new headteacher has lost no time in evaluating the school's effectiveness as a church school. The monitoring of collective worship and RE is improving and it is important to ensure that identified areas of concern are amalgamated into the school's improvement plan so that it is seen to have a high profile within the school. The role of foundation governors in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school as a church school needs further improvement. The key area for development from the previous SIAS inspection for governors to effectively monitor the quality of RE has started to be tackled but has not yet been fully addressed. The school recognises that a review of the school's vision and values with staff, governors, pupils and parents would enable all to have a good understanding of how the school is to continue the development of its effectiveness. Parents speak well of the new headteacher and are already noticing how the school has improved, including the introduction of new equipment and resources at lunchtimes to promote positive play. Parents are aware of the five values but not all are clear about how they are promoted within school as Christian values. They appreciate the close links between the school and the local church and clergy, viewing this as a positive reinforcement of the school's Christian distinctiveness. In particular they talk about how their children enjoy celebrating the major Christian festivals in the church. Parents have not been asked about their views about the school as a church school but say that they would welcome the opportunity to be able to. However, they are confident that they would be able to approach staff should they have any concerns. There are positive links with the diocese who have given the school support in particular areas. Staff talk about having received support to develop particular aspects of the school such as the introduction of the new RE curriculum. The new headteacher has plans for further professional development, including the development of spirituality for pupils. The overall self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness as a church school is accurate and they ensure that the arrangements for RE and collective worship meet

statutory requirements. School leaders recognise that the school is on a journey of improvement and is making a good start, demonstrating their capacity for future development.

SIAMS report May 2016 Sonning CE (VA) Primary School, Reading RG4 6XF