



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

### **Spetisbury (Hall and Sloper) Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

High Street, Spetisbury  
Blandford Forum  
Dorset  
DT11 9DF

#### **Diocese: Salisbury**

Local authority: Dorset

Date of inspection: 25 June 2014

Date of last inspection: 30 June 2009

School's unique reference number: 113826

Headteacher: Jane Minett

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

#### **School context**

Spetisbury (Hall and Sloper) is a smaller than average rural primary school with 166 children on roll. The large majority of children are of a white British heritage and from varied socio-economic backgrounds. The number of children with learning needs is in line with the national average. The proportion eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average. Attendance is similar to the national average. Children enter the school with learning broadly similar to national expectations. Three new staff including the assistant headteacher have been appointed this year.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Spetisbury (Hall and Sloper) as a Church of England school are outstanding**

- Strong links between the school's Christian values, collective worship, religious education (RE) and spirituality create an all-embracing Christian ethos that make a significant contribution to the development of the whole child.
- Religious education provides many opportunities for children to explore matters of faith and belief in considerable depth.
- Leaders and managers have a very clear understanding that the children's spiritual development is a key aspect of their education in a church school and are committed to ensuring that this is continually developing.

#### **Areas to improve**

Embed the recent developments in promoting the growth of children's personal spiritual awareness by:

- Provide greater opportunities for children to engage in open dialogue that allows them to explore in depth difficult concepts through challenging questions,
- Ensure that, as the school refines its interpretation of spirituality, opportunities for its development are identified within the creative curriculum,
- Develop the role of the foundation governors group to monitor and evaluate the quality of encounters for children to engage in and reflect on their spirituality.

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

The strength of the school's Christian ethos is that different aspects of school life make clear connections with Christian values and the opportunities for children to develop a personal spirituality. These links underpin the school's approach to children's well-being and providing for their care. It is also becoming more directly linked to the children's learning through opportunities in the creative curriculum to explore spirituality. The school has made good progress in formulating a shared definition among teaching staff of what spirituality means. Specific opportunities have been identified where this can be explored in the children's learning. An exciting aspect of the teaching is the way that some teachers naturally take this further by linking these opportunities to explicitly expressed Christian values. When this happens, greater depth is added to the challenge offered children. The school is at the stage where this needs to be further refined by revisiting its understanding of spirituality, in the light of what they have learnt so far, and place more emphasis on allowing children to take more ownership of the direction they want to explore. However, where the school is placed at the moment is outstanding. The opportunities to explore difficult concepts in the creative curriculum enhance the children's learning and contribute to their good progress and above average attainment. Relationships throughout the school are excellent and characterised by the quality of care shown to all members of the school community regardless of whom they are.

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

The impact of collective worship has grown over the last three years because the school has reflected carefully on creating a worship programme that best meets the needs of children. Reviews of worship themes at the end of each year led by the headteacher has identified improvements which have considerably strengthened the impact that explicit Christian values make to the lives of the children. The continual development of collective worship gives them a vibrancy which is reflected in the positive attitudes children have towards them. The introduction of the 'Values for Life' material in September 2013 built on the existing programme of themes but has given greater opportunity to explore them in depth. Children already have an excellent understanding of how values are rooted in Bible teaching and have relevance in their daily lives. The school is keen to take this further so that children become enthused to take action to live out these values in a proactive way. Children are developing their understanding of what prayer means to them and how they interpret the Trinity. Older children in particular are able to share very mature opinions on how they perceive the Holy Spirit and 'what it actually does'. Children explained how the Holy Spirit 'sort of gets inside you and tells you what to do if you are in trouble'. One child explained how the Holy Spirit 'would never give up on you and leave you on your own, even if you did something naughty'. The place of prayer in the life of the school is regarded by children as an essential part of being a church school. They have an excellent appreciation that prayer can be answered in many different ways and often not how we might want them to be. Younger children explained how prayer can bring comfort or give you strength when you are in need. The introduction of reflection points in each classroom has provided a further opportunity for children to think about important issues in their lives. There is more that could be done to involve children in how these reflection points are used. Children are involved in acts of worship through the assembly team which is comprised of children from each class. Their role is developing as they become more involved in the actual planning and delivery of worship. Governors regularly monitor the quality of worship and the views of children have been sought through interviews. The school understands that this is an area that they could improve.

### **The effectiveness of religious education is outstanding**

Standards in religious education are consistently at least in line with national expectations for most children by the time they leave the school at the end of Key Stage 2. A significant number of children achieve at the higher levels at the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. When their starting points are taken into account on entry to the school, all groups of children make excellent progress in RE. Attainment in RE compares favourably with other core subjects in

the curriculum. Regular assessment of children's attainment in both their knowledge and understanding of RE enables children's progress to be monitored and support given to those who need it. Ongoing scrutiny of children's achievement and training in levelling their attainment has improved teachers' accuracy in assessment and there is greater consistency across the school. Assessment of RE is something that the school is continually refining. The overall quality of teaching is very high with considerable outstanding strengths. This is particularly evident in the quality of questioning from teachers to challenge the children's understanding. This has been a whole school focus for development across all curriculum areas and is making a positive impact on the quality of opportunities for children to reflect and to grow spiritually. The school is aware that more emphasis can be given for children to have greater opportunity to engage in open dialogue so that they have some ownership of where discussions in RE, and across the whole curriculum, might take them. When this works well, children's learning accelerates considerably. For example, in a Year 6 lesson children explored links between the worship theme of humility and messages contained in proverbs from the Bible. As the teacher challenged children to reflect more deeply on how these proverbs have meaning in their own lives, so the children responded with maturity in their understanding of the nature of meekness and modesty balanced with being glad when succeeding in achieving something. A Year 3 RE lesson showed the transformative learning that can take place as one child spoke of a change in perception as a result of being challenged in their thinking. Attitudes towards RE are very positive and children respond with enthusiasm. Leadership of RE is excellent. The subject leader ensures that RE has a high profile within the creative curriculum and that staff are informed of latest developments.

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

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection in developing its understanding of the purpose and meaning of being a church school. For example, the school's leaders have not just addressed the areas for development from the previous report but have identified how expectations of being a church school have moved forward and have responded in a positive way to them. This is evident in the work the school is doing to identify how its Christian values are lived out in school life and how spirituality is at the heart of the curriculum. A growing understanding of these aspects is contributing to the greater impact of collective worship and the quality of RE as well as becoming embedded in the children's learning. Leaders and managers, including governors know that there is still scope to do better and have a very clear understanding of what this entails. What makes the school outstanding is the extent to which the school has moved forward to meet the more rigorous requirements of the new inspection framework in a short amount of time. The headteacher is the key driver in this, being fully supported by the staff and governors. They have a very clear understanding of the school as a church school and through regular monitoring and evaluation are able to accurately identify next steps. Therefore the school has an excellent capacity to continue to improve. The role of the foundation governor group in monitoring and evaluating is an aspect of leadership that should evolve as the school refines its understanding spirituality. Parents say that they like the way the school approaches its Christian character by giving children time to learn about faith in a 'non-pressurised' way that allows them the 'space to make up their own mind'. Parents appreciate that the school's values have Christian teaching at their centre and say that their children will ask questions at home about things they have learnt about these values in school. The school has excellent links with the parish church which is adjacent to the school. Children attend collective worship in the church every week and say that it is an everyday part of the school. The contribution from church members to these times, some from other parishes, is an example of the commitment to the life of the school. A particularly good example of the relationship is the success of the half termly messy church run by church members and held in the school hall. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

