



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Giles Church of England Voluntary Aided Infant School

Dene Road
Ashtead
Surrey KT21 1EA

Previous SIAS grade: Satisfactory

Current SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: Guildford

Local authority: Surrey

Dates of inspection: 28 June 2016

Date of last inspection: 26 June 2013

School's unique reference number: 125190

Headteacher: Tim Smith

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

School context

St Giles is a smaller than average infant school with 104 pupils on roll, arranged in four class groups. It is situated in a residential area. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. The majority of pupils are from a white British heritage and from favourable socio-economic backgrounds. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Giles as a Church of England school are good

- The school's vision has made an important contribution to the improvements in teaching and learning.
- Acts of worship are clearly based on Bible teaching.
- School leaders are developing their understanding of what it means to be a church school and are applying this to identify further improvements.

Areas to improve

- Revisit the school's vision to clarify the links between a core set of Christian values and an understanding of spirituality so that opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of them can be identified throughout the curriculum.
- Ensure that there are clearer opportunities for religious education (RE) and collective worship to promote explicit core Christian values.
- Develop the skills of leaders and managers, including governors, to effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of new initiatives.

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

Excellent progress has been made over the last three years in improving the quality of education and pupils now achieve well above national expectations and have very positive attitudes towards their learning. One of the main factors in this improvement has been the establishment of a vision, created in 2014, that focusses on developing independent learners who have a curiosity for learning in a stimulating environment. This vision has the care of pupils at its centre. Relationships throughout the school community are excellent. Thirteen Christian values were identified to support the vision and are included in some documentation. They have not yet become part of the language of the school community and are not yet fully articulated. For example, pupils don't readily refer to them when talking about relationships or link them to the Christian ethos. The school leadership is aware that thirteen values are a lot to link successfully to the vision and Christian distinctiveness. Nevertheless, pupils show values such as respect, empathy and trust in everyday life in the school. The school has begun to explore a shared understanding of what spirituality means to adults and staff have attempted to link them to the thirteen values. They are aware this is difficult to achieve and are exploring how to clarify a more manageable core set of values that connects to the vision and supports the pupils' personal spiritual growth. Pupils have a good appreciation of right from wrong and an awareness of justice and fairness. They know that everyone should be treated equally and with respect for their views and opinions. Some pupils are developing their understanding that not all situations have simple solutions and that moral dilemmas are part of life. Religious education makes a good contribution to the pupils' social and cultural development and helps them to appreciate a range of faith and beliefs.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is securely based on Christian teaching through the contribution of the 'Open the Book' which teaches pupils stories from the Bible each week over a three year programme. These form the basis of worship planning and themes from them are explored later in the week by pupils in class. They have a very good knowledge of Bible stories and understand the messages that they convey and know that these messages can be applied to their own lives and help them to be kind and caring towards others. Pupils find it harder to link these stories to the thirteen Christian values and then link them to the school vision. Pupils have a good understanding of the purpose of prayer and know that it can be used to say thank you to God or to ask for help for someone else in need. They talk with confidence about the nature of the Trinity and are at ease to share their thoughts. Pupils say 'God is the Father who takes care of us' and 'Jesus teaches us about God'. They say the Holy Spirit is 'kind of the same as the other two and helps God to lead us'. There are good opportunities for pupils to pray during the school day and they respond with respect and appropriate reverence. Some monitoring of worship has been undertaken by governors which has informed them what pupils think about worship. A more formal system to regularly monitor the impact of worship is not yet in place.

The effectiveness of religious education is good

Pupils make good progress in RE and the standard of work is at least in line with national expectations by the end of Year 2. Work in books and the excellent class faith Books, show that pupils are able to reflect on what they have studied as they have a secure knowledge and understanding of RE for their age. Teaching and learning is of a high quality with well-planned lessons clearly focussed on the syllabus content which is delivered using a variety of learning styles. Pupils respond very well and are engaged and enthusiastic in lessons. They are eager to talk and explore ideas and listen to the views of others with keen interest and respect. The quality of their responses demonstrates that it is when pupils are challenged in their thinking, that their learning is at a deeper level. Class 'Faith Books' capture these moments and are an excellent way of gathering evidence of the pupils' understanding and contribute to assessment.

There are times when because pupils have a secure knowledge of the subject, challenge could come earlier in their learning so that progress was even greater. The school is developing assessment of RE. Pupils are assessed every half term in their knowledge and understanding. Data has not yet been used to track pupils across the school. The current syllabus is coming to the end of the first year of implementation and its impact has yet to be reviewed along with the accuracy and usefulness of assessment. For example, although there has been some internal moderation of standards, this has not been done in comparison with external standards. The RE leader has developed the role and is growing in confidence and understanding. She regularly attends courses to keep up to date with the latest developments in RE and has a good grasp of the priorities needed to continue to improve the subject.

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

Good progress has been made since the previous inspection in developing an ethos which is more securely rooted in the school's Christian foundation. This is reflected in the vision statement and the way it is lived out in the quality of care for pupils and in their high academic achievement. The drive to raise standards over the last three years has been very successful and the headteacher, supported by other leaders and managers, feels that the school is now in the position to look afresh at its ethos and values and involve the whole school community in identifying a clearer articulation of the vision that lies at the heart of the school. The headteacher's growing understanding of the meaning and purpose of being a church school places him in a good position to now drive improvements in this important aspect of the school. He is well supported by the staff and governors. Crystallising the Christian ethos is a distinct element of overall school improvement planning and will help to ensure that it is an integral aspect of the school's ongoing development. The governor with responsibility for monitoring Christian distinctiveness makes an important contribution through leadership of the 'Open the Book' team and involvement in gathering feedback from pupils on their views on collective worship and RE. As the school implements challenging initiatives, so governors are aware that they need to develop new skills to enable them to monitor and evaluate the impact of them effectively. Links with local churches have developed significantly since the previous inspection. Pupils say that the parish church is part of the life of the school and that the celebration of major Christian festivals there helps them to have a better understanding of the meaning of Easter and Christmas. Members of the clergy make a greater contribution to acts of worship in school and the vicar supports the school pastorally and through involvement with the governing body. The work of the Youth and Families Worker is an excellent example of the commitment of the church and its involvement in the life of the school. With the appointment of a new Youth and families Worker, the school and church are keen to see this relationship develop further. Parents say that the school has the right balance between promoting core Christian values and being inclusive. They feel that the values help their children to understand relationships and making the right moral choices in life. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

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