



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Sutton Benger Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Chestnut Road
Sutton Benger
Chippenham
Wiltshire
SN15 4RP

Diocese: Bristol

Local authority: Wiltshire

Date of inspection: 7 July 2014

Date of last inspection: 7 July 2009

School's unique reference number: 126486

Headteacher: Mrs Hayley Roberts

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Muriel Griffiths – 268

School context

Sutton Benger is a small village school with 139 pupils on roll, who come mainly from surrounding villages and further afield. The majority of children are white British. The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus and through a statement of special educational needs is above average. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is well below average. The headteacher has been in post for a year.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sutton Benger Voluntary Aided Primary as a Church of England school are outstanding

- An ethos where children are valued as individuals and whose talents are given every opportunity to flourish.
- The strength of the school's Christian values making an impact on children's academic, personal and social development.
- The inspirational leadership of the headteacher, together with the religious education/SMSC leader, in developing the school's distinctive character.

Areas to Improve

- Involve children more frequently in planning, leading and evaluating collective worship.

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

Sutton Benger school is a welcoming and happy Christian community. Its positive ethos, with a strong emphasis on inclusion, ensures that each child feels valued and special. Children enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in the excellent attendance. The warm, caring Christian ethos is evident in the excellent relationships enjoyed at all levels throughout the school community. The school's values have an excellent impact on children's very good achievement and the school shows strong awareness of providing extra support for vulnerable children with careful and accurate tracking of their progress. Children have a strong voice in school through the School Council which enables them to feel highly valued as members of the school community. Children also make an important contribution to the evaluation of the school as a church school through questionnaires and discussions with the RE leader. The strong Christian ethos, collective worship and religious education (RE) are particularly effective in supporting the spiritual and moral and cultural development of all children. There are many excellent opportunities provided for children's spiritual development, especially through quiet reflection. An area for development in the previous inspection was to 'embed spiritual development through the school' and since then a beautiful Peace Garden has been developed in the school grounds, all classrooms have reflective areas and 'Pause for Thought' is regularly led by the vicar at appropriate levels according to the age of the children. Children use these areas for quiet reflection, write their thoughts in reflection books and also write their own prayers. All these developments, together with opportunities in the creative curriculum, encourage children to reflect and think more deeply. There is a strong commitment to the development of the whole child within the context and commitment of a supportive school community. Behaviour amongst all groups of children is excellent and can be attributed to the way in which everyone understands the Christian values and wishes to live by them. Children have excellent awareness of how the school's Christian values are at the heart of the school and can explain their meanings. For example, they talk about the current value of 'peace' and know that it can mean 'being calm' or 'stopping bad things happening across the world'. Children are very proud of their school and enjoy talking about what they are learning and the many activities that are provided for them. They describe the school as 'brilliant, where we learn about Christianity and a place where everyone cares and cherishes one another'. Parents like the way that children show care for one another and how the older children 'look out' for those younger than themselves. The way that the school promotes an understanding of other diverse communities is excellent through the 'Box of Delights'. Each classroom has a box, 'from fictitious children living in the UK', which has encouraged children to investigate their various faiths and cultures. A display helps children to consider all the various faiths and cultures represented.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is explicitly Christian and central to daily life at Sutton Benger. This is because it is highly effective in promoting the school's Christian values. It is important to the school community because it brings everyone together to worship God and demonstrate their care for each other as a school family. One child said that 'it is a time to learn about God and have some peaceful thinking time'. Anglican practice is promoted very well. This is apparent in the lighting of the candle, the responses between the children and the person leading and also the focus table on which is placed the cross and cloth in the appropriate liturgical colour. The school visits the church for all major Christian festivals for services which are well supported by parents, governors and the local community. Members of the ministry team attend weekly to lead worship and members of staff also have opportunities to lead worship. Children enjoy collective worship because they are always engaged in the various elements of worship and frequently participate in aspects such as role play or prayers. There are regular opportunities provided for them to plan and lead worship and children say that they would appreciate planning worship more often. Themes are based on the school's Christian values with the use of appropriate Bible stories and other moral tales which promote Christian values and also the

school's Christian ethos. This was evident in an act of worship observed on the day of the inspection based on the current value, 'peace'. Children enjoyed a story to help them to understand the role of a peacemaker. Worship promotes spiritual development very effectively. This was apparent during the quiet time for prayer and reflection when children were thinking about being peacemakers and applying the concept to their everyday lives. The children then sang 'Peace, perfect peace' followed by a prayer about 'peace' from a book of prayers compiled by all adults in the school community (parents, staff, governors, the ministry team and the Parochial Church Council). Everyone leaving the hall was presented with a piece of paper with the words of Matthew 5 verse 9 – 'Happy are those who work for peace; God will call them his children.' This provided a very appropriate ending to collective worship and gave everyone attending, something to think about further. The school and church work very closely together to share the worship life of the school with the local community, with such events as 'Experience the Lord's Prayer' and other similar times linked to major Christian festivals. The vicar has taught the children about the Lord's Prayer and also helped them to begin to understand the Biblical concept of the Trinity, of which they now have increased awareness. The worship co-ordinator ensures that worship has a very high priority in the daily life of the school. Children have opportunities to give their views about collective worship and it is clear that they understand how the school's values impact on their behaviour.

The effectiveness of the religious education outstanding

Standards of attainment of all learners are well above average in RE. They are in line with other core subjects. This is due to the outstanding quality of teaching in both key stages and Reception class and the systems in place for regularly tracking the progress of pupils. Religious education has a high profile at Sutton Benger. As a result, it has a positive effect on children and they enjoy RE lessons. They recognise its importance and say that it 'teaches them about Christianity and to respect what other people believe'. Children are developing an understanding of Christianity and learning about a broad range of religious beliefs. The curriculum for RE is creative and varied and it strongly supports spiritual, moral and cultural development. Children make good progress because excellent teaching is providing many opportunities for children to be interactive and engaged. This was evident on the day of the inspection during a lesson with the youngest children in the school who were learning to express a personal response to the natural world. The teacher skilfully helped the children to understand that the world that God created is a very special place. Using a Persona Doll (an approach to help children consider the feelings of others), called Elizabeth, the children enjoyed looking at 'special things' in her Golden Box and were helped to work out that the special place that they came from was God's beautiful world. The children then were given opportunities to hunt for special things of their own in the school grounds. They talked confidently about which sense they used, such as touch, as one child stroked a soft feather and explained why it was special to her. This was followed by a 'pause for thought' as the teacher helped children to reflect on God's beautiful world and if they wished, to say a thank you prayer. Learning objectives are clearly shared with the children and teachers use good questioning skills to develop children's thinking. The very good use of learning partners, well planned lessons and skilful teaching an example of high quality teaching strategies seen throughout the school. In a lesson observed with older children, the teacher was helping children to learn to use religious vocabulary to suggest meaning for religious actions. They looked at a picture of the Western Wall in Jerusalem, the most significant site for Jewish people, and discussed what it might be like to be there. Children were confident to express their own opinions as they knew that what they had to say would be valued by others. Children were helped to reflect on the importance of writing a prayer or intention, by having the opportunity to write their own prayers before placing them in their own 'Western Wall'. Children were clearly used to quiet reflection as they took part in this activity. The RE subject leaders lead the subject very effectively ensuring that it plays an important role in the life of this church school. They have excellent knowledge of their subject and are constantly striving to move the subject forward, as well as working on spirituality and the Christian vision. The RE link governor works closely with the subject leaders and this close working partnership

between teachers and governors helps to ensure that standards remain high.

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

The vision of the headteacher, together with the RE/SMSC leader, for the Christian ethos of the school and their strong commitment to this vision are inspirational. School leaders and governors have a well-established understanding of how the Christian faith underpins all aspects of the school's life. At Sutton Benger, a community has been created where Christian values are not only expressed, but are 'lived out' and are at the heart of the school. The quality of leadership by the headteacher, RE/SMSC leader and governors, well supported by staff, contributes significantly to the success of this Church of England school. Sutton Benger is a school that does not stand still because the headteacher and governors seek constantly to promote further the school's Christian character. The school has a very accurate picture of its strengths and areas for development through rigorous self-evaluation. Children, staff and governors were involved in decision making about the school's values and mission statement, which has meant that the whole school community has ownership. The format of the vision and values has been developed into a 'child friendly' version so that all children can understand them through the poem that has been created. The headteacher's spiritual leadership is strong, imaginative creative and effective and ensures a permeating Christian ethos which is an outstanding feature of the school. The partnership with the local church is strong and is evidence of the way that their lives are closely intertwined. For instance, the 'experience activities' celebrating Christian festivals organised by the school, church and local community enhance the lives of everyone involved. The vicar is clearly very involved in the daily life of the school, working for example with children in 'Pause for Thought' and providing support for staff. The school also has good links with the village community. This is particularly reflected, for example, in the way that two children each week visit the pre-school to help with lunch and also, reading to them. Parents say that they appreciate the family feeling of the school with older children 'looking out' for younger members of the school. They also like the way that the headteacher and staff keep them fully informed and involved in school life. The enthusiasm and commitment by the school's leadership and management ensure that the pupils of Sutton Benger school have every opportunity to grow and develop into mature, knowledgeable and caring young people.

SIAMS report July 2014 Sutton Benger CE (VA) Primary School Sutton Benger Chippenham SN15 4RP