



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### Shere Church of England Voluntary Aided Infant School

Gomshall Lane

Shere, Surrey GU5 9HB

**Previous SIAS grade: Outstanding**

**Current SIAMS grade: Good**

**Diocese: Guildford**

Local authority: Surrey

Dates of inspection: 25 February 2016

Date of last inspection: 13 January 2011

School's unique reference number: 125246

Headteacher: Victoria Voller

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

#### School context

Shere is smaller than the average size infant school with 64 pupils on roll. Pupils are arranged into three class groups. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. The majority of pupils are from a white British heritage. Attendance is above the national average. The headteacher was appointed in September 2015.

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

- The introduction of values rooted in Christian teaching is strengthening the pupils' understanding of how Bible stories have relevance to their own lives.
- Acts of worship are becoming increasingly meaningful to pupils as they make links between the messages they hear and Bible teaching.
- The headteacher's commitment to strengthening the Christian ethos is making a positive difference to the quality of relationships throughout the whole school community.

#### Areas to improve

Provide greater opportunities for pupils to be involved in the exploration of their personal spirituality by:

- Developing a shared understanding of spirituality across the whole school community so that there are clearly defined opportunities for reflection across the curriculum.
- Developing themes in collective worship so that Bible stories have greater relevance to the pupils' own experiences.
- Developing the use of questioning in religious education (RE) so that pupils have more opportunities to explore their own learning.

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

A core set of six values have been chosen by the whole school community and are in the process of being embedded in the life of the school. Pupils are beginning to have a better understanding of each of these values as they are explored in a carefully devised programme delivered through collective worship. This is ensuring that an explicit Christian meaning to each of these values is clearly given. As yet, only some of the six values have been introduced but, where they have been explored, pupils are gaining an appreciation of how a value, such as honesty, can help to make them a better person. They are developing their understanding of how honesty, justice and compassion have an impact on how they treat others. Relationships throughout the school are strengthening because, as parents say, their children are more encouraged to question and explore what they hear and think. Some work has begun to explore how this impacts on the development of a personal spirituality. There is a better understanding of what it means as part of spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development and how including aspects of this in curriculum planning can be done in a meaningful way. The establishment of reflection areas in each classroom is a positive move towards finding ways to provide opportunities for pupils to challenge their own thinking and the ideas of others. The introduction of a new curriculum model in January 2016, with specific 'drivers' such as curiosity and reflection, is also beginning to make an impact on the way that values are incorporated into the learning. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their learning and make good progress and achieve standards that are at least in line with national expectations. They say that they make good friends in school and feel that they are respected by other children and adults for who they are, regardless of background. Pupils have a growing awareness of the diversity of cultures and faiths in the world and modern Britain. They know that they should be tolerant towards others and that this is an essential part of the life of the school.

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

Provision for collective worship has improved since September 2016 and this is having a greater impact on the pupils' understanding of how Christian values teach them how to lead their lives. An audit of collective worship carried out by the headteacher led to an action plan that identified the need for a new planning format with clearer links between themes and the new values. Worship themes are now delivered with more direct messages based on Bible teaching that lead to a greater understanding of how they relate to the pupils' own experiences. This has not been fully explored and pupils are not yet confident to make strong links between values, Bible teaching and their own lives. Acts of worship are distinctly Christian in nature with prayer, reflection and religious songs. The use of candles and other signs and symbols reflect the school's Anglican foundation with pupils knowing, for example, the importance of the Lord's Prayer. They have a good appreciation that prayer is a way to talk with God to say sorry, thank you or ask for help. They appreciate that prayer is a difficult thing to understand but feel that somehow it can help. As one pupil expressed, 'it sort of helps with a spelling test by getting in your brain and helping you to think'. The introduction of the prayer tree in the hall and reflection areas in classrooms give pupils good opportunities to pray at different times in the school day. Pupils are developing their understanding of the nature of the Trinity. They explain how God and Jesus are 'technically the same' although 'one is in heaven and the other on earth' but 'somehow, both are still all around us at the same time'. They are less sure of the Holy Spirit who they think 'might look after us when God and Jesus are busy'. Pupils have some opportunity to be involved in planning and leading worship but these have not been fully explored so that pupils have a more direct and regular involvement in the delivery of worship themes. The school has started to introduce more robust procedures to evaluate the impact of worship through audits and more frequent observations by staff and governors.

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

Religious education is good because standards are at least in line with national expectations by the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 2 and the subject is making an increasingly valuable contribution to the pupils' moral and social development. Pupils make good progress in RE and acquire a secure knowledge of Christianity as well as learning about Judaism and Islam. They apply this knowledge during lessons that provide opportunities for them to have a better understanding of what they are learning. Pupils respond well to these times and engage with enthusiasm when discussing their own views and opinions about faith and belief. Lessons are well planned and ensure that clear learning outcomes are linked to the scheme of work which covers the agreed RE syllabus. Teachers ask questions that assess pupils' knowledge and encourage them to think more deeply so that they have greater understanding. At times, pupils ask very mature questions, or have ideas with the potential to enhance their learning. The potential for these opportunities to be followed through, so that pupils' own learning is encouraged, are not being fully explored. Assessment of RE is being developed as teachers become more confident to make judgements about the progress made and standards achieved. Some moderation of pupils' work has taken place by the RE leader but more needs to be done for all staff to assess securely the contribution that pupils' responses make to their understanding. The RE leader is the headteacher. She is fully aware of the strengths of the subject and has accurately identified areas that need improvement. She is committed to the place of RE within the curriculum of a church school and ensures that it has a high profile.

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

The headteacher has made a strong start since her appointment in September 2015 in reviewing the Christian foundation in a process that has involved the whole school community. This has led to some important initiatives, such as explicit Christian values, that are in the process of being successfully implemented and whose impact has yet to be fully embedded. The headteacher is rapidly developing her understanding of what it means to be a church school that has the wellbeing and academic progress of pupils at the heart of all that the school does. Members of the school community, including parents, say that the direction she is taking the school is the right one because the vision is inclusive and closely matches their views on how they want their children to experience opportunities to explore what faith and belief mean. The headteacher is fully supported by governors who have a sound understanding of the school as a church school and are aware of areas where the school can improve further. Leaders and managers are developing their involvement in monitoring and evaluating the impact of the Christian distinctiveness but systems are not yet sufficiently rigorous to use high quality evidence to analyse impact and identify further improvements. Links with the local church are strong and the rector, supported by other members of the ministry team, make an important contribution to the worshipping life of the school. The regular celebration of major Christian festivals in the church and the open invitation to families at other times is a reflection of the close link between school and church. This has been further enhanced through the joint support for charitable giving. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

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