

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Arreton St George's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

School Lane
Arreton
Isle of Wight
PO30 3AD

Diocese:	Portsmouth
Local authority:	Isle of Wight
Dates of inspection:	9 July 2013
Date of last inspection:	23 April 2008
School's unique reference number:	118180
Headteacher:	Jessica Mead
Inspector's name and number:	Andrew Rickett

School context

Arreton St George's is a smaller than average size primary school set within a rural community. The school entered a federation with another church primary school in 2009 and shares a single governing body. It became an all-through primary school in 2011 following local authority reorganisation and has doubled in size since the previous SIAS inspection. Children come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds from across the Island. There are 159 pupils on roll arranged into five class groups. Nearly all pupils come from a white British background. The number of pupils with identified learning needs is below the national average. The proportion eligible for the pupil premium is lower than average. Attendance is in line with the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Arreton St George's as a Church of England school are outstanding.

Arreton St George's has made good progress since the previous inspection by adding depth to its understanding of what it means to be a church school. This has given greater clarity to the school's articulation of a distinctive Christian ethos interpreted within the context of the community it serves. This distinctive ethos is underpinned by clearly articulated Christian values and spiritual development. These make a significant impact on the children's well-being as well as contributing to success in the children's academic achievement.

Established strengths

- The extent to which children and adults in school articulate a clear vision based on explicit Christian values.
- The quality of experiences for children and adults in school to develop a personal spirituality.
- The commitment of the headteacher and her staff in driving forward the impact of the school's Christian ethos.

Focus for development

- Building on current practice, develop a whole school approach to how an understanding of spirituality can impact across all areas of the curriculum.
- Develop monitoring of spirituality by identifying the growth in understanding as children progress through the school.
- Develop ways through which children can contribute to raising awareness of the impact of the school's values and spirituality among all members of the school community.

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

The school has made excellent progress since the previous inspection in developing its Christian ethos in a way that gives it more meaning and purpose to both children and adults in school. The identification of three distinct values in a process that involved children, with their roots in explicit Christian teaching, has successfully provided the school with a framework through which they are exploring how these values link with all aspects of the life of the school. An outstanding aspect of the school as a church school is the extent to which these values make an impact on children's well-being and achievement in their learning. For example, Year 6 children were encouraged to empathise with events at the Last Supper and write about them from the disciples' point of view. The result is some very powerful writing using mature vocabulary that reflects the depth and quality of understanding of their knowledge of the Biblical event as well as high quality literacy skills. In examples such as this, children use their understanding of all three of the school's core values of compassion, friendship and thankfulness. Together with the development in values education, the school has also moved forward considerably in its understanding of spirituality and in how to provide quality experiences that help children to develop a personal spirituality. This is reflected in the maturity with which children articulate what spirituality means to them. For example, some children describe spirituality as 'a feeling inside' that 'guides how to behave and respond to things'. For others it is being surrounded by beauty or friends. Children are able to relate this to the school's Christian ethos but with older children also saying that 'you don't have to be Christian to be spiritual'. The impact of spiritual development and the core values is seen through collective worship, personal social and health education, the approach to behaviour and sex and relationships education. The impact of these many opportunities to engage in spiritual experiences, alongside the core values, is recognised by both children and adults in school who say that the school is 'a much friendlier place' with 'everyone much more willing to help one another'. There is still more that the school could do to develop the children's potential in understanding the core values and in ensuring that children are making progress in this understanding as they move through the school. The school is aware of this and is looking at how to monitor this as well as ensuring that their approach to spiritual develop is consistent across all areas of the curriculum. The care that teachers demonstrate towards children makes an impact on the quality of relationships throughout the school community and contributes to the excellent behaviour of the children and the positive attitudes they have towards the school and their learning. The emphasis on Christian teaching has enabled children to have a good understanding of right from wrong and a developing sense of issues related to social justice across communities both locally and around the world. Religious education makes a very important contribution to this by reflecting the core values and giving children many opportunities to reflect on important concepts and issues.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

One of the strengths of collective worship is the connection that children make between the messages that they hear in acts of worship and the life that they lead in school and beyond. Children readily articulate the impact that the core values are making to the quality of life in the school. They explain how Bible stories help them to understand that Jesus taught us to love each other in friendship and to show this through compassion. Acts of worship are very clearly planned in a process which involves all staff and some governors each term. The themes are clearly planned to get across messages that relate to explicit links to the school ethos. These themes are supplemented with regular reference to Christian festivals that mark the church year. These give children a wealth of opportunities to explore their understanding of difficult concepts such as the Trinity. Children are developing their own interpretation of what Trinity means to them and in some cases this can be quite profound. For example, one child expressed his view that each of the school's three core values is equally as important because, just like the Trinity, 'one on its own doesn't make much sense'. The establishment of two key stage steering groups involves children in the regular planning of acts of worship. The commitment of the children and teachers to this group is a reflection of the importance that the school gives to worship. Children say that they enjoy being a part of these groups because they are offering something back to the school that is important.

Interviews carried out by the headteacher and governors with children have proved useful in identifying what children think about worship and have helped identify what children would like to improve. These interviews, along with the use of a worship board, staff worship book and the steering groups, provide very effective systems that ensure collective worship is regularly monitored and evaluated. Prayer is an important aspect of collective worship and in the wider life of the school. Children have a mature understanding of the purpose of prayer and know that it is a time to talk to God about your worries or to ask Him to help others in need. Older children are growing in their understanding of how God answers prayer. Children are confident to talk about prayer and say that they value the opportunity to be 'quiet and think about serious issues'. Acts of worship follow a pattern that is recognisably Anglican in its character. Simple words of liturgy begin each act of worship to which children respond with an appropriate reverence. The Lord's Prayer is familiar to children some of whom can talk about its significance to them.

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

The headteacher is very well supported by her staff and governors in their commitment to on-going development as a church school. They have an excellent understanding of how Christian values and spirituality make a difference to the well-being and learning of the children and how to ensure that they are put at the heart of the school's mission. The enthusiasm with which teachers are embracing the development of spirituality is a reflection of their passion for meeting the needs of all learners as a whole person. Leaders and managers, including governors, have very effective systems in place to monitor and evaluate the impact of the Christian distinctiveness and have a clear picture of where the school is mainly because this involves regular feedback from the children. An important aspect of the leaders' articulation of the impact of the Christian ethos is their understanding of the link between ethos and children's progress in their learning and its contribution to identifying priorities in whole school development planning. For example, the school is keen to explore further how to embed spirituality throughout all areas of the curriculum in a meaningful way. The extent to which parents and the wider community have shared and understood this aspect of the school's Christian ethos has been less well developed but is being addressed in consultation with children themselves. The school has good links with the local Anglican church whose vicar regularly leads acts of worship and is a member of the governing body. There are also links with the Methodist church whose minister is the chair of governors. Children regard both churches important to them as an expression of being a church school. The leadership of religious education (RE) and collective worship is given priority. Religious education is enjoyed by children who say that they value the opportunity to study Christianity and other world faiths. The joint leaders for RE ensure that the subject has a high profile within the school curriculum. There are very good quality displays and reflection areas in all classrooms and corridors that celebrate the school's Christian character. Parents feel that the school has struck the right balance between promoting a distinctive Christian message and being inclusive to all families. They say, for example, that it is a good thing that children say prayers as part of the school day whether they have a faith or not. In particular, parents felt strongly that the recent link with an Islamic school was a very positive experience for their children. Children echoed this view when they explained the importance of 'living out our core value of friendship'.

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