



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### Stone Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Oxford Road  
Stone, Aylesbury  
HP17 8PD

**Diocese: Oxford**

**Previous SIAMS grade: Good**

Local authority: Buckinghamshire

Date of Inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> November 2014

Date of last inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> December 2009

School's unique reference number: 110420

Headteacher: Claire Mirams

Inspector's name and number: Lynne Thorogood (799)

#### School context

Stone Primary school is smaller than average with 209 pupils on roll. The Head Teacher joined the school after the last SIAS inspection. Pupils are drawn from the village of Stone and the surrounding area, including parts of Aylesbury, and are predominantly white British. Proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and the Pupil Premium are low. The percentage with Special Educational Needs is average.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Stone Combined Voluntary Controlled School as a Church of England school are good

- The explicit Christian values of the school, articulated and understood by all, underpin the determination of leaders and staff to continually raise standards for all pupils regardless of starting points.
- Strategic planning and decision making by managers and governors is guided by the school's Christian values.
- The school's Bible-based values link directly to the 'golden rules' and rewards system, resulting not only in good behaviour by pupils but a strongly developed moral code based on Christian principles.
- The pupils who are Worship Leaders are highly committed to their role and make an outstanding contribution to the planning, leading and evaluation of worship.

#### Areas to improve

- Develop a robust assessment system to monitor, assess and evaluate the impact of 'Wow Days' as the main provision for the teaching of religious education.
- Widen pupils' experience of the Anglican tradition including the use of common texts in worship and common liturgical structure to deepen their understanding of Anglican distinctiveness

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

The school's Christian values are high profile on the website and visible in and around the school. "The Christian character is the anchor of the school", observed one parent. The culture of Christian fellowship is driven by these well embedded and Biblically rooted values. Each of the values is set as a monthly school theme, developed through worship. Pupils readily link the values to associated Bible stories and texts and are keen to explain how they affect the conduct of their daily lives. Christian values are articulated in many of the school's policy documents including the behaviour policy. The 'golden rules' code of conduct and the reward system link directly with the values. As a result, behaviour, relationships and attitudes to school are very positive and pupils' moral understanding is well developed. Pupils make good academic progress in the core areas, and teachers and leaders use data effectively to track pupils' achievement. Interventions are put in place to promote further progress when pupils lag behind but guided by the school's values, staff also recognise the need to support social and personal development of individuals and groups, and leaders articulate their determination to help 'the whole child and every child' to do as well as they can. This reflects the underlying Christian principles on which the school is run, and results in good levels of social, moral spiritual and cultural development as well as good academic outcomes for pupils. The teaching of religious education (RE) has been restructured recently to establish whole-day enquiry-based RE workshops ('Wow Days') each half-term. Evidence from previous 'Wow Days', in folders, on display and as evidenced by pupils in discussion indicates that these experiences have resulted in positive growth of social, moral, spiritual and cultural development for pupils of all ages. On the inspection day the youngest children were learning about signs, symbols and ceremonies they might see in a church, and had transformed the home-corner of their classroom into a chapel, showing good understanding of its features. The oldest pupils were engaged in analysis of similarities and differences in the Gospel stories of Christ's birth. All were highly motivated and challenged by the work, but at the moment the school does not have well-developed monitoring and assessment systems in place to assess pupil progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the new teaching model in promoting learning, enhancing the school's Christian character or developing understanding of a range of faiths and cultures. Links with a school in India help pupils to understand that Christianity is a global world faith. They understand the need to help others as part of their Christian service and have raised funds for this and other charitable causes. The school is both distinctive in its Christian character and inclusive in its approach to diversity.

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

Worship holds an important place in the life of the school. Pupils benefit from a varied experience of worship led by a range of people, including the local vicar, who leads the 'Open the Book' service each week. This is frequently interactive and includes singing, drama and role-play in which pupils of all ages participate. Daily worship is well planned and covers Christian themes and festivals over the church year, with a strong emphasis on the school's Christian values. Following recommendations in the last inspection report, aspects of worship have been further developed with the establishment of a small group of worship leaders, older pupils who meet regularly with the head teacher to plan and organise worship. They and other pupils regularly lead worship and also monitor and evaluate it through the use of 'worship journals', books placed in every class in which staff and pupils record their views and reflections on the day's worship service, influencing future developments. This group take a very serious and mature attitude to their responsibilities, and their work and ideas have had a significant positive impact on the quality and kind of worship offered. They have developed worship themes, music and prayer, and say they are "trying to make sure that worship is suitable for every year group." They also say it is "important to find out what people have learned from worship". To contribute to the SIAMS inspection two of these pupils prepared a high-quality document outlining the group's work and achievements, and were preparing a presentation to take to a staff meeting the following week, demonstrating their high level of commitment. The school prayer is used regularly and pupils have opportunities to write

their own prayers for use in worship. Most know the Lord's prayer, but many are not familiar with other common liturgical texts, which restricts their knowledge and understanding of the Anglican tradition. Some older pupils articulate an age-appropriate understanding of the Holy Trinity, saying, for instance, "Father God is in Heaven, His human form is Jesus and the Holy Spirit surrounds us all, but they are all part of one God." The opportunity for prayer at other times of day outside of collective worship is inconsistent, with some classes saying grace before lunch and a prayer at home time and others omitting one or both of these. A parent commented, "My daughter said she missed the 'goodbye' prayer at the end of the day." Pupils say they enjoy both collective worship and RE lessons, and they enjoy going to church for regular services, when they are joined by parents, who appreciate the opportunity to feel part of the close community of worship created by the school.

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

The head teacher, supported by staff and governors, provides good leadership of the school as a church school. The head teacher's determination and commitment are enhanced by working in close and effective collaboration with foundation governors who provide both support and challenge. The role of members of the governing body has been developed and extended in line with recommendations in the last SIAS report, and their expertise is now very effectively deployed. Governors have a good understanding of their role. They monitor and evaluate the work of the school rigorously, ensuring that issues are identified and addressed through the school's improvement planning. Collective worship and RE are monitored with commitment and a genuine desire to improve further. Through their evaluation of the school as a church school foundation governors work with the head teacher to identify strengths and next steps for improvement, which become part of the school improvement plan. Governors have a good understanding of the school's performance data because they have undertaken training. This enables them to offer informed challenge to the head teacher. The Christian values of the school are influential in decision making and strategic planning, including prioritising spending. For instance, funds were ring-fenced for the resourcing of the RE 'Wow Days', ensuring that this initiative would have the best possible opportunity to succeed. Governors have also given financial support to staff members who have undertaken training with a specific focus on RE and worship, and on leadership in church schools. This has enabled teachers to gain qualifications at MA level, to take on additional responsibility and to move to senior management positions in other C of E schools. This demonstrates a strong commitment to investing in Christian distinctiveness by leaders and managers. Partnerships with other church schools have enabled some sharing of good practice, particularly in the development of worship and the teaching of RE, and firm plans are in place to develop these further. Partnerships with the church, parents and the wider community are strong. Many parents are strongly committed to the school's Church of England foundation. All those interviewed hold the school's Christian status in high esteem, including one parent who said she was not a church-goer, but had been opened up to faith since her child had been at the school. Parents summed up their feelings with a range of comments: "At this school, you know the home values will be carried on."; "Stone School produces more well-rounded children"; "Everyone looks after everyone., child or adult, whoever they are, wherever they are from."

