



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church**

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

### Cornerstone Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Bader Way, Whiteley

Hampshire PO15 7JH

**Previous SIAS grade: Not previously inspected**

**Current SIAMS grade: Good**

**Diocese: Portsmouth**

Local authority: Hampshire

Dates of inspection: 24 February 2016

Date of last inspection: Not applicable

School's unique reference number: 139548

Headteacher: Tim Clarke

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

#### School context

Cornerstone is smaller than the average size primary school with 103 children on roll. The school opened in September 2013 and currently has children from Reception to Year 3. The large majority of children are from a white British heritage. The number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average as is the number entitled to receive the pupil premium. Attendance is above the national average. The headteacher was appointed in September 2014. The school occupies temporary accommodation.

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

- An explicit core set of values is rooted in Christian teaching and becoming increasingly central to the life of the whole school community.
- Collective worship makes a valuable contribution to the children's growing awareness of spirituality and how Christian teaching can help them lead better lives.
- The headteacher's commitment to the development of the ethos is ensuring that the school is rapidly moving forward in establishing a distinctive Christian vision.

#### Areas to improve

- Develop the school's growing understanding of spirituality so that there are clearer links with core Christian values and children have a greater ability to reflect on their learning and personal development.
- Provide more opportunities for children to explore their learning as an integral part of religious education (RE) so that they have greater depth to their understanding of how faith makes a difference to people's lives.
- Improve the quality of evidence gathered of children's learning in RE so that assessment is more accurate and identifies progress made.

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

The impact of the school's distinctive Christian ethos is good because a set of three core values make a difference to important aspects of the life of the school and are increasingly becoming integral to the children's learning. For example, love, hope and forgiveness underpin the school's approach to its behaviour management through the Cornerstone rules which encourage children to reflect on their actions and learn from them how to be better people. Children have a good understanding that these values help them in their relationships with others and know that being kind to one another is something they ought to try their best to do. This understanding contributes to the positive school environment in which children are happy and feel safe and confident to share their views and opinions. The core values are becoming more firmly established in the children's learning as they are more clearly identified in curriculum planning and in opportunities for teachers to explore them as an integral part of their lessons. The school has made good progress in establishing these values in a relatively short time. Likewise, the development of a clear understanding of spirituality and how it can be placed at the heart of the children's wellbeing and learning is progressing well. The school has agreed a shared framework for an approach to spirituality that is becoming more firmly understood by both adults and children. At its best, this understanding is already making a significant difference to the quality and depth of the children's thinking. For example, one child described how 'walking in the footsteps' of another person helped them to 'step forward to be a better person'. The potential to develop this understanding of spirituality has not yet been fully realised particularly through its links with the core values. The impact of the positive learning environment and high quality of care for children is reflected in the outcomes of their learning which is improving and at least in line with national expectations. Children show a marked appreciation for others and understand the need to be tolerant regardless of the background of other people. They know that the world has great diversity and that this should be respected. This in turn, impacts on the way that they treat others in the school community.

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

Acts of worship are good because they very effectively promote the core values and provide time for children to appreciate how Bible teaching can be interpreted and show how they can live out the values and therefore have meaning in their own lives. Children are acquiring a mature grasp of the values and how they can support them. For example, they say that hope 'doesn't always help' but that they 'shouldn't give up on it' because 'it isn't enough just to believe in nothing'. They explain that for Christians 'only God and Jesus can help' as long as they 'hope for things that are not bad things'. Acts of worship provide the time and space for children to reflect on their thoughts and ideas about faith and belief and therefore make a good impact on their spiritual development. Planning for collective worship is thorough and continually improving. The recent greater involvement of children in responding to questions, as well as a focus on spirituality, is increasing the expectation that they will take greater ownership of worship themes and how they are explored. Worship is distinctively Christian and follows the Anglican tradition. Children have a good appreciation that the Trinity is difficult to explain but includes God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As one young child expressed, 'God is the ruler who protects us, Jesus is the helper who tells stories, but the Holy Spirit is a bit more complicated'. There are good opportunities for children to pray throughout the school day both in acts of worship and at other times. They clearly articulate how prayer can be used to say sorry, thank you or to ask for something for someone else. They appreciate that prayers might not always be answered but that they do bring comfort and support and encourage them to be brave when in difficulty. The school has begun to gather evidence of feedback from children in a more formal way. This has not yet been established on a regular basis.

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

Religious education is good because children increasingly understand how what they learn can be applied to their everyday lives and that it also reflects what they learn in collective worship. Standards in RE are broadly in line with national expectations. Children make good progress in acquiring knowledge and in how they use it to deepen their understanding of religion. Teaching is confident and at its best allows children to take the lead in some aspects of their learning and allow them to become enthused when given opportunities to explore their own thoughts and ideas. When these moments happen, there is greater depth to the children's learning as they respond with a genuine interest to know more especially if it happens to be a particularly abstract concept that they want to follow. For example, children became animated when they found an opportunity to discuss where 'God and Jesus are right now!' These moments arise naturally out of the children's learning but their potential to generate greater depth in the children's understanding has not yet been fully explored. Evidence from these discussions is not routinely gathered to form part of the assessment process. The school is trialling a new assessment system introduced in September 2015 and this is in its early stages. The balance between recording evidence of achievement in the children's books and capturing moments when the quality of their responses exceeds the work in their books is an aspect that the school is still exploring. Children's attitudes towards RE are positive. They engage well in their lessons which create an environment in which learning is focused and progress is made. At times, learning activities do not always provide a sufficient level of challenge of which the children are capable. The RE leader was appointed in September 2015. She has quickly grasped the subject's strengths and identified areas for improvement that accurately reflect where the subject is. She is committed to the further development of RE and is clear about how it makes a contribution to the school's Christian vision.

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

The headteacher has ensured that the school has made very good progress in developing its distinctive Christian character. He is dedicated to the promotion of a vision that puts the wellbeing of children at the heart of all that the school does and that values and spirituality make a positive difference to the lives of children. Leadership and management are good because the headteacher has been successful in leading the whole school community in creating an ethos that has meaning and purpose for everyone. It is an inclusive ethos based on Christian teaching. The headteacher is fully supported by his staff and governors. They clearly articulate how the Christian ethos makes a difference to the school's approach to relationships and are increasingly appreciating how values and spirituality can enhance experiences in the classroom. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the ethos are accurate. The headteacher in particular has an excellent grasp of how to continue to develop the school as a church school and therefore the leadership and management, including governors, together have a good capacity to continue to improve. Links with local churches are strong. Local clergy make a valuable contribution to the life of the school through their commitment on the governing body and supporting the school through worship and RE lessons. The use of the school for messy church is a good example of the links between the two communities. The school has benefitted from support from the diocese which is helping to give leaders direction for the continuing development as a church school. Professional development of staff and governors ensures that they are up to date with the latest developments. The headteacher's commitment is reflected in his support for staff who wish to explore aspects of church school ethos as part of their ongoing professional training. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report February 2016 Cornerstone CE VA Primary School Whiteley PO15 7JH