



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Copthorne Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior School

Church Road
Copthorne
West Sussex
RH10 3RD

Previous SIAMS grade: Satisfactory

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Chichester

Local authority: West Sussex

Dates of inspection: 2 February 2016

Date of last inspection: 23 April 2010

School's unique reference number: 126013

Headteacher: Ann MacGregor

Inspector's name and number: Julie Burnett-Kirk 748

School context

Copthorne C E Junior school serves a widespread community including the village of Copthorne and the nearby urban town of Crawley. There are 243 children taught in 8 classes. Most children are of White British heritage. There is a small group of children of Gypsy/Roma heritage. The proportion of children with special educational needs is slightly above the national average. There are 28 pupils currently eligible for pupil premium. This is an increase from 15 children in 2014. Attendance is equal to the national average. The parish church is near to the school.

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

- The school's Christian values make a significant contribution to the caring, respectful relationships in the school and to children's wellbeing and academic achievement.
- The establishment of the school's distinctively Christian vision and the school improvement plan have been used effectively to raise the profile of the school's Christian character.
- The strong partnership between the church and the school community develops children's understanding of the impact faith can have on everyday life

Areas to improve

- Strengthen the evaluation role of new leaders and school governors so that they can identify the impact of worship, RE and the Christian character of the school on children's spiritual, moral, cultural and social development (SMSC).
- Improve children's involvement in planning and leading worship to ensure the whole school community is engaged with collective worship (CW).
- Develop a range of creative approaches to teaching Religious Education (RE) so that it

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

The school has been on a journey since the previous inspection to raise the profile of the Christian character of the school. A focus on Christian values including humility, hope, forgiveness, perseverance, courage and trust shapes positive and accepting relationships in the whole school community. Children explain easily how these values relate to their life and to Jesus and the Bible. For example, 'Jesus had confidence to speak to all those people.' 'You put your trust in God so He can help you with any troubles' and 'Abraham and his wife Sarah had courage and we can have courage too.' Values such as perseverance are applied to children's learning and contribute to the culture of high expectations and the attainment and progress of all learners. One child described how he used what he learned in worship to make a difference to his learning 'perseverance helped me to keep on doing something that was difficult and then I got it right'.

The culture of hopefulness, love, compassion and joy modelled by the headteacher is apparent in how children's personal development and wellbeing needs are met. All children's wellbeing is well supported but there is a particular focus on cherishing the most vulnerable through strategies such as targeted breakfast club, circle time, learning mentors, Lego club and peer mentors for reading, writing and the playground. Children understand that their school is a church school and speak about how they value going to church for worship; learning about people in the Bible; the variety of prayer experiences they have at school; how they use their reflection areas in each classroom and times of quiet in their sensory garden.

Children's moral development is influenced by the Christian values that surround them. They are taught that on the way to the cross the right path is not always the easy path. A typical child's written comment describes how 'There was once a time when I had a difficult choice – easy or hard way? ... I could of taken the easy way but I decided that would be unjust and I decided to do the right thing ... the moral of the story is to persevere and never give up.' Fundraising for a range of local and national charities enables children to explore moral and social issues around compassion and responding to the needs of others.

Religious education (RE) has a strong focus on oral discussion, which develops children's confidence in expressing their own ideas and views. Children demonstrate a sound understanding about the similarities and differences between the Christianity which is familiar to them and a range of other faiths and cultures. There is currently nothing in place either for monitoring the impact of RE on children's spiritual development or for assessing its contribution to the distinctive Christian character of the school. Children described how 'it doesn't matter what religion you are because most religions want peace.'

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Children speak excitedly about worship in the school and in the church. They describe how worship linked to Christian values has changed the way they behave. For example, 'Abraham and Sarah had courage even though they were old.' 'Having courage to stand up for myself but not hurting people by saying this is right and this is wrong.' 'Jesus had confidence to speak to all those people and that gives me confidence.' The church is used throughout the year for the school to celebrate special services, which are regularly attended by many families, who value the close links with the church. Children are keen to describe their involvement in special services in the church such as the Remembrance service, Christingle and Harvest through singing in the school choir, decorating the church, writing and reading prayers for the services although their involvement does not currently involve planning and leading worship. The special Candlemas service observed was a joyful celebration that engaged all the children and staff in a time of joyful singing, learning about Jesus. The story of Simeon was used to focus on hope and the vicar talked about Simeon 'hugging God'. This led to a time of prayerful reflection where children were encouraged to think about the candle light shining and bringing hope and a 'hug from God' to a member of the school community suffering a loss. Daily collective worship is carefully planned by a variety of staff, who link the themes to Christian values, the church

calendar, the Bible and current world situations. The vicar leads worship weekly in the school and half termly in the church. Children's comments about CW are collected on their core value display and used by the worship co-ordinator to look at children's understanding of the half termly value. However, there is currently no specific focus on exploring the impact of worship on children's spiritual development. The Trinity is included in the themes for worship and was referred to with varying degrees of age-appropriate understanding by the children as they compared Christianity to other religions. As part of the school improvement plan to raise the profile of the school as a church school more opportunities for prayer and reflection have been put in place. These include class reflection areas, a sensory garden, daily prayers, class prayers, prayer boxes, prayer trees, prayer CDs and bookmarks. The church is used for Prayer Spaces in Schools and children are proud that the prayers they write are regularly published in their church newsletter. Children talk confidently about how they value reflection areas in class and the sensory garden as quiet spaces for prayer and thinking time (an area for development from the previous inspection). One child described how he would go into the class reflection area and hold the rough stones there and imagine them polished saying that 'this takes your mind away from bad things' and that prayer was important because you can 'trust in God so he can help you with any trouble.'

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

The journey of the school in developing its Christian character began by involving all stakeholders in creating their vision, which states 'Our Christian ethos enriches our children whilst encouraging them to make sensible choices and be respectful of others.' This vision was used over the next two years and into the current year to effectively drive forward Christian distinctiveness as a key priority in the school improvement plan. Staff and governors know the strengths of the school's Christian distinctiveness through working together to create the church self-evaluation 'toolkit', which is jointly reviewed and updated twice a year (an issue from the previous inspection). Foundation governors and subject leaders monitor the implementation of the school improvement plan with a specific focus on children's SMSC development. Detailed reports by the foundation governor focus on what is happening in school, including RE lessons, conversations with the children, visits to the church and evidence in the environment about the school as a church school. Governors are kept informed through presentations to the full governing body. For example, the RE Subject leader gave a well-evidenced presentation entitled 'How has Copthorne moved on as a church school?' Good professional development strategies for staff and governors include INSET days with outside speakers to explore together 'Making a church school distinctive'. Governors and all new staff attend diocesan training linked to their roles in a church school. A new member of staff is shadowing the RE and worship co-ordinator so that she will be in a good position to take on the role at the end of the next year. All leaders promote a culture of high expectations whilst embracing a strong Christian commitment to valuing each individual and this has an impact on standards of achievement and the wellbeing of the school community. All staff, led by the headteacher, have a strong belief in every child's right to an excellent education and they work very hard to establish good quality teaching and learning. Current data shows good improvements in all areas of learning across the school. The close relationship with the vicar and other members of the church enriches the Christian character of the school and the life of the church. Elderly members of the church are involved with the children as part of the Christingle service and the school and church see themselves as all part of the same village family. Parents describe how the school is viewed as a church school - 'as a parent I hear people say they value the moral values and teachings of Christianity, however Christianity is reflected at home.' Parents speak highly of the school and the care and love provided for their children and the way they are valued and supported as parents. The foundation governor, chair and Headteacher visit and have made links with other church schools and children attend the leaver service at Worth Abbey. The arrangements for RE and worship meet statutory requirements.

SIAMS report February 2016 Copthorne VC Junior School RH10 3RD