



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### **Norton-sub-Hamdon Church of England Primary School.**

New Road, Norton-sub-Hamdon, TA146SF

**Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: Bath & Wells**

Local authority: Somerset

Date of inspection: 6th October, 2015

Date of last inspection: 8th July, 2010

School's unique reference number: 9333281

Headteacher: Liz Stiddard

Inspector's name and number: Revd John Angle 119

#### **School context**

Norton-sub-Hamdon Church of England Primary School is a smaller than average school with 125 children on roll in four mixed aged classes. The school has been federated with West Chinnock Church of England Primary School since 2010. The current Head has led both schools since September 2015. The school serves the village of Norton-sub-Hamdon and the surrounding hamlets. The proportions of disabled pupils, those with special needs and those eligible for the pupil premium are all below the national average.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Norton-sub-Hamdon Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding**

- There is a strong sense of family and community based on a firm foundation of Christian belief and practice
- Excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural opportunities have a transformational effect on children's personal development
- Outstanding behaviour and relationships based on strong Christian values ensure an excellent learning environment
- There are strong and mutually beneficial links with the local church and village community.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Build into the life of the school more robust and detailed processes of evaluating and monitoring the school's Christian character
- Incorporate results of church school monitoring and evaluation into the whole-school development plan and ensure effective strategies for continued improvement

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

The school's excellent Christian ethos and character is a reflection of the Christian values articulated by all members of the school community. The school is a place of warmth and welcome. One girl expressed it as, "All teachers are inviting" and another boy said "Everyone encourages you, no matter what!" Adults support each other and are excellent role models. They are approachable and know children well, showing care, giving support and guidance and building confidence. Children and their parents agree that the school is a happy and safe place in which to live and learn; an example of the belief that everyone is a child of God. Within a distinctive Christian environment behaviour and relationships are excellent and ensure children enjoy their learning and are confident. Children achieve well and make good progress, usually above national averages. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are well embedded and effective throughout the school which leads to improved pupil performance. Pupils with special needs and those eligible for pupil premium make good and improving progress because of effective and diligent support. Attendance is good and above national averages. Christian values are clearly expressed in word and action by all involved in school and children can talk about them saying how these values affect their daily lives. For instance children express their concern for the welfare of others through charitable activities, such as the 'Year Six Charity Challenge' where they plan a weekly market to make money for a chosen charity. Children express their spirituality, particularly in collective worship and religious education (RE), by acting out Biblical stories, in dance, art and writing. Participation in church services and in Forest School activities help to develop in children a sense of awe and wonder and appreciation of God's world. Christian symbols and displays around the school, prayers (usually written by children) and the creation of class charters based on Christian values all contribute to children's outstanding spiritual, moral and social development. Children are respectful and polite and support and encourage each other. For instance the year five 'special friends' and the year six buddy system offers encouragement and friendship to younger children. Children's growth in confidence is evident in their enthusiasm to express their ideas and to lead in school activities. One older girl said of the teachers, "They don't force you but they do put you out of your comfort zone." This level of confidence is also evident in the School Council and other examples of strong Pupil Voice. There are high levels of pupil engagement in school and village activities and in the life of the local church community. Children's world view is broadened through visitors to the school and in various areas of the curriculum, particularly RE and Collective Worship, where there is discussion of various religions and cultures. This encourages understanding, concern, tolerance and mutual respect. RE plays a major role in determining the school's Christian character and develops a wide range of skills; enquiry, analysis, interpretation and reflection. These enable pupils to make informed moral and religious choices and develop a respect for the beliefs of others.

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

Collective worship plays an extremely important part in the life of the school community. It is a valued opportunity for the school to come together in unity to share and experience Christian praise and thanksgiving to God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Children are able to talk about collective worship with interest and confidence and express their sense of belonging to the family of God. It also gives them the opportunity to reflect, often in some depth, on spiritual and moral issues, including their care for each other and the world around them. Collective worship is inspirational, inclusive and enjoyed by the children - "my favourite thing" said one girl. Children are fully engaged and respond enthusiastically to what is presented to them; they are keen to participate and lead. Children are able to make relevant links between biblically based material and their own lives and behaviour. As a result of collective worship themes, children support a variety of charitable activities during the year, for example the focus at this year's Harvest celebrations is on bringing food for the Lord's Larder in Yeovil. A range of creative opportunities together with variety in leadership, style and Christian tradition, gives children a

wealth of worship experiences. As a result of the regular contributions of the 'Open the Book' team children have a good understanding of Biblical values and the teachings of Jesus. Children understand the purpose of prayer and the value of reflection. They write their own prayers and learn the Lord's Prayer. One girl expressed prayer as meaning, "I am never alone....God always helps me". The major festivals of the Christian year are celebrated, and are taken as an important learning opportunity in developing in children a greater theological and Trinitarian understanding; for instance the concept of God's creative activity at Harvest, the reason for Jesus' death and resurrection at Easter and the helpful activity of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The use of candles, the Bible and the cross in school and church worship and the passing from family to family of nativity figures prior to the church Crib Service all aid further understanding of Christian teaching and traditions. There are very strong links between the school and the local church, for the benefit of both. The vicar makes a very effective contribution to the planning and delivery of collective worship and with other governors regularly evaluates the purpose and practise of collective worship, to ensure continued improvement.

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

The governors and the head teacher articulate and promote a strong vision based on distinctive Christian values. All are committed to supporting the school's Christian ethos and clearly express how it has an impact on children's learning and behaviour and the well-being of the whole school community. The school website contains a section on the school's church school ethos. The school's distinctive ethos and character is also made clear in the prospectus, in various displays around the school and to new parents and visitors. School leaders ensure that the curriculum is informed by distinctively Christian values and that children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a priority. One example is the school's sex education programme, which explains some Christian beliefs about relationships. There are also procedures for evaluating the school's Christian character but this needs to be further developed and embedded. In a recent questionnaire 85% of parents responding agreed that being at a church school played a significant part in their child's personal development. The school communicates well with parents and as a result families take a full part in the life of the school, including attending collective worship at school and in the church building. There are excellent and mutually beneficial partnerships with the local community, including the local churches, which enrich the lives of the children. These partnerships include school involvement in a wide variety of local events including poetry and writing workshops, the Wells Cathedral Service, local music events and the annual Village Festival. School leaders' vision ensures that children are energised by the beautiful school environment and that it communicates the school's Christian character and beliefs; for instance the school hall which is built in a style to remind children of a church - complete with a stained glass window. Attention is paid to displays around the school which promote children's spiritual development and help them to feel very much part of a Christian community. School leadership ensures that there is excellent provision for collective worship and religious education and that they are well led by experienced teachers. As a result standards of attainment and progress in RE are good and the standard of worship high. All governors and staff are encouraged to attend continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities related to the school's Christian character. Governors ensure that the school's Christian ethos is emphasised in all staff appointments and also to new parents.

**Norton-sub-Hamdon Church of England Primary School**

**New Road, Norton-sub-Hamdon. TA146SF, October 2015**