



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Mells Church of England First School

Mells Green
Mells
Frome
BA11 3QE

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Satisfactory

Diocese: Bath and Wells

Local authority: Somerset

Date of inspection: 20th April 2015

Date of last inspection: 30th March 2010

School's unique reference number: 123767

Headteacher: Lara Tatam

Inspector's name and number: Julian Thompson 114

School context

Mells Church of England First School is a village school with 93 children aged between 4 and 9. The proportion of children with special educational needs is above the national average. A monitoring inspection by Her Majesty's Inspector in January reported that the school continued to require improvement. In the last year there have been significant changes in staffing. The vicar of the parish church who has worked closely with the school in the past has recently retired. The church currently has a vacancy for a new vicar.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Mells Church of England First school as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- There are good relationships and a strong sense of community within and between the school, the church and the village
- The Headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to improve achievement and respond to the recent Ofsted inspection
- The school's vision and values have recently been revised and these now need to be fully understood by the children as linked with Christian principles.
- The school's monitoring and evaluation of itself as a church school is in early stages of development
- Information and policies to parents and staff are not always clear about the school's Christian foundation and character
- Arrangements for collective worship do not provide enough opportunities for children to present their own ideas and take a lead

Areas to improve

- Ensure that the recently agreed values are presented as distinctively Christian and more clearly inform the school's vision and aims, both in documents and in the way these are explained by school leaders and other staff.
- Ensure the evaluation of the school's effectiveness as a church school focuses on the impact on children of what the school provides and informs leaders' future planning and improvements
- Ensure that the school's Christian foundation and character is clear on information for parents and others on the website and elsewhere.
- Provide more opportunities for children to plan and present and lead collective worship
- Provide guidance and policy to help staff and parents understand the school's approach to spirituality and to enhance planned opportunities for children's spiritual development

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

The impact of the school's Christian character on the achievement of pupils is not yet good because in the most recent national assessments some groups of children were not achieving highly enough. The arrangements for monitoring and managing some groups of vulnerable children and the progress of some of them was also not yet good enough. This year the school has been working hard to improve achievement in writing and the quality of teaching in all subjects. School leaders' most recent assessments indicate that children's achievement is improving. Children's personal development and well-being is good. The school provides a broad and interesting curriculum including a good range of sporting and outdoor activities. There are very good relationships in the school and there is a strong and supportive family feeling among the school community. In lesson times and at playtimes adults provide sensitive and caring support to help children, especially those with difficulties Children are happy, confident and respond well to adults and each other. In consultation with the school community, leaders have recently re written the school's vision and values. Six core values are being introduced this year, one each half term. Leaders are currently working on materials and examples from the Bible to support teachers' planning and teaching about them. This has not yet been fully implemented and as a result the impact of the values on children's learning is at an early stage. Some opportunities are provided to support children's spiritual development and reflection; classes use circle time and there are displays in every class to reflect the Christian dimension of the school. Children are encouraged to reflect but there is a need for clearer guidance to staff and more planned provision for children's spiritual development. Changes have been made to the religious education curriculum to ensure that children learn about and respect other faith communities. This is a good development. Children are also learning about equality through a range of topics designed to discourage discrimination and prejudice Whenever possible these are linked with teaching from the Bible and the lives of Christian leaders.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Collective worship is recognised by many members of the school community as an important part of the daily life of the school. Leaders have worked well in the last year to review the themes which now use guidance for church schools as well as a special emphasis on the school's own core values. Children behave well and are attentive but some can become restless in longer periods of teacher talk or readings. Worship is not inclusive of the whole school because staff do not always attend. The school should ensure that whenever possible collective worship includes the whole school community. Although children are sometimes involved in readings there are few opportunities for them to plan and present their own ideas in school worship.

The school's core values are displayed in the hall and are referred to by worship leaders and by using Bible stories. However, children are only just beginning to understand the connection between the values and the school's Christian foundation. There are good opportunities for prayer. These include the children's own class prayers as well as the Lord's Prayer and time in lessons to think quietly about events at school and home. As a result some children speak of saying prayers in their own lives. The children attend worship in the parish church at times of major Christian festivals. The school community recognise this as an important part of the school's ethos and foundation. This also helps children to understand some of the principles of the Church of England. The weekly involvement and leadership of the vicar in collective worship has been a strength and much valued by everyone. Following his recent retirement the foundation governors have worked well and arranged local training for interested church members to enable them to share in leading worship. This is expected to start soon and will use the Bible based "Open the Book" approach. Foundation Governors also attend worship and have recently begun to record evaluation reports. Pupils are not regularly asked to talk about their response to worship although the school council are sometimes asked for feedback.

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

The school's leaders have faced a number of significant challenges recently and the Headteacher has rightly focussed strongly on the need to improve aspects identified by Ofsted inspectors. Following staffing changes she has also taken over the leadership of a number of key areas including collective worship and religious education. Throughout this time the headteacher and governors have maintained the school's very good relationships with parents and the support of the wider community. The vast majority of parents recognise the high levels of personal development and well-being which the school provides. Although school policies on behaviour, special needs and social and moral development do not refer to the school's Christian foundation, the Christian character of the school supports children's moral, social and spiritual development well; they enjoy school and are happy. As a result, behaviour is good and children are thoughtful and kind to others in practical ways. For example, in their 'Porridge' initiative for Mary's Meals to support hungry children. Outdoor education has an important place and this contributes well to the children's sense of spirituality and reflectiveness. The school's Christian character is recognised and valued by parents and the community. They appreciate aspects such as the links with the church, the presentation of Bibles and the regular visits to Wells Cathedral by Y4 leavers. Recently there has been wide consultation and revision of the school's values and ethos. Importantly the Headteacher and foundation governors are working to explain how these will be at the heart of the school's distinctive Christian foundation. Leaders have also begun to gather evidence to evaluate the school as a church school and have written a detailed report with areas for development. This is good but the actions are not yet having a clear impact on the children. Leaders should also take further steps to ensure the Christian character of the school is clearer and promoted more effectively on documentation, policies and the school website. There is a growing sense of teamwork and shared vision. Leaders are working hard to clarify and embed the school's approach to its Christian foundation and identify its impact on children. This gives the school the capacity and potential to become a good church school.

SIAMS report, April 2015, Mells Church of England First School, BAI I 3QE