



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church**



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

### St Martin's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Younghayes Road  
Cranbrook  
Devon EX5 7DT

**Previous SIAS grade: Good**

**Current SIAMS grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: Exeter**

Local authority: Devon

Dates of inspection: 7 May 2015

Date of last inspection: 19 March 2010

School's unique reference number: 113351

Headteacher: Tania Beard

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

#### School context

St Martin's is a larger than average size primary school with 390 children on roll. The school opened in September 2012 to serve the new town of Cranbrook. At that time, children transferred from Clyst Honiton CE Primary School when that school closed. The school has grown rapidly since it opened. Children are from a diverse community with a range of socio-economic backgrounds. The majority of children come from a white British heritage. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average as is the number entitled to receive the pupil premium. Attendance is above national expectations. The school has an ecumenical outlook through its close links with the local church, which is based in the school, and provides a Christian hub for the community.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Martin's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Explicit Christian values make a significant contribution to the secure and stable school environment in which children and their families are supported as part of a nurturing community.
- Children express their views and opinions on matters of faith and belief with confidence in an atmosphere of trust and respect.
- Exceptionally close relationships between school and church gives the whole community opportunities to come together.

#### Areas to improve

Develop the place of spirituality in the whole school community by empowering children and adults to make sense and meaning of their world through understanding and growing in the stories they tell by:

- Developing the skills among children and adults to ask deep questions of meaning and purpose that challenge their thinking and understanding.
- Provide greater opportunities in the outdoor environment for children to have time to explore and make sense of their growing spirituality.
- Develop leadership of collective worship so that children and adults have more involvement in the direction that stories they hear in worship are explored in greater depth.

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

The impact of a set of core Christian values has been central in creating a school community that provides a secure and stable environment for children and their families as they come to live in the new town of Cranbrook. The school has grown very rapidly in less than three years but the strength of its distinctively Christian ethos has provided the cornerstone in creating a sense of belonging and togetherness for children and adults. The simultaneous establishment of an ecumenical church, as an integral part of the life of the school and wider community, has created an exceptionally strong relationship between school and church which makes a very significant difference to the lives of children and their families. The core values of love, kindness, mercy, hope, faith and grace are well known to the children and adults in school. They are used as an everyday part of the language of the school and inform approaches to learning and dealing with relationships. Links between the values and the school's vision, to 'be the best we can be', means that children interpret these values to help them in their learning through the establishment of a learning environment that encourages risk taking in teaching and learning. This is making a contribution to the increasing rate of progress in the children's achievement and the steady rise in standards. The school's approach to learning places a very strong emphasis on narrative and the telling of stories. Learning themes help children to explore concepts such as 'belonging' and 'connections'. These themes provide excellent opportunities for children to explore stories that connect with their learning and help to develop a personal spiritual awareness. There are fewer opportunities for children to explore their own stories and explore these in depth to make connections between them and other aspects of their learning. Opportunities for children to explore the natural world, and their relationship with it, are very well provided for in the 'Forest School' experiences. Children speak with great enthusiasm about the time they spend in the Forest School and enjoy the opportunities to have time to be still and reflect. There are some missed opportunities to provide further time for children explore their own stories and the significance of them in their own lives both in the indoor and outdoor environments. Relationships are a very great strength of the school. Children and adults show genuine care and kindness towards each other and a real sense of wanting to support each other. Children have good opportunities both within the curriculum and in their charitable work to develop their understanding of the diversity of cultures and faiths in modern Britain and around the world.

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

Collective worship is outstanding because very clear links between worship themes and the children's work in their learning means that the impact of worship messages extends to all areas of school life and beyond. Worship themes are explicitly based on learning themes such as belonging, dreaming and connections and then further linked to the six core Christian values and Bible stories. The giving of time to reflect on the meaning of worship themes contributes well to the development of the children's spirituality. Together, all of these strong aspects of collective worship planning and delivery make a highly significant contribution to the establishment of a sense of togetherness and fellowship which is central to the success of the school as a new school serving a new community. As yet, children are not fully involved in leading the direction of how themes in acts of worship can evolve so that there are greater opportunities to enhance their impact by exploring how stories they hear in worship connect to their own stories. Children have good opportunities to explore their understanding of the nature of the Trinity. They talk with confidence about God as Father and Jesus as the Son who came to earth in human form. They are less clear about the nature of the Holy Spirit and how

it is part of the mystery of the Trinity. Prayer is an important time in the school day and children appreciate its purpose and how it can help those in need. Effective feedback from collective worship informs current strengths and identifies areas for improvement which are an integral part of school development planning.

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

The context of the school means that significant numbers of children are continually joining the school as families move into the new town. This makes identifying children's progress in RE over time difficult. However, there are very effective systems in place that assess children's attainment and, as more children have been at the school for a longer time, information is being gathered to show the progress they are making. The evidence emerging shows that standards are in line with national expectations in RE and children make at least good progress from their starting points. Some moderation of assessment has taken place but this has not yet been fully embedded across the school. The quality of teaching and learning is high. Children make at least good progress in their RE lessons because confident teaching challenges the children's thinking who respond with enthusiasm. Indeed, children are encouraged to 'fly freely' in their thinking to creatively respond to the religious concepts they learn about. Hence, one child, using a wonderful metaphor relating to a hosepipe, explained their understanding of the impact that faith can make to a person's life openly and with conviction. Children have the confidence and freedom to express their views and thoughts in ways that make sense to them. This is one of the strengths of RE in the school and a reason for its success. The RE curriculum is still developing as the school continues to grow and is evolving to meet the needs of the children and to reflect the school's overall approach to curriculum delivery through learning narratives. Religious education makes an important contribution to the promotion of the Christian ethos through the frequent links to the school's values and personal and social education. Children have a good understanding of Christian traditions as well as a firm knowledge of other world faiths. Leadership of RE is excellent. The RE leader ensures that the subject has a high profile within the school curriculum and has an up to date understanding of latest developments in RE. In particular, the RE leader promotes dynamic and 'risk taking' teaching and learning in RE which makes it the vibrant subject that it is.

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

The school's leaders and managers articulate the school's distinctively Christian vision exceptionally well because they have a shared understanding of how it can best serve the needs of children and families in this rapidly growing community. The need to quickly establish a secure and stable school environment has been of paramount importance and the school has been extremely successful in achieving this. Children and their families have truly benefitted from the opportunities the school has provided to create a sense of belonging to a community. The committed leadership of the headteacher has been inspirational in carrying through this vision and has been done alongside the passionate support from the minister from the local church. Indeed, the two communities act as one and together provide a living example of Christian faith in action to meet the needs of the whole community. The drive to 'be the best that you can be' has been driven by the Christian ethos and has underpinned improvements in children's academic achievement and been indispensable in supporting their wellbeing and that of their families. School leaders are fully supported by staff, whether teaching or non-teaching, who have invested a personal commitment to the welfare of the children as part of the school's mission to meet their needs. Governors share this mission and ensure that their contribution to the life of the school is focused on the needs of children. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the ethos are well established and rigorous systems ensure that regular priorities for development are accurately identified and integral to overall school development planning. The involvement of senior leaders in the development of the Christian ethos and the very effective use of diocesan training has equipped them for future leaders of church schools. Statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are met.