



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

### Almondsbury Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Sundays Hill  
Almondsbury  
Bristol 32 4DS

<b>Diocese:</b>	<b>Bristol</b>
Local authority:	South Gloucestershire
Dates of inspection:	20 <sup>th</sup> June 2014
Date of last inspection:	5 <sup>th</sup> June 2009
School's unique reference number:	109157
Headteacher:	Mr Paul Smith
Inspector's name and number:	Mrs Daphne Spitzer NS No 37

#### School context

Almondsbury Church of England VC Primary School has 300 children on roll arranged in 11 classes. The school serves a wide catchment area; the majority of children living outside the village of Almondsbury but within close proximity. This is a semi-rural area of social advantage near the northern edge of the city of Bristol. The school's numbers have increased since the last inspection. Most of the children are from white British heritage families. The numbers of children with special educational needs and/or physical disabilities are below the national average.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Almondsbury V C Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The role of collective worship in promoting depth to the quality of children's spirituality has a strong impact on their achievement and personal development
- Strong leadership by the headteacher, together with the good teamwork of governors and staff, provides direction for the development of the school's distinctive Christian character
- Excellent partnership between church and school communities is mutually beneficial and enables all to feel part of the extended church school family

#### Areas to improve

- Establish and embed a simple form of liturgy into daily acts of collective worship and ensure children understand the significance of actions, such as the lighted candle, in order to further promote a sense of Christian worship

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

Almondsbury Church of England Primary School is a welcoming, friendly Christian community. Distinctive Christian values have a strong impact on the children's academic achievement and personal well-being. The school's core Christian values of love, hope and respect are fully embedded and integral to all aspects of daily life. The caring Christian environment enables children to feel safe and secure which contributes to them learning well and thriving. As a child said 'God is here and having God on our side gives us confidence'. Children highly value the school's recent focus on spiritual reflection. They say times of quiet enable them to feel calm and peaceful, helping them reflect on how they can improve both their learning and their behaviour. Opportunities within the curriculum, for example, asking Big Questions, promote spiritual development very well and have a significant impact on spiritual growth. A recent visit from 'Prayer Spaces' for Year 5 children has been particularly beneficial. This is evident in the children's deeply insightful and sensitive poems and prayers about forgiveness. Both the areas for reflection in classrooms and the central reflection space are widely used in an interactive way. A visit from 'prayer spaces' for an older year group had been beneficial which is reflected in the quality of their comments written on the subject of forgiveness. Relationships at all levels are outstanding. Children say that this is due to the Christian value of respect. They say that they live by Christ's teaching to 'do for others what you want them to do for you' and understand that everyone is respected and considered equal by God. The impact of the school's values on relationships is reflected in a child's comment that 'respect and understanding is very important so that we all get along with each other'. Religious education (RE) promotes spiritual awareness very effectively and plays an important role in promoting a good understanding of diverse communities. Children say that their knowledge of other faiths enables them to interact better with people. This was evident in a Year 4 RE lesson when children were easily able to recognise similarities between Christian values and those of Hinduism. A recent International Week has been successful in promoting children's understanding of people of other nationalities and reinforcing the school's key values of respect and love.

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

Collective worship is central to daily life at Almondsbury Church of England Primary School because the school's Christian values are promoted very effectively through daily worship. Children recognise the important role these values play in the life of the school and easily link them with Christ's teaching and His life. They say that worship helps them learn to 'be better people' by demonstrating the values in their interactions with others. Children were fully engaged in the worship observed. They talk about how inspired they felt after the recent emphasis on hope in worship introduced them to the lives of people such as Rosa Parks and Nelson Mandela. This is an example of how worship has a significant effect on children's spiritual development. It is evident in the powerful impact of the guided reflection at the end of worship. Children say that they value the way the candle is lit to promote reflection and the time of prayer. However a lit candle is not used as a symbol of the light of Christ as in Anglican practice nor has a form of simple liturgy been introduced to increase the sense of worship. Times of prayer and reflection are integral to the school day and have an impact at a personal level; this is reflected in a child's comment that it helps her 'deal with difficult situations as Jesus would have done'. Worship is led very well by the headteacher who ensures that planning is very effective because it is shared with the vicar as well as staff and the children's Worship Committee. The vicar leads worship weekly and sets the themed value in its Christian context very effectively by linking it to a memorable story from the Bible. Acts of worship make an important contribution to the children's developing understanding of the Trinity and those led by the headteacher have had a significant impact. The Worship Committee take a high profile role within the school by planning and leading a special act of worship each term as well as leading aspects of whole school worship on a regular basis. The headteacher plans to build on this success by increasing the involvement of a greater number

of children in planning and leading worship. Monitoring and evaluating worship is undertaken by the headteacher, staff and governors and is rigorous. This ensures that the impact of collective worship is consistently high.

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

The leadership of the headteacher, together with the governing body, in providing direction for the school's distinctive Christian character has been outstanding. Under the headteacher's strong leadership the Christian vision has grown from strength to strength with an increasing impact on the lives of the whole school community. The governors are exceptionally well involved in all aspects of the life of the school; for instance, by being part of staff curriculum teams. This ensures that they fully understand how the school's distinctive Christian character impact on the children's academic as well as their personal and spiritual development. Governors individually monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of collective worship and religious education and regularly meet together as a church 'Foundation Committee' to evaluate the school's progress as a church school. Headteacher, staff and governors are united in their desire to strive for continual improvement which benefits all members of the school community. This is evident in the way that diocesan support is regularly sought and valued. The school leadership greatly value the work and well-being of the staff and this is seen in the way that annual Inset includes time for staff spiritual reflection and teamwork which is a particular strength of the school. Parents are exceptionally well involved in the leadership and management of the school. For example, the Parent Council contributes their views in regular meetings with the headteacher. Parents are very appreciative of the school's distinctive Christian character which they say makes a real difference to their children's lives. The priority placed on spirituality is evident in a comment from a parent who said that her young child had asked if she could have a candle lit to help her say her prayers. Religious education is led in an outstanding way by the newly appointed deputy headteacher and reflects the important position it holds in the school's curriculum. Lessons are observed regularly by the subject leader often together with the link governor, work moderated at staff meetings, and children's learning and progress thoroughly tracked. The partnership between the church, local and school communities is strong with all groups working together for the benefit of all. For instance, the local Mothers Union and Women's Institute contribute greatly to the life of the school and the school recently has undertaken litter picking in the village and is now planning to create new banners for the church.

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