



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

### **Merrow Church of England Voluntary Controlled Infant School**

Kingfisher Drive  
Merrow  
Guildford  
Surrey GU4 7EA

**Previous SIAS grade: Outstanding**

**Current SIAMS grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: Guildford**

Local authority: Surrey

Dates of inspection: 29 April 2016

Date of last inspection: 8 March 2011

School's unique reference number: 125160

Headteacher: Jane Treharne

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

#### **School context**

Merrow is smaller than the average size infant school with 201 pupils on roll. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. The majority of pupils are from a white British heritage and from favourable socio-economic backgrounds. Attendance is in line with the national average.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Merrow as a Church of England school are outstanding**

- Pupils openly share their views on faith and belief in an environment which encourages exploration of what this means to Christians, people of other faiths and those with no faith.
- Explicit Christian values make a significant contribution to the pupils' growing spiritual awareness and understanding of themselves and their place in the world.
- School leaders are deeply committed to the continual development of the Christian ethos so that it serves the needs of children and the wider school community.

#### **Areas to improve**

- Involve pupils to a greater extent in planning, leading and evaluating acts of worship so that they have opportunities to share their understanding of worship messages with the whole school community.
- Revisit the school's core values to update the current set to meet the developing needs of the pupils.
- Involve pupils in the planning of an outside area for reflection.

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

Ten core values are firmly embedded in the life of the school and make a significant contribution to the pupils' academic progress and wellbeing. These core values are explicitly linked to Christian teaching. They are promoted through collective worship and embedded in school policies and practices. For example, relationships are rooted in codes of conduct and expectations for behaviour that reflect the values of respect, kindness and friendship. The impact of these values is outstanding because members of the school community have acquired a language through which these values are discussed with a shared understanding. This language has become part of the everyday life of the school. Teachers refer to them as an integral part of learning and they underpin how the school approaches relationships and dealing with moral and behavioural issues. They have contributed to the creation of a learning environment in which pupils are confident to be independent and openly ask questions in an atmosphere of trust where they will be listened to with respect. Pupils thrive in this environment and they achieve academic standards that are consistently above national expectations. The school recognises that the time is right to revisit the values because an understanding of some of them has evolved and their original purpose has changed as the needs of the pupils have changed. Opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual awareness are rooted in experiences from their learning. These are captured as 'WOW' moments which pupils themselves are able to identify. Whether through creative expression or other means, pupils are encouraged to develop an appreciation of the wonder of the world around them. Some pupils are beginning to reflect on a wider appreciation of how life affects not just themselves, but those around them and in other countries. The opportunities for pupils to be still and reflect in the outside environment are currently being explored with the close involvement of the school council. Through religious education (RE), pupils have a good understanding of other cultures and faiths. Visits to a nearby mosque, and visitors to school from a range of faith communities, allow pupils to appreciate that Britain is multi-faith country. They are also developing a better appreciation of the wider world and a growing commitment to help countries through charity work responding, for example, to an earthquake in Nepal.

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

Collective worship is outstanding because it makes a significant contribution to the pupils' understanding and appreciation of values and faith and how they make a difference to their own lives and the lives of others. Acts of worship are times when a genuine sense of enjoyment by pupils in what they are experiencing means that there is a high level of engagement and response. Pupils have an excellent understanding that worship is a central expression of the schools' Christian ethos and that they are times when they learn about Jesus and talk to Him through prayer. They explain that worship is a time to give thanks for all the good things they have in life and celebrate God's creation. Worship is thoroughly planned with clear connections between values and Gospel teaching. Pupils readily recall the values they have learned and Bible stories that illustrate them. Acts of worship have distinct elements that make them special times in the school day. Bible teaching, prayer, song and time for reflection are regular components of each acts of worship. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the purpose of prayer. They explain that it is a time to talk to God or Jesus to give thanks, say sorry or ask for help for others. Some understand that prayers may not always be answered but why that happens is a mystery as it is 'God's decision'. The recent emphasis on helping pupils develop their understanding of the nature of the Trinity is being effective. Pupils talk about God as Father being in heaven, Jesus His Son, also in heaven, and the Holy Spirit. They talk about all three being in our heart bringing hope if we trust in them. Some pupils are developing a mature appreciation that people of other religions, and those with none, may also have a spirit within them because 'God loves us all' and 'wants everyone to be good'. Pupils have opportunities to lead some acts of worship but have not yet become regularly involved in evaluating the impact of worship messages to their own lives and sharing these with the whole school community. There are regular opportunities for pupils to talk about worship through informal feedback to adults in school.

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

The leadership and management, including governors, have a very clear understanding of the distinctive ethos that underpins the pupils' academic achievement and personal development. The leadership and management are outstanding because they ensure that, because of their clear understanding of the church distinctiveness, it has a significant impact on the pupils' lives. This stems from the example set by the headteacher who articulates with great clarity how Christian values and opportunities for spiritual development contribute to pupils' personal code of conduct and attitude to learning. Adults in school are excellent role models for promoting the ethos through the example they set children regarding relationships lived out through the core values. Governors, equally, share a commitment to the importance of the ethos and are knowledgeable about how it impacts on the life of the school. Together, school leaders and governors, share an excellent grasp of the distinctive ethos and how they can continue to develop it. The systems for self-evaluation as a church school are accurate and the school has addressed the areas for development from the previous report. Parents similarly feel that the Christian ethos is important to their children through the teaching of values and agree that, whether you have a faith or not, they are important in giving their children a 'clear moral basis' for their lives. Links with the local church have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Pupils recognise that the church is an integral part of the life of the school and value the times when they celebrate major Christian festivals there. These are occasions when pupils learn about the meaning of festivals such as Easter and Christmas of which they have a good understanding. The contribution of the vicar and curate in the worship life of the school is an important aspect as is their support for RE and school management. The school has received substantial support from members of the diocese acting in an official capacity but also freely giving their time and expertise that has made a difference to the quality of worship and much appreciated by the school community. The RE leader has a good understanding of the subject. She ensures that it has a high profile within the overall curriculum and is delivered in an exciting way. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report April 2016 Mellow CE VC Infant School Guildford GU4 7EA