

# National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

## Stanton Harcourt Church of England VC Primary School

Stanton Harcourt

Witney

OX29 5RJ

**Diocese: Oxford**

Local authority: Oxfordshire

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> June 2013

Date of last inspection: 07<sup>th</sup> July 2008

School's unique reference number: 9313130

Headteacher: Karen Jupp

Inspector's name and number: Mrs. Lesley Turville 732

### School context

Stanton Harcourt is a smaller than average primary school in a rural setting. Numbers have been increasing recently and nursery aged children are now admitted. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language, learning difficulties and disabilities is well below average.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Stanton Harcourt as a Church of England school are outstanding

A clear vision articulated through Christian values permeates the school and has an outstanding impact on the personal, spiritual and academic development of the children. Pupils feel safe, happy and valued at school because of the support they receive and the excellent relationships that exist between all members of the community. There are excellent links with the local church which make both the school and the church the focal points for the village.

### Established strengths

- The emphasis on Christian values and SMSC (social, moral, spiritual and cultural) development which impact positively on the daily lives of the children and their achievement
- The excellent behaviour displayed by the children and their care for each other
- The exceptionally close links with the local church which define the school character

### Focus for development

- To develop the opportunities children have to plan and lead collective worship
- To further enhance the spiritual development of the children by creating a reflective/prayer space for the children

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

The school motto of CREATE is made up of the values of care, respect, equality, achievement, trust and excellence which are clearly linked to and explained through biblical teaching and understood by the children as Christian. They are able to relate the stories behind chosen values and to explain that this means that they are 'a small school with a big heart'. This motto was further explained by one child who said this means 'no one is left out here and there is no discrimination as Jesus cared for and loved everybody'. These Christian values were chosen by the whole school community through a collaborative exercise and are at the core of the school's Teaching and Learning Policy where each one is used to set out the expectations of behaviour, relationships and teaching methodology for the whole school. As a result of this children enjoy coming to school, behave well and standards of attainment are consistently above or well above national expectations with better than expected rates of progress throughout the school. The needs of all groups are met through a personalised learning approach that takes into account individual learning styles and a clear rewards system that celebrates success and motivates children. They know that if they make a mistake this will not be held against them and Christian principles of forgiveness and reconciliation will apply. This is clearly seen in the behaviour policy where children are asked to reflect upon their behaviour and think about how to rebuild relationships. Pupils readily accept responsibility, for example, as members of the school council or eco club and they recognise how fortunate they are compared to other children which motivates them to support a range of charitable giving throughout the year. Religious Education and SMSC teaching is given a high priority in the school. 'Direct impact response time' is built into the school day to enable children to think about their learning in all subjects and in RE children are encouraged to ask 'big questions' and taught how to debate and reflect upon scriptures and inspirational people from all faiths and their own experiences from a variety of

perspectives and to link this to the Christian values of the school. Children talk enthusiastically about RE and enjoy being allowed to express their own opinions where there is 'no right or wrong' answer and they understand the importance of learning about and respecting other faiths and beliefs. The school is undergoing alterations to the entrance and office area which will enable better use to be made of the environment to display the school's Christian vision and support the children's spiritual development by the creation of a prayer space.

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

Collective worship plays a central role in the life of the school. It is explicitly Christian in character, is based upon the schools 'CREATE' values and follows the seasons of the Anglican Church year. It is carefully planned across the term so that clergy and the school led acts of worship support and flow from each other. The approach is suitably adapted for different ages with the clergy leading a separate act of worship for the youngest children where they enthusiastically select songs, from a wide range that they know by heart, and where the biblical story told then leads into creative class based activities seamlessly linking the act of worship with their daily learning. The older children thoughtfully engaged with the story of 'The Widow's Mite' and related this to the value of respect and giving from the heart. They used Anglican responses, which were clearly well known, and sang beautifully from memory unaccompanied in a round. Worship is led by all members of the community including, on a weekly basis, the local clergy and church warden which ensures that children and parents see the church community and the school community as one. This is reinforced by displays in the church about the school's Christian values and invitations to the whole community to attend special school days and celebrations. Children are actively engaged in acts of worship by skilfully led questioning and reflecting and the prayer time is made relevant to the children by the use of a prayer box. Prayers are written by the children and placed in the prayer box throughout the day and then used in worship. Children welcome this opportunity to contribute their own prayers and also the chance to pray before lunch. They plan and deliver special acts of worship that support seasonal Anglican festivals but as yet they are not regularly planning and leading other acts of worship. Staff participate in and value all acts of collective worship and parents and governors are invited to attend special services held in the local church and to comment on what the experience meant to them. Feedback on parental and pupil questionnaires show that the vast majority believe that collective worship is central in developing a good understanding of faith and is valued as part of the life of the school in turn developing the Christian ethos and celebrating children's achievements. Children enjoy worship and recognise it as an important time that 'teaches you how to live'. Leaders are continually evaluating worship and children welcome recent changes brought about through discussions that mean they sit in a horseshoe shape rather than rows so that they can all see and are all equal.

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

The explicit Christian ethos of the school is clearly shared and articulated by all members of the community and is the driving force behind school policy. The headteacher and foundation governors provide strong leadership and model the values through their rigorous focus on and monitoring of teaching and learning and the achievement of all children whilst ensuring that their development as enquiring, responsible and caring individuals is of equal importance as is the well-being of staff members. The school development plan is well focussed and there is a very clear and detailed plan in place to monitor and raise attainment further. There is a separate section on SMSC which is planned for by staff and commented on as part of every lesson observation. Foundation governors were fully involved in writing the new church school self-evaluation and regularly attend school and report back on their visits. They are effective in supporting but also challenging the school however a formalised pattern of what is monitored when for this aspect of school life is not yet in place. Religious education and collective worship are well led by the headteacher and given a high priority within the school. She has a clear understanding of how she wants to develop these areas further demonstrating her commitment to constantly improving the experience for the children. The school is at the heart of the local community and the relationship with the church is central to its life. The local vicar, who is also a foundation governor, is a key factor in this and is untiring in the pursuit of her vision to make the school the centre of the mission of the church. Children and parents value her presence in the school and can relate to her as an individual. The governors take this relationship with the church seriously, regularly feeding back to the PCC about school life. They are currently actively planning for the future and how this close relationship will be maintained when the vicar leaves to take up a new post at the end of the year, for example members of the congregation will be leading 'Open the Book' collective worship in school. Links with the diocese are good and the head attends training to make sure she develops her understanding of the school as a church school. Parents and carers are strongly supportive of the school, saying how well their children progress and develop. It is the village school and valued as such but there is also no doubt about the distinctiveness of the school.

