



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

### **Stanford in the Vale CE VC Primary School**

High Street, Stanford in the Vale, Faringdon, Oxon. SN7 8LH

#### **Diocese: Oxford**

Local authority: Oxfordshire

Date of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> July 2013

Date of last inspection: 6<sup>th</sup> May 2008

School's unique reference number: 123159

Headteacher: Amanda Willis

Inspector's name and number: Robin Sharples 398

#### **School context**

Stanford in the Vale is a village school of 198 pupils set in a rural location. The children are mostly of white British heritage with few children of other ethnicities and the school has a lower than average number of children with special needs. The school has good buildings and is set in attractive, well developed grounds.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Stanford in the Vale CE VC Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding**

Stanford in the vale is an outstanding church school. The children thrive in an ethos built upon clear Christian values which are evident throughout the school community. The school has very well developed self-evaluation which drives both learning opportunities geared to the needs of the children and the overall development of the school as a resource within the community.

#### **Established strengths**

- The dynamic vision and energy of the headteacher which enables both learners and staff members to be successful in their work in school
- The community within school; the courteous and creative children and the very strong staff team
- The place of the school in the wider community especially the relationships with the village and the local church.

#### **Focus for development**

- Extend the role of the church seasons in the school's pattern of worship
- Develop the leadership roles of children in worship
- Explore differing experiences so that spiritual development is more closely linked to the sensitivities of children of differing ages and interests.

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

Stanford-in-the-Vale's Christian character is discernible throughout the whole life of the school. The behaviour of everyone in the school echoes the values which underpin the work of the school and the Christian foundation of those values. Teachers and other adults provide excellent models for children and the children themselves, through peer mediators for example, have opportunities to act as models for their friends and associates. Children are very hard working and place great value on their learning; they respond readily to the creative curriculum provided by the school and particularly appreciate the qualities of creativity which are encountered in religious education (RE). The children readily discuss the importance of religious topics and their comments are well supported by their learning in RE. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) aspects of learning are encountered throughout the curriculum. SMSC is well developed and the school works hard to

provide a range of cultural experiences for the children. The children were very enthusiastic about a recent Hindu celebration for instance and the school's efforts in inviting visitors also helps to enrich their awareness of diversity in the world. The lunch time prayer club not only serves to extend children's appreciation of prayer itself but further complements the SMSC provision – as one child said *'it is a place to reflect and let out our feelings.'* The school has successfully introduced many opportunities for spiritual development (a focus for development from the last report) and these have had an important impact and the school is now well placed to extend these alongside differentiated activities to tailor the experiences to the needs of younger or older pupils. Members of staff are aware of these possibilities, some of which were discussed during the inspection.

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

A very strong worship life has been established which, increasingly, encourages the participation of children. Examples of this are the school prayer written by a child and the outstanding example of class led whole-school worship seen during the inspection. While the worship was of a very high standard throughout the reflective time was especially powerful and effective, a strong indication of the impact of worship being more than simply performance. The children contribute readily and show a readiness to adopt a wider range of leadership roles within the regular weekly pattern of worship. The character of worship is explicitly Christian and makes use of a good range of resources including poetry and PowerPoint shows alongside hymns, prayers and Bible readings. Worship is offered in 'assemblies', at Church and at various times during the day. The children's familiarity with the church is highly commendable and makes a significant impact on RE. The impact of worship has grown since the arrival of the current headteacher and there are plans to increase this impact further through the introduction of 'Prayer Spaces' in the Autumn. The children play significant parts within worship but their experience of the range of worship resources within the Anglican heritage is still quite limited, for example the exploration of varieties of liturgical prayer such as collects or blessings. The school's core values are used in planning alongside various festivals of the church year, the impact of this is seen by the inclusion of Fathers' Day in the calendar and its celebration within the Christian context of the school. While the school planning includes festivals and other celebrations the possibilities afforded by the church seasons have not yet been fully embedded particularly the season of Easter and the festival of Pentecost. Evaluation of worship is carried out regularly and includes discussion of the impact of worship with children.

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

The headteacher's powerful vision for the school is well established and is understood clearly by everyone in the school community. Leaders of the school clearly articulate this vision and, through four 'drivers', *Personal, Social and Emotional Well-being, Spiritual Diversity Community and Environment and Life Skills*, ensure that the vision is consistent across all planning. The Governors review the character of the school annually to ensure that this vision is sustained and nurtured. The pattern of review includes parent questionnaires and discussions between children and members of staff. The drivers ensure that progress of pupils is good and that achievement is maintained at a high level – reading and maths being particular strengths of the school in this year's Year 6 test results. Staff development is given high status and the headteacher's approach to distributive leadership ensures that all members of staff have opportunities to enhance their professional roles. The solid engagement of planning within the Christian character of the school ensures that such professional development goes hand in hand with the needs of leadership in a church school. The leadership of RE is a good example of this and what can be seen in school is steady improvement in the impact of RE and the increasing confidence and capability of the RE subject leader. The Incumbent has a high profile in school and provides substantial support for the character of the school as well as specific roles, for example, in worship and pastoral matters. This has a strong impact on the children who respond well to his contributions especially the worship in Church. Parents speak very highly of the school. They are confident that the children are safe and well cared for and that, should any concerns arise they would be dealt with swiftly and effectively.

Perhaps the best summary of the impact of the school is summed up in the words of a child who when asked what the *worst* thing about school was, replied – *'...going home'*!