

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Aldbury Church of England Primary School

Stocks Road, Aldbury, Tring, Hertfordshire, HP23 5RT	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	St Albans
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	N/A
Date of inspection	19 January 2017
Date of last inspection	23 April 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary controlled primary 117382
Headteacher	Natasha Chiswell
Inspector's name and number	Lindsay Fraser 107

School context

Aldbury is much smaller than the average sized primary school. The majority of the 84 pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. The number of pupils who have a special need or disability is slightly higher than the national average. In the last 18 months there have been a number of staff changes, including the headteacher who was appointed in September 2015. There is currently no parish vicar due to the recent and sudden death of the parish incumbent.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Aldbury Voluntary Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The headteacher has a very clear vision, rooted in strong Christian values, to create a learning environment in which the needs of all pupils are met. This has led to decisive action in school which is impacting upon pupils' progress and well-being.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of spirituality because there are regular high quality experiences, based on the school's Christian values, for pupils to reflect and develop their thoughts and opinions.
- Attendance and behaviour are excellent because the school's Christian character underpins the strategies taken to achieve these high standards.
- Based on a Christian vision of meeting the needs of all pupils, governors and senior leaders ensure they have a thorough understanding of standards, progress and pupil and staff well-being. This enables them to identify appropriate action.
- Excellent relationships with local churches and other church schools have led to the further development of the distinctive Christian character of the school.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that pupils have a deeper knowledge and understanding of key Christian beliefs through their inclusion in collective worship.
- Ensure that the impact of the school's outstanding Christian character is communicated more effectively to parents and the local community through the use of the school website and newsletters.

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

The Christian character of Aldbury Primary School is clearly evident throughout the whole school. Relationships at all levels are excellent. All members of the school community, parents, staff, pupils and governors can articulate the school's Christian values and how these influence behaviour and relationships, attitudes and learning. Whilst half termly values introduce pupils to a range of Christian values, the school community has identified 'respect, responsibility and friendship' as the key school Christian values. These ensure a consistency of ethos throughout the school regardless of background, ability or faith. Pupils attribute their excellent behaviour to the school's Christian values which means that they care for each other, seek to involve everyone, especially those new to the school, and support others in their learning. Pupils have a strong understanding of how the school's Christian character applies to themselves because this is well articulated by the headteacher and staff. Consequently, they understand the context and purpose for taking responsibility, showing respect and being a friend to all. Parents and carers reinforce and discuss the values at home because they receive detailed monthly information. Comments from parents indicate that many find this very helpful. Pupils speak of being inspired by Bible stories such as Queen Esther's courage. The link between Christian values and classroom 'learning powers', such as determination and co-operation, is evident in the way pupils approach their learning. The school's Christian character informs the rigorous steps the headteacher has put in place to address underachievement. As a result of her creative interventions pupils are more confident in their learning and school monitoring indicates that progress is quickly accelerating. Attendance is now high due to the headteacher's work with and support for individual families.

The quality of spirituality demonstrated by pupils is excellent because they are given frequent and meaningful opportunities for reflection and deep thinking. A 'quiet garden', created by a professional sculptor and based on pupil's own ideas provides an excellent environment for group and individual reflection and discussion. Quiet reflection is a natural and frequent part of pupils' lives. One pupil described reflection as 'your heart tells you what you ought to do, how to live and how to be more focused'. Another pupil liked to sit by the tree because it made him feel part of a long history. Pupils have opportunities to develop their spirituality in traditional and non-traditional ways because it is not only part of religious education (RE), but it flows through collective worship and the rest of the curriculum. The use of thinking deeply about big questions in life had been introduced by the local incumbent during the previous term. Such had been the reception and impact of this that pupils continue to be encouraged in lessons to ask and discuss deep and meaningful questions. Older pupils had asked the incumbent questions regarding death, belief and heaven. As a result of her open discussions with the pupils, they had been able to take some comfort at the time of her unexpected death. Pupils' memories of how she had touched their lives are displayed on a tree in the reflective area. The school's Christian values of responsibility, respect and friendship have a significant impact upon the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC). This is because extensive and stimulating cross curricular learning and extra-curricular activities encourage pupils to reflect and respond to a variety of beliefs and human experiences. These include participating in village activities such as singing to senior citizens, participating in the village gardening club and contributing to church events. Culture weeks enable pupils to become immersed in other cultures and faiths. Global issues and needs are discussed with pupils through collective worship, the school council and 'Philosophy4Children'. Consequently, pupils demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility for the future and for all people in need, both locally and internationally. Charitable giving is therefore a strong feature of the school, both for local and international charities. The school council has the responsibility to choose from a range of charities they wish to support. The most recent charity chosen is the Tear Fund toilet-twinning project with African countries. The quality of RE has improved significantly under new leadership. Pupils are keen to talk about Christianity and other faiths. They are able to explain different beliefs and practices and how faith impacts upon day to day lives. The school has introduced a faith tour which has further inspired pupils' learning. Parents remark that they themselves have learned from the children's discussions at home and believe that this is an important aspect of the school's Christian character.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship makes a strong contribution to the life of the school. Pupils regard collective worship as a vital, relevant and meaningful part of the day and therefore often discuss collective worship with their families. Whole school worship is carefully planned, using a variety of creative approaches to introduce pupils to Biblical material and Christian teaching. Pupils are therefore very attentive and engaged. They particularly enjoy opportunities to be involved, such as dramatising stories, leading prayer and lighting the candle. They like the use of drama in the telling of stories and the use of artefacts and visual aids because they help them to understand. The school's commitment to ensure pupil awareness of global issues leads to a flexibility in planning that takes account of such events from a

Christian perspective. Pupils show a good understanding of a range of Bible stories and can link these to the current and previous term's Christian values. For example, they are able to speak at length about the courage shown by Daniel in proclaiming his faith. The school has identified the need to include more Bible stories to illustrate Christian values and therefore the monthly pupil led collective worship is now based on a specific Bible story. A recently established school church council enriches the planning and delivery of church services and school worship. Members' contributions to the evaluation of worship helps future planning. Since the previous inspection, governors are also involved in attending and evaluating collective worship. This has given increased confidence to those leading worship. Evaluation is always positive, praising the atmosphere and use of prayer and reflection, engagement and enjoyment of pupils. Pupils talk with some knowledge, understanding and confidence about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but the school is at an early stage of developing this understanding. Leaders are fully aware of the need to develop this further and for governors, staff and pupils to include this within their evaluations. Prayer is a strength within the school. Pupils are confident in their use of prayer, apparent in their use of spontaneous prayer. Prayer takes many forms in school, enabling pupils to express themselves in a way in which they feel comfortable. The use of prayer boxes in each classroom also enables pupils to contribute privately. Pupils benefit from a variety of worship experiences provided by a range of worship leaders. Pupils have a good understanding of Anglican practice through frequent visits to the local church for learning as well as for services and major festivals. Pupils have a very good understanding of the main Christian festivals because of their active involvement in church services and practical activities to support their learning. For example, pupils can explain what Advent and Christmas mean to Christians because of engaging and interesting practical activities in the church. The school also has strong links with the Tring parish team. Due to the recent bereavement members of the Tring parish are providing excellent support for the school and lead collective worship once a week. This provides the school with the consistency of church worship.

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

The headteacher's consistent and passionate vision to provide a Christian learning environment in which the needs of each individual are met is evident throughout the school. All members of the school community can articulate the way in which the school's Christian values shape the day-to-day actions. The headteacher is extremely well supported by a governing body which provides both challenge and support to ensure that measures are put in place to address the needs of those at risk of underachieving. To ensure that the school's Christian character shapes the provision for all pupils, governors have in place a system of thorough monitoring and evaluation of standards. They are well informed by national research enabling them to give advice and support school strategies to overcome the needs of those who are disadvantaged as well as ensuring that all pupils progress well. The strategic development of the school's Christian character is clearly detailed in the school action plans and is regularly monitored and reported on by the foundation governors. This is a regular agenda item at all governors' meetings. Governors and all stakeholders have together developed the school's Christian values programme. Governor monitoring and evaluation indicates that this has improved academic progress, well-being and SMSC development of all pupils. The Christian character underpins policy decisions within the school. However, governors and senior leaders miss opportunities to articulate these links and the impact of their decisions on the successes of the school. All school staff are very well supported and encouraged by governors and the headteacher. Consequently, morale is high. Under the strong leadership of the headteacher, who is also the subject leader for RE, standards in RE and the quality of collective worship have both improved. Both RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements. Strong partnerships with other church schools, local schools, the diocese, external agencies and the local churches are clearly enabling the school to further academic progress and pupils' well-being. The whole school community agrees that they have benefited from the work of the recently deceased incumbent, whose legacy supports a clear vision for future development. A strong emphasis on professional development has been a key element in developing the school's current and future leadership roles, the skills of the staff and the importance and provision for RE. Parental engagement is a strong feature of the school, enhanced by effective relationships with the staff and governing body. Through their support for the school the 'Friends of Aldbury School' are extremely active in their fund-raising. This has enabled the school to complete their outdoor learning and reflective areas.

SIAMS report January 2017 Aldbury Church of England Primary School, Aldbury, Tring, HP23 5RT