

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Hertford St. Andrew Primary School

Calton Avenue, Hertford, Herts. SG14 2EP

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	St Albans
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	N/A
Date of inspection	15 June 2017
Date of last inspection	20 May 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 117397
Headteacher	Lyn Stark
Inspector's name and number	Mel Adams NS58

School context

This is a smaller than average primary school and nursery with 122 children on role. Pupils are predominantly White British with a below average number of pupils from a range of minority ethnic groups including a small number with English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is above average. Those eligible for pupil premium grant are above average. Since the previous SIAMS inspection, Ofsted placed the school in special measures. There have been a number of staffing changes including the headteacher. Under her leadership, the school rapidly improved to gain a good Ofsted judgement.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Hertford St Andrew as a Church of England school are good.

- The passionate leadership of the headteacher has developed a strong staff team and governing body, who share a commitment to developing the Christian character of the school, driven by the belief that the love of God is there for all.
- Steered by the recently adopted vision, 'Aim high, Love learning, Trust God', and after a period during which school leaders addressed urgent priorities, their more recent evaluations and action planning are making a significant impact on the rapid development of the school's Christian character.
- The vision statement, embraced by adults and children, is becoming strategic in driving forward improvements, creating the Christian ethos in which every child is valued, leading to good behaviour and rising standards.
- Staff and pupils appreciate collective worship as a time when they are able to be still, listen and learn how Christian faith and values can support them in their own lives.

Areas to improve

- Strengthen the Christian character of the school by ensuring the vision statement is understood by all members of the school community and consistently steers strategic decision-making, teaching and learning.
- Extend strategic leadership by ensuring that governors embed systematic and sustainable monitoring and evaluation of the schools' Christian character.
- Sustain pupils' spiritual development by agreeing a clear and shared understanding of spirituality as a church school.
- Broaden pupils' understanding of Christianity by extending their knowledge about how people of all nationalities practise it around the world.
- Deepen the experience of collective worship by supporting pupils to plan and deliver acts of worship.

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

Passionately committed to 'teaching from the heart, living the love' and having led the school through a challenging period, the headteacher is resolutely committed to advancing the development of the Christian ethos of the school. As a result, understanding of Christian values is growing and staff, pupils, governors and parents speak of them as being an essential part of daily life in school. Children understand the need to forgive to help them to sort out disagreements, something which is confirmed by parents who see this at home as well as school. Senior staff and governors demonstrate the Christian ethos in their lives and leadership of the school, and this has a significant impact on the school community. This has led to a strong, cohesive commitment amongst staff to sharing the headteachers' passion, creating a 'school family where children come first and families are supported'. Recognising this commitment, one parent describes how she had confidence that the school would set her child 'back on track'. The vicar accurately describes how the staff 'go the extra mile, give opportunity for new beginnings and reflect God's grace'.

This growing ethos is leading to improvements in attendance, exclusions have declined and standards throughout the school have improved. Within this deeply nurturing setting, pupils behave well and show a commitment to loving learning, aiming high and loving God, described in the school vision statement. One pupil explains what it means for him saying, 'If you love the work you're doing, you will have a fantastic time and make progress all through the school. Never give up if you're stuck, and rely, appreciate and trust God. No matter what he is always there for you.'

Through the strong partnership with the church, supported by the vicar and youth worker, pupils of all ages are developing a good understanding of Christian faith and values. Enjoying visits to the parish church of St Andrews, pupils have a growing understanding of their local church and its worship. They do not have awareness that Christians worship in different ways, or that Christianity is practised in different cultures all around the world.

As a result of a creative approach to curriculum planning, pupils developing spiritual, social and moral and cultural [SMSC] awareness is growing. This is illustrated through yoga lessons, where pupils learn self-regulation, peace and reflection. A PSHE lesson, where pupils are invited to have a picture in their mind to help them calm down, leads to a discussion on how saying sorry and forgiving helps them to move on. Pupils are able to use these reflection skills during collective worship and at other times of the day.

Through learning in religious education [RE] along with their participation in worship, pupils write prayers reflecting on the needs of others locally, nationally and internationally. They enjoy learning in RE, where they further develop understanding of how they can apply what they learn to themselves. For example, they compare their own experience of belonging to what it might be like to belong to a religious community. One child reflects how people would support each other in the same way that they and their friends support each other in learning and play. There is a developing understanding of different faiths, such as Judaism, and Islam, and pupils speak of how learning about different faiths helps them to understand some of their festivals and traditions and how faith communities worship.

Because of the increasing impact of the Christian character, pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported. However, the staff do not have a clear definition of spirituality as a church school which they apply to their work.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Staff derive significant value from worship, which is clear in statements such as, 'collective worship gives us the time we need to reflect and gives us, through religion, a positive start to the whole day'. Through having time to 'listen, receive guidance and comfort', some staff describe how this 'underpins our motivation to work with children and families'. It is equally clear that pupils believe daily worship helps, as one explains how they know that 'God is always with us' when the candle is lit as worship begins. There is a growing understanding amongst parents of what school worship is and what it can mean to their children. One parent describes how her child talks about God always looking after her and how they sing songs and say prayers at home inspired by worship. Over half of parents responding to a recent questionnaire said that their children talk to them about collective worship and that they know the value of the month.

Through daily worship, pupils have a growing knowledge of Bible stories and they are developing understanding of how they help them to understand and use Christian values. One pupil illustrates this by explaining that in the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus is showing 'how we can help anyone, everyone is our neighbour'. Another pupil goes on to describe how because of this, they had supported a child who was upset by organising a game for him.

There is clear respect for worship, with pupils and staff participating together in an atmosphere of calm expectation. This ethos is created by stories, which inspire understanding of Christian values and singing songs linked to the

values. Understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is developing. Through a recent whole school project on the Holy Spirit, one of the younger pupils describes how, 'God is the Holy Spirit like the wind because you can't see it but you can feel it.' Prayers allow for personal response, or for the needs of the wider community, including observing Remembrance Sunday, and prayers for Syria. As a result, pupils' spiritual and moral development is supported, leading them to serve others, for example, through the local food bank and Children in Need. The vicar and youth worker from the parish church of St Andrew lead worship weekly. These visits support the development of the act of worship. They include celebration of Christian festivals such as Christmas and Easter along with other events in the church year such as church colours and their meaning. Consequently, pupils have a developing understanding of Anglican faith and practice. They do not have an understanding that Christians worship in different ways in other traditions. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about project days in church, which include the stations of the cross and most recently a Pentecost project. This inspired one pupil to describe how it had helped them to 'understand that God is everywhere, he is looking over the school'.

Governors attend some daily worship, which supports evaluations carried out with school leaders. These have led to the development of a strong partnership between the church and the school, along with other developments such as the vicar taking weekly worship for the youngest pupils. This is helping them to have a growing understanding of Jesus, illustrated by pupils seeing a picture of Jesus on the cross, excitedly stretching out their arms and shouting, 'I love you this much.'

Pupils support the organisation of worship in roles such as managing the words for songs on the computer and doing readings and prayers. They are not involved in planning or leading worship.

There is a growing understanding of the importance of prayer in daily worship and how prayers can be said at other times during the day. Some pupils appreciate recently developed reflection areas in all classrooms as a place 'where you can go and say a prayer if you're sad'. Others speak of going into the sensory garden 'to be still, say a prayer and talk to God'.

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

Galvanised by the determined leadership of the headteacher, school leaders and governors are united in their belief that every child deserves to receive God's love. This is supported in the words of the vision statement, 'Aim high, Love learning, Trust God', which was created by pupils supported by the vicar and headteacher.

Pupils also chose a number of Christian values to support the vision, including forgiveness and respect, which are making a difference to the way they manage disagreements on the playground'. The values are Christian because they are linked to message of Christ. Their importance is summed up by the vicar who sees them as pillars which support the day-to-day lives of all who learn and work in the school.

School leaders and governors are committed to ensuring that what pupils learn in collective worship and increasingly in RE results in practical application of the vision and values. This is supporting good behaviour, as pupils speak of wanting to do their best in their learning, enjoying coming to school and knowing that God is always with them. Consequently, achievement is improving throughout the school and SMSC is being enriched.

Governors know the school well. Over the past two years have become increasingly involved in defining what it means to be a church school. Following a period of where urgent priorities were addressed, school leaders and governors are working on areas for development from the previous SIAMS inspection. Action plans are prepared, for example on ensuring that Christian values and ethos underpin all aspects of school life. The impact of this is evident in the way values are used in RE lessons and daily worship. Working with the diocese is supporting the commitment of school leaders and governors to develop the school as a church school. This has informed the strategy for developing the Christian character and the development of the strong partnership between the church and the school. Church members pray for the school and some volunteer to support pupils in school, helping with listening to reading or supporting learning in classrooms.

The relationship between the church and school is extending into the wider community, most recently through the development of a monthly 'messy church', a creative all-age Sunday service held in school and attended by some of the pupils and their families. Some parents are beginning to attend school worship when it is in church, with one parent describing that they always feel welcome and how the service can create a sense of peace.

The strong commitment to developing and sustaining church school leadership leads to governors, senior leaders and staff attending training with the diocese. This training has supported them in developing the Christian distinctiveness throughout the school. It has also supported the RE leader, to work with staff on the implementation of 'Understanding Christianity', a new national RE teaching resource.

SIAMS report June 2017. Hertford St Andrew Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Hertford SG14 2EP