

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### Preston VC Primary School

Back Lane, Preston, Hitchin, SG4 7UJ	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>St Albans</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Date of inspection	17 October 2017
Date of last inspection	21 October 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary VC 117403
Headteacher	Vicky Lunniss
Inspector's name and number	Lindsay Fraser 107

#### School context

Preston (VC) Primary School is a smaller than average primary school, currently with a roll of 86 pupils, located in the rural village of Preston. Pupils attend from the local village and surrounding areas, most pupils being of White British origin. Those eligible for the pupil premium grant, which provides funding for looked-after children and those eligible for free school meals, are far fewer than average. The school has a larger than average number of pupils with special educational needs and disability. The headteacher has been in post for two years and an assistant headteacher has been in role for one year. The school's Ofsted inspection in March 2017 maintained a good judgement.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Preston VC Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- The headteacher has established strong Christian values which are having a clear impact on standards of teaching and relationships at all levels in the school community.
- The school governors are now rigorous in their monitoring and evaluation of school standards because of their commitment to the school's reinvigorated Christian character. Through this they seek to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met.
- Strong links with the church enable pupils to benefit from the expertise of the vicar, generosity of the church community and the opportunity to attend children's special church services during the year.
- The quality of teaching and learning in religious education (RE) enables pupils to develop a greater understanding of a range of Christian beliefs and of the school's Christian character.

#### Areas to improve

- Ensure that pupils have a deeper knowledge and understanding of key Christian beliefs, including the Trinity, through their inclusion in collective worship.
- Provide informative material for families regarding the school's Christian values to enable parents and pupils to further embed and celebrate these values.
- Involve pupils in the planning and delivery of collective worship to increase the engagement and enjoyment of the all pupils,
- Formalise monitoring and evaluation to assess and increase the impact of collective worship.

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

It is evident that Christian values have become central to the life of the school community since the appointment of the current headteacher. The headteacher has ensured that a strong, shared vision, based on six key agreed Christian values, underpins every aspect of the school's provision. Pupils, staff, governors and parents can articulate how these values are improving relationships, behaviour and learning. Parents agree that their children are now much more aware of the Christian context of their school values. The school is aware that the next step is to keep parents well informed of each value and how the value can be further developed in the home. The new school motto of 'Love Learn Aspire', developed by the whole school community, is well understood by pupils. Pupils are keen to explain in detail the many aspects of 'love' and how it applies to their daily lives in school. Pupils make good or better progress in all areas of their learning. This is because the school leadership and staff share the Christian belief that each child is unique and has different needs. Consequently, all pupils are confident that adults in the school will support them, as they require, to achieve their best. The school is strongly committed to inclusion and adapts curriculum provision to support those in greatest need, enabling other pupils to learn without interruption. In line with the school motto's third value of aspiration, the school has identified, and is also addressing, the need to challenge the most able pupils. It is clear from standards in religious education (RE) that pupils can think deeply about a range of concepts. RE contributes significantly to the Christian character of the school not only through the high profile that it is given, but also through the well-planned teaching and learning opportunities observed in lessons and pupils' work. A wide range of extra-curricular activities and specialist weeks such as the school's 'Culture Week' contribute significantly to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. However, there is at present, no specific monitoring to ensure the quality of SMSC across the curriculum. Pupils have a growing understanding of Christianity as a world faith. Pupils can talk about Christians and their faith in other countries because the school ensures that they are aware of world events and how the Christian faith has helped believers in times of catastrophic events. Pupils enjoy learning about other faiths and are confident in describing their own beliefs. The school has identified the need to further pupils' experiences of other faiths through visits to places of worship. As a result, plans are already in place and include a visit for the younger pupils to a Sikh gurdwara.

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

Pupils value, understand and express the importance of collective worship which is held at the beginning of the day. They agree that the experience of worship 'sets them up for the day, enables them to relax and helps them feel ready to learn'. There is a clear structure to the pattern of worship, with good attention given to setting a suitable atmosphere for worship. Pupils develop a good understanding of traditions in Christian worship through the lighting of a candle and the use of appropriate colours to represent different seasons of the church year. Worship is well planned and is based on the Church calendar and the school's Christian values. Each half termly value is broken down into specific aspects of the value and is linked to a Biblical text. For example, in the week of the inspection, the current values of care and compassion were linked to 1 John 3: 18, 'Let us not love with words or speech, but with actions and in truth'. A simple story, dramatized by pupils, led to pupils' understanding that people, regardless of who they are, should be given help and treated with compassion. Pupils refer also to the parable of the Good Samaritan from which they learn the importance of care and compassion for everyone. Pupils can easily state how this applies to their school. Music is given a high degree of importance within the school. The impact of this can be seen in the very high quality of singing which contributes towards a spiritual atmosphere within acts of worship. Pupils are keen to describe the impact of collective worship on the way they learn. This was characterised by one pupil who stated that, 'collective worship helps me to think that I can do things'. Pupils have a good understanding of the person of Jesus Christ, but have a limited understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The school leadership and rector have identified this as an area for further development. The school has special services during the year which are held in the local church for Harvest, Christmas, Easter and the leavers' service. These church services have been put in place since the previous inspection. They are very well planned, involve all pupils and are well attended and valued by parents. Prayer is a developing strength within the school. The introduction of the Lord's prayer in collective worship and its regular use ensures that pupils are participating more confidently. The attention paid to prayer and guided reflection in collective worship has encouraged pupils to set up prayer corners in each classroom. Younger pupils have identified items which help them to pray and to reflect, including a recording of the headteacher's voice saying, 'Let us pray', a cross, into which they can post their prayers and a range of chosen books. Senior leaders have sought some general feedback from pupils on collective worship, an action point from the previous inspection. Whilst most pupils enjoy the current form of worship some pupils stated during the inspection that they wished to be more involved and to have more stories and discussion. The governors have a detailed action plan to ensure that every pupil benefits from their experience of collective worship. This includes a formalised approach to monitoring and evaluating the impact of collective worship on pupils.

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

As a result of changes in leadership over the past two years, the governing body and headteacher have involved the whole school community in establishing a clear Christian vision. This is a vision, based on the school's Christian values of love, learn and aspire, which recognises that all children are unique, and aspires to treat all children as individuals, supporting them to achieve success and develop mutual respect for all, regardless of background or ability. Highlighted as an area for the development in the previous inspection there is now an increasing understanding of how the Christian character seeks to underpin standards and the well-being of the school community. As a result, governors now have a very clear knowledge and understanding, through careful monitoring, of pupil progress and attainment. They can compare the performance of individuals and groups of pupils and thereby challenge any underperformance to secure the best outcomes for all. A clear set of values, based on the school's Christian character, have been agreed by the school community. The headteacher, supported by the school staff, ensures these values constantly underpin the curriculum, support for those whose progress falls below that which is expected, good attendance and high standards of behaviour. School leaders readily accept that, whilst the vision and values are solidly in place and followed by all staff and pupils, the impact is yet to be as fully embedded as they would wish. Whilst monitoring of standards and the curriculum is securely in place, monitoring of the effectiveness of the Christian character, the quality of collective worship and SMSC is still at an early stage of development. Governors demonstrate good strategic leadership in considering and discussing the future needs of this small school. Current leadership within the school has been reorganised to meet the changing needs of the school, including the appointment of an assistant headteacher. The appointment of staff takes account of their commitment to the school's Christian character, in order that the Christian character will be maintained throughout the school. Staff are well supported in their professional development. The headteacher has taken on the responsibility for leading RE and collective worship to ensure that these remain central to the life and work of the school. Her strong leadership in the development of RE, together with effective staff development, is enabling the rapid improvement in standards. Staff have welcomed the emphasis now given to the school's Christian character and its impact on the very positive, happy and energetic atmosphere within the school. This includes the attention given to the well-being of all staff which results in a high morale. The school's relationship with the church has developed further since the previous inspection due to the commitment of the rector and the headteacher. The impact of this can be seen in the greater attendance of pupils at the three-monthly children's services in the church and the greater involvement of the rector in supporting the school. Parents are very supportive of the school. The Preston School Association (PSA) is very conscious of the ethos and diversity of the school and therefore ensures that the organisation of events respects this. Consequently, they ensure that events are not always fund-raising events, but are opportunities to thank and support pupils and parents.

SIAMS report October 2017 Preston VC Primary School, Preston, Hitchin, SG4 7UJ