

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Christ Church Chorleywood Church of England School

The Common, Chorleywood, Hertfordshire, WD3 5SG

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	St. Albans
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	Academy April 2013
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	n/a
Date of inspection	3 November 2017
Date of last inspection	October 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	I39507
Headteacher	Duncan Gauld
Inspector's name and number	Mel Adams NS 58

School context

This is a smaller than average one form of entry primary school and nursery with 238 pupils on roll. Pupils are predominantly White British with a below average number of pupils from a range of minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is well below average. The number eligible for the pupil premium grant is also well below average. Since the previous inspection, the school has converted to academy status. There have been some staffing changes, but staffing has been stable over the past three years.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Christ Church Chorleywood as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Progress made since the previous inspection has resulted in a strengthening of the school's Christian vision and values, which are lived out in daily life throughout the school.
- Pupils have a clear understanding that Christian values help them to be better people in the present, and prepare them for the future.
- Daily collective worship, extended throughout the day with times of prayer, significantly inspires those who participate and is foundational to the strong Christian character of the school.
- The partnership between the church and school is dynamic and the exceptional contribution made by the vicar, worship leader and children and youth workers, is powerful in supporting understanding of Christian faith and worship.
- The inspirational leadership of the religious education [RE] leader is empowering staff to deliver high quality lessons which lead to high levels of attainment and progress.
- The school and church have a tenacious commitment to training leaders, resulting in strong and effective leadership, which helps to shape the schools' Christian character.

Areas to improve

- Maximise the potential of pupils academically, spiritually and socially by agreeing a shared understanding of spirituality as a church school.
- Extend pupils' knowledge of the global nature of Christianity, including different denominations, by broadening understanding that it is a worldwide, multi-cultural faith.

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

Pupils in this outstanding church school understand that the school supports them to learn, become better people, grow together as a family and develop understanding of the Christian faith. An older pupil describes how this prepares them for their lives in the future when they have left the school. They attribute this to the school vision articulated through core values of trust, love and respect which helps them 'learning and growing with God'. Pupils want to come to school and attendance is above the national average. For the very small number of pupils whose attendance is below expectations, the school works tirelessly with others to support them. There are no exclusions. A clear belief that every child is a child of God is evidently in action in support for all pupils. The vision statement sets out an aim 'to be a community in which everyone is encouraged to be ambitious and to achieve their full potential, academically, spiritually and socially within a caring Christian environment.' This is the daily experience in the life of the school. There are a number of explanations of spirituality, including 'God being central', and 'encountering the love of Christ daily'. However, there is not an agreed understanding of what 'realising full potential spiritually' means for pupils. Governors, school leaders and staff agree that this is important in further developing the Christian character of the school. Behaviour is excellent and attributed to the active use of Christian values by adults and children. Pupils describe how they use them 'to lead others to be better'. They explain how staff speak to children about their behaviour using the values, supporting them to forgive and be reconciled, inspired by Jesus' teaching. As a result, relationships throughout the school are very strong, recognised and appreciated by all members of the school community. Parents describing the effects of the values on their children illustrate this, for example, one parent explaining how her young child spoke to a younger sibling about the importance of trusting. Parents also see how the ethos supports pupils' personal development, as they learn a strong sense of self and faith, which leads to high levels of mutual support across year groups. Through visitors from the church, pupils understand that there are Christians in other places in the world. However, they have a limited awareness that the Church is global and multi-cultural. Learning in RE gives them an understanding of a number of different faiths. Pupils recognise where beliefs and practices may be similar or different to Christianity and are able to identify that many share similar values. They appreciate how learning about different faiths helps them to understand, trust and respect, knowing that they are growing up in a multi-cultural society. Underpinned by the Christian ethos, very good, spiritual, moral, social and cultural [SMSC] development is secured through consistently rich experiences in worship, RE and the wider curriculum, creating a setting in which pupils learn and achieve very well.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

The headteacher describes daily collective worship as central to the life of the school and pupils, parents, staff and church members affirm this. Pupils learn about Christian faith and values, which support and nurture all who attend. The values are from Bible stories, told through interactive presentations supporting reflection, response and action. For example, one pupil describes how sometimes after worship, instead of playing with her friends, she finds a quiet place to sit and think. Another explains how hearing about the plight of refugees led her to realise the real meaning of the word 'starving' making her grateful for the blessings of her own life. Worship also inspires concern for the needs of others leading to charity fund raising including Chorleywood Refugee Association and harvest gifts to Betel UK, a charity for the homeless. Pupils are strongly appreciative of worship, identifying this as the time when the whole school can be together as a family. Family groups of pupils from different classes led by year 6 pupils along with house groups strengthen what pupils describe as a strong bond. During all of these times, values such as trust and love permeate, steering the high level of support pupils provide for each other across year groups. Older pupils take very seriously the responsibility this brings to welcome newcomers and to support others at playtimes. Across the school, pupils of different ages recognise how values inspire them to be kind and friendly, making the school a happy place. Pupils have a good understanding of the Holy Trinity, describing the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, and the events of Pentecost. Supported by lighting three candles to begin worship, pupils say, 'God the Father whose promises are true, God the Son trusted his Father, and God the Holy Spirit who gives us faith to trust today'. Pupils explain that trust is one of their core values. Celebrating a number of Christian festivals, often in the church, pupils have a good understanding of Anglican faith and traditions and know some liturgical prayers. Parents' attendance at these services is so high that there are plans to provide on overflow space. Pupils' singing in worship is lively and energetic and supports the teaching, giving expression to what they have heard. The dynamic partnership with the church supports planning for worship and the vicar and worship coordinator lead worship weekly in school. The regular participation of the youth and children's workers provide further enrichment by working with classes. The headteacher and a number of staff lead worship. Pupils regularly plan and confidently lead worship with school council leading half-termly. Year 6 organise and lead worship in church, demonstrating the clear knowledge and understanding they have gained. As a result, those who attend enjoy a variety of approaches, which help them to reflect and pray in different ways. Occasionally a visitor from the Baptist church may lead worship, but pupils do not have a clear understanding about how other denominations worship. Described as essential, prayer permeates the life of the school. There are class prayers at lunchtime and the end of school. Pupils and staff may pray together,

for example, for someone who is ill. Meetings of staff, governors and the parents association all begin with prayer. Pupils write prayers for times of worship. They say they would like to have a space outside for prayer, which the school has identified, as an area for development. Senior staff and governors evaluate through learning walks and attendance at worship, leading most recently to adopting a new resource, which is supporting the development of Biblical understanding and values. Seeking the views of parents and pupils through surveys indicates that the overwhelming majority agree that worship and prayer are important in the life of the school.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.

Pupils enjoy learning in RE, recognising that it helps them to understand the Christian faith, which they say is the reason the school exists. Standards are high and match attainment in the core subjects. The new locally agreed syllabus, alongside 'Understanding Christianity', a recently published resource, is leading to a high level of challenge, which is extending and deepening religious understanding. Through excellent teacher questioning, a child in nursery says that we should be kind because God wants us to be kind. Pupils in year 3 are able to discuss the properties of water and use these to describe characteristics of God. One child draws a parallel with water flowing to the love of God flowing to her. The pupils in year 6 study the concept of Messiah in Judaism by looking at the Old Testament prophecies. Applying their understanding, they then consider what kind of Messiah they personally believe is needed by designing wanted posters identifying issues they see as important today. Pupils are able to reflect on their learning, illustrated by one pupil using the story of Jesus calming the storm to describe how her 'storm' would be fear of getting lost, hoping that Jesus would help. Such reflective activities deepen understanding by enabling pupils to relate religion to their own experience and that of others. Progress is good for the majority of pupils but this can sometimes be limited where tasks restrict pupils' ability to record what they know and understand. Regular assessments are used to support planning for future teaching and learning. Visits to different places of worship including a mosque and a Hindu temple, support pupils' growing understanding that people have different ways of expressing faith and belief. Pupils particularly appreciate the contribution made by peers and their family members who are able to explain how they practise their own religion and what their faith means to them. Pupils are able to make links between different faiths and Christianity, recognising that light is a common symbol for goodness, and that values can also be the same. Because of the breadth of learning experiences in RE, SMSC development is strong and this extends across the wider curriculum. The RE leader has passionately supported developments in RE, researching resources, revising the scheme of work, providing and arranging training for staff and supporting them to deliver RE lessons. Supported by the headteacher, she has raised the profile of RE, timetabling it alongside the core subjects. As a result, teachers make links throughout the day between the understanding pupils gain in RE and other areas of the curriculum. For example, a teacher highlighted a connection between the content of the RE lesson with a novel. Through regular monitoring and effective evaluation and action planning, the quality of teaching and learning in RE has risen since the previous inspection.

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

The exceptional partnership between the headteacher, school leaders, the church and the governing body results in a singular commitment to the vision, values and ethos of the school, which steer strategic developments. They feature in governing body meetings and in monthly prayer meetings in the church. Staff, governors, parents and pupils contributed to their formation and they all understand their importance for pupils. Pupils speak of how the core values of trust, love and respect help them to 'learn and grow with God'. Through regular visits to the school, governors see the values in action. These visits enable governors to 'pin down evidence, ask questions and probe'. As a result, they are confident about the excellent behaviour, commitment to learning and high levels of participation in worship. A governor describes a pupil, inspired by the worship theme, explaining how they had to have courage and not to give up. The importance of the values is evident in documentation, including the school headed paper, leaving no doubt that they are central to the life of the school community. Strategic planning places Christian character development as first priority, emphasising its importance in steering other developments. Staff and governors gain insight into the impact of the Christian character through regular evaluations which include reports from the RE leader. Consequently, all those in leadership have a clear understanding of the school's performance in all areas in light of their commitment to see 'children realise their full potential academically, spiritually and socially.' Through the perceptible application of the school vision, school leaders and governors ensure that SMSC development is strong. The exceptional contribution made by the church is strategic in the provision for pupils and support for staff, significantly enhancing RE and worship, along with pastoral support and prayer. The RE leader, staff and governors are well-supported drawing on diocesan resources and training. Parents are supportive of the school, attending worship in church and through fund raising. The headteacher is unequivocal in his ambition to develop school leaders, as evidenced by the strong leadership of RE and collective worship. Clergy and church leaders benefit from training provided by the worship leader in working with schools and children.