

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

### Cockernhoe Endowed CofE Primary School

Cockernhoe Green, Luton LU2 8PY	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>St Albans</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Name of multi-academy trust	N/A
Date of inspection	10 May 2018
Date of last inspection	6 June 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 117446
Headteacher	Simon Philby
Inspector's name and number	Lilian Weatherley 42

#### School context

Cockernhoe Church of England Primary School is a small village school in the Parish of St Francis, Luton. There are four mixed age classes and a nursery. A relatively small number of pupils come from Cockernhoe, with the remainder coming from the outskirts of Luton. Pupils enter school with skills that are below the national average. Most pupils are of White British heritage although the number from ethnic backgrounds is increasing. The proportion of pupils who have disabilities or special educational needs is in line with the national average while the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Cockernhoe Church of England Primary School is Outstanding

- The school's Christian values are having a significant impact on pupil behaviour and achievement
- All pupils are valued as being unique in the sight of God with their personal development and wellbeing paramount in all decisions
- Religious education (RE) and worship offer excellent opportunities for pupils' spiritual development
- Leaders ensure that as a church school Cockernhoe lies at the heart of the parish and community
- The excellent parish and community links have a significant impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding of the school being at the heart of a Christian community.

#### Areas to improve

- Ensure that there is rigorous planning and assessment in RE to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of key religious ideas and concepts rather than opportunities for their personal and social development.
- Ensure that tasks set offer sufficient rigour and challenge in order to improve progress particularly of the more able pupils.
- Further develop the role of the worship council to enable more pupil participation, monitoring and evaluation

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

Since the recent Ofsted report in November 2017 attainment has continued to rise. Pupils have a good start in the nursery and early years, and although pupils enter with below average skills they are catching up rapidly. There is now rigorous monitoring and tracking in place and 2018 results are due to show significant improvement. Teaching, learning and assessment have improved since the last inspection and there are now several programmes in place for early intervention. Much of this is linked to the impact of the school's distinctive Christian character and the improvements in attitudes and behaviour brought about by the school's Christian values. Progress of more able pupils does, however, still remain an issue in some subjects.

RE and worship are given a high profile. Both strongly support the school's Christian character and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which is excellent. The curriculum offers regular opportunities for pupils to reflect, and the leadership has worked hard to create an inspirational learning environment in which the pupils can flourish. The new library area and colourful displays have clearly had a significant impact on attainment and how the pupils learn. The Christian values, which are deeply embedded in the daily life of the school, are also painted around the walls as constant reminders of the gospel teachings. One pupil explained that 'we learn our Christian values for life in the future'. Parents are eager to praise the way in which the monthly newsletter recognises the pupils for following the values. 'It helps them to grow in confidence.' Relationships are excellent and pupil welfare and development are at the heart of the school. This church school has been there since 1881 and is viewed by all as being at the heart of the village. Many parents and governors have past links with the school and close personal ties with the parish, resulting in the whole community supporting the school and its pupils. This is expressed in the leaf wall where all pupils and staff have their names painted on a leaf. Ex-pupils still return to the school to see their leaves.

All pupils enjoy school and a series of visits and visitors make learning fun and enhance the curriculum. The recent Year 1/2 visit to the easyJet simulator was a big hit. Being close to Luton, the school ensures pupils have an awareness and respect for diversity. It also has effective links with a school in the Philippines. 'Our school values teach us to respect people for who they are and their beliefs.'

Shaped by the school's Christian character, attendance is good and parents say their children are 'eager to get to school in the morning'. Behaviour is excellent and pupils move around the school with calmness and respect for each other. They feel safe and say that bullying rarely happens. If there is an issue it is dealt with quickly and effectively. 'It's a small school and we all know each other well. We also help and care for the younger children.'

Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities and a strong musical tradition. The Forest Schools project has had a significant impact on the pupils' health and wellbeing. Pupils say how much they enjoy their time outside exploring their environment and 'God's Creation'. Parents and governors have joined with the pupils to create an outdoor quiet area, a sensory garden, paddle pipes and a tear drop garden where pupils explain how they are able to think and pray about the loss of loved ones. Parents were also involved in creating a garden around what would have been a concrete space for pupils to park their bikes and scooters. One of the parents said, 'we all work together for the children'.

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

Prayer and worship lie at the heart of this school. Whole school worship is planned by the vicar and headteacher each term and it is firmly rooted in biblical teaching and the school's 22 Christian values.

Pupils and parents are very positive about the worship provided. Pupils say how much they enjoy the worship in school and the parish churches, and parents value the opportunities to worship with their children. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the school's Anglican heritage. They all know the Lord's Prayer, the Grace and have an age-appropriate understanding of the Trinity. They also know key Christian greetings and dismissals which are regularly used during the monthly service at the church. Eucharistic worship is not currently part of school practice but discussions are taking place with governors and clergy as to how this too might be incorporated into the planning. Pupils' understanding of the Bible and Christian liturgy has been greatly enhanced by the regular inputs from the parish clergy.

The school celebrates the major Christian festivals and holds some of these outside, including Harvest Festival and Remembrance Day. Pupils and parents speak positively about these events. Both parish churches are also used extensively for worship. The monthly worship at St Hugh's is well attended by parents and governors and the regular monitoring reflects how much they enjoy these opportunities to worship with the children.

During the act of worship observed, pupils entered quietly and with utmost respect, and listened carefully throughout. Based on the Christian value of 'Joy', the white board images and balloons were used effectively to engage the pupils and reinforce the value of Joy. The hymn singing was exemplary. The active school choir sings regularly in the church and for community events such as the cream tea for the elderly and a Christmas carol service for grandparents.

Pupils have a deep understanding of prayer and its value. They benefit from the many opportunities for prayer and reflection given throughout the school day both in worship and across the curriculum. Each lesson observed had a significant moment of reflection and prayer and both pupils and parents say how important prayer has become in their personal lives. Pupils also enjoy writing prayers and make good use of the 'prayer chair' and outside area to write their personal prayers. 'The outside area is a great place to sit and pray.'

The new and active collective worship council, which was set up in 2017, has resulted in pupils taking more of an active role in planning, leading and evaluating their worship. They are enthusiastic about leading worship each term.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

Standards in RE are generally good but there are elements of weakness in the progress of more able pupils and their deeper understanding of key religious ideas and concepts. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of Christianity but their knowledge and understanding of the other faiths studied is less secure. Where teaching is good there is detailed planning, pupils are challenged in their thinking and the tasks set allow for an understanding of key religious concepts. Where teaching is less secure planning is weak and lessons focus more on personal and social education.

The work on 'Understanding Christianity' is excellent and the materials have clearly given a structure to lessons and helped to raise pupils' knowledge and understanding of the Christian tradition. All staff have been trained on the project and were able to take part in the RE days on Creation and Salvation. This work reflected much higher standards and has been shown around the diocese as an example of good practice. Work on Christianity is also supported by the Christian content, values and biblical background delivered through worship.

Pupils say how much they enjoy RE and their behaviour is exemplary. 'RE is the best lesson of the week; we learn about different religions and how those of different faiths should be treated.' Although pupils are excited by RE and are given a wide variety of fun and creative tasks, pupils' books often reflect a lack of challenge and extended writing opportunities. RE lessons make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The lessons observed each had a moment of reflection to complete the lesson. The bird cage filled with stones for pupils to take home and reflect on their own souls, linked to the story of the 'Soul Bird', was exceptional.

The school follows the new Hertfordshire agreed syllabus but assessment based on this syllabus is not yet in place. The RE subject leader, who is a Higher-Level Teaching Assistant, has been in post for four years and is passionate about the subject. However, the writing of new assessment procedures without levels is not part of the HLTA role.

The profile of RE has risen over the last four years and there is a series of planned visits and visitors which enhance the subject. Pupils were eager to talk about the recent question time held with the local rabbi and parish clergy. Other pupils said how much they enjoyed the work on Islamic art done with a Muslim parent.

The recent RE book club, led by the subject leader, has also been a success with numbers increasing rapidly.

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

Since the appointment of the headteacher in 2015, the school has gone from strength to strength. The school has a clear and distinctive Christian ethos, aims and values. It is clear that it sets out 'to provide the highest quality education for all within the context of the Christian faith and to develop understanding of the Christian faith, based on the teaching of the Bible and of the Church of England, and an awareness of Christian values'. However, this has not yet been encapsulated into a 'vision statement' rooted in the Gospels and the teachings of Jesus. The headteacher and vicar, who is vice chair of governors, have attended training on the new C of E Vision for Education and are in the process of revising the school's vision and values in line with this.

All of those interviewed were clear about the distinctive character of the school and were able to articulate its Christian values and foundation. Parents spoke positively about the impact these values have had on their children's behaviour and achievement, and how much the staff modelled these values in practice; for example, the headteacher's presence at the gate each morning and the respect he shows by knowing all pupils' names. 'It's like a Christian family where each child is valued.' The school has had some challenges in recent years with pupil standards and progress but the headteacher, with the support of the governing body, has ensured that things are moving forward and that any issues with pupil progress are being addressed with rigorous monitoring and evaluation. Alongside the diocesan health check, this has led to effective strategies for improvement. Governors know the school well and the SIAMS self-evaluation is a regular item on the governing body agenda. Governors' meetings ensure that all action is rooted in the school's distinctive Christian character and now end with a prayer and silent reflection on 'What action have we taken to support our pupils?'

Links with the parents and the community are outstanding. There is an active PTA which is constantly raising funds to ensure the school environment is 'the best it can be for the children' and supports the school's Christian character. By purchasing sound equipment, they have been actively involved in ensuring that worship becomes a meaningful experience for the whole community. The outdoor services were 'heard and enjoyed by all'.

Links between the school and the parish church are mutually strong and effective. The vicar is the RE governor and the parish clergy are regular visitors to the school. They are well known and praised by all of the parents for their support of the school. Parents regularly attend worship and speak highly of the school and church as being central to the local community.

Links with the diocese of St Albans are strong and staff regularly attend diocesan training. Statutory requirements for RE and worship are met in full and all staff and clergy have recently attended the 'Understanding Christianity' training. This has had a significant impact on standards, with all teaching staff gaining experience of teaching Christianity.