

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Wrestlingworth Cof E VC Lower School

Church Lane, Wrestlingworth, Sandy SG19 2EU

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	St Albans
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Date of inspection	5 June 2018
Date of last inspection	23 September 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 109609
Headteacher	Nancy Sheehan
Inspector's name	Mary Westley 927

School context

Wrestlingworth Lower School is set in the small village of Wrestlingworth. It is a much smaller than average lower school. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is below the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for whom the school receives additional funding is also below the national average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national figure and the percentage for whom English is a second language is significantly below the national average. The school shares a headteacher and a single governing body with Dunton VC Lower School.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Wrestlingworth Church of England Voluntary Controlled Lower School are outstanding

- The school's distinctive Christian values are made very explicit and are widely known. They have a very positive impact on the daily lives of all members of the community.
- The well-being of all members of the community is given great importance and is directly attributable to the Christian character of the school.
- The headteacher models Christian values in her strong leadership. This has led the whole school community to strive to make this school the best church school possible, serving the community with respect.
- The school's Christian character ensures a fully inclusive approach so that all families feel welcome. Relationships are strong at all levels.
- Collective worship has great importance and clearly sets out the distinctive Christian values of the school.

Areas to improve

- Develop pupils understanding of Christianity as a world faith so that they have a wider awareness of the scale and diversity involved.
- Governors should systematically evaluate the school as a church school so that the extent of the impact of the schools' vision can be accurately understood.

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

This school values its Christian foundation highly. The chosen twelve distinctive values are prominently displayed around the school. Members across the community are very aware of these values and are able to talk about the very considerable impact they have. Examples abound and are common place to the extent of everyday behaviours automatically reflecting the values held. This has become the culture of the school. A specific example is pupils demonstrating an ability to accept challenges and persevere with tasks both in school and in special events such as a whole school walk. In the latter older pupils encouraged the younger ones not to give up. A Year 4 pupil aptly summarised how the school's values reminded everyone how to behave. The highly effective 'values champion' scheme rewards pupils for demonstrating the values. Pupils are delighted to be noticed and strive to apply the values to their daily lives. All members of the community are involved in these nominations and the celebration of them. The headteacher, staff and governors ensure a fully inclusive approach where every individual child is known extremely well and valued. Within a Christian context individual pupil achievements across the school are highly valued. As a result, academic standards for most pupils are at least in line with national expectations. Progress for some was slower than expected last year but the school has taken decisive action to improve achievement for these pupils. This is already showing impact. Attendance rates are high due to the fact pupils feel valued in this school and good attendance is rewarded. They also like coming to school. There is a strong sense of respect running through the community and this is evident in relationships at all levels. This leads to a very powerful sense of community, with all families feeling welcome and included. The well-being of all members of the school community is given high importance and this is directly attributed to the school's Christian character. This can be seen in the sensitive support for families in times of difficulties and the strong tradition of supporting local and overseas charities. For example their support for the local food bank at harvest time and a school in Uganda. The very evident distinctive Christian values, such as respect, have made pupils and staff keenly aware of each other's needs. Small acts of kindness occur every day. These Christian values have clear and very direct links to collective worship. This enables pupils to reflect on these values and see how they relate to their lives. For example, pupils explain that after reflection people could realise they have to say sorry. Christian values also shape behaviour throughout the school as they are explicitly referred to in expectations and procedures. Behaviour throughout the school is excellent showing respect at all levels. Pupils know they will be listened to and feel able to say how they feel. The mixed aged classes have helped the school develop a strong culture of children looking after each other. There is a very inclusive atmosphere and when small issues arise, they are resolved quickly so no-one feels left out. Children's spirituality is developed through their use of reflection and prayer, particularly in their worship. Pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith is developing. The headteacher has worked hard to build the Christian character of the school. As a result, the school is a supportive Christian community caring for the needs of all its members and the wider community. An example is pupils electing which charities to support each year. There is a culture of giving across the school and pupils are centrally involved in this. Religious education (RE), alongside collective worship, makes a significant contribution to the Christian character of the school and the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The school places great importance on collective worship as shown by the range of staff, adults and pupils involved. The recently established worship group is beginning to lead and plan worship based on the current Christian value. They tackle this with enthusiasm, commitment and sincerity. Each applied for a place in the group. Additionally they are able to thoughtfully link the Christian value to an appropriate Bible passage and think hard about making the worship meaningful and interesting. When asked how they knew how successful they were a member of the group replied 'When pupils are listening well'. Many children routinely read aloud prepared passages and say prayers, written by themselves or other pupils. All pupils have the opportunity to do so. All stakeholders evaluate worship and findings lead to further improvements. Planning for collective worship is very thoughtful and links clearly to biblical teaching. The Bible stories included are most carefully chosen to illustrate the Christian values. Pupils have a very good understanding of these stories and can apply the meaning to their lives. A pupil reported how 'the Bible stories show us how to behave'. A Year 4 pupil gave a very full account of the parable of the Good Samaritan and went on to say that it meant we should be kind to everyone. A Year 2 child then added that 'everyone was our neighbour'. Pupils engage very well by listening attentively in worship and responding very thoughtfully about the meaning of what they have heard. Pupils have an age appropriate understanding of the key Christian beliefs such as that of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and can explain their thoughts. There are frequent opportunities for prayer in worship and the pupils have recently written a new school prayer together most effectively. Pupils use reflection time in worship sensibly and value their 'sacred space' recently created on the edge of the playground. They are able to reflect there or say their own prayers. Creating this outdoor prayer space involved people from many levels of the community working together with a united aim. There is frequent reflection time in worship. As a result, pupils think about issues with ease and make direct links to their worship and Christian values. Candles aid reflection. Parents are made very welcome to the worship each

week. Many attend regularly. Worship provides a very strong community link with the village through the church. Until his recent retirement the vicar led worship weekly in school which was popular. During the vacancy links with church have been maintained effectively due to the very close proximity of the church and the active support of volunteers and lay readers from the parish team. A particularly good example of this is regular visits to school which engage the pupils in Bible stories through drama. There is a clear pattern for worship in school with very careful attention given to the setting of the atmosphere with a candle, flowers and a worship table displaying seasons of the church year. As a result, pupils are well aware of the church festivals and seasons.

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

Both the governors and headteacher value the Christian foundation of the school highly. Together they promote a gentle atmosphere where Christian values shape relationships. The school's vision of 'believing and achieving together' was developed collectively involving all stakeholders and is promoted by all leaders across the community. The headteacher leads by example in her behaviour and modelling the Christian values. As a result, all staff and pupils share respect across the community. A caring community exists at all levels. Parents and staff remark on this. Staff support each other routinely. Parents also say they chose the school because of its nurturing nature. One parent expressed this as the school 'seeing each child as an individual'. Another said 'individuals are cared for and known well.' This is illustrated in the school having a dedicated pastoral role for one member of staff and all staff knowing the families well. Parents say their children talk about the Christian values at home and parents are additionally made aware of these through school communication. These Christian values are actively promoted. An example is the well embedded 'values champion' scheme which relates to all the Christian values. The headteacher cares about every child and family in the school. She knows her pupils and families very well and they appreciate this. Links and support for families endure long after pupils have left the school. Very close links exist between the school and the village community and they are mutually supportive. An example is fund raising in the village for the school alongside a community breakfast for the village run by the school parents' association. Collective worship has a very high profile in the school. It reflects the Christian values which run through the school and are known well by all. These are reinforced through prominent displays around school. They are further evidenced in attitudes and relationships across the school. For example, mixed aged groups across the whole school work together harmoniously and a dedicated group of children look after the school environment. The latter is organised on a clear rota and the duties taken very seriously. Every governors' meeting is started with prayer to set their work in a Christian context. Governors are actively involved in aspects of monitoring, but as yet there is no systematic self-evaluation by the governors of the school as a church school. They are active in school including additional meetings if needed, as when the vision was developed. The school's relationship with the local church is very strong. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced through the clear emphasis on Christian values. All of this is set in a broad curriculum giving pupils a rich range of experiences and a variety of ways of working and learning together. These range from whole school theme days to frequent visits to places of local interest. The school values its active links with the diocese and benefits from the training and support it offers. There is a very strong partnership between parents and school, and parents are very aware of the school's values and expectations. They appreciate the responsibility given to the children and how well the children respond to this. Leaders are aware of succession planning and staff training has had considerable positive impact on the leadership of the school. The leadership of worship and RE is given high importance enabling effective and beneficial links between the two.

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