

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

All Saints' and St Richard's Church of England Primary School

School Hill, Old Heathfield, Heathfield, East Sussex, TN21 9AE

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Diocese

Chichester

Previous SIAS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

East Sussex

Date of inspection

16 June 2017

Date of last inspection

November 2011

Type of school and unique reference number

Primary – Voluntary Aided - 114554

Executive Headteacher

Alison Flynn

Head of School

Gavin Davison

Inspector's name and number

Pamela Draycott - 161

School context

Increasing numbers in this very small school means it is moving from three to four classes from September 2017. It is also beginning a new partnership with another church school locally. The current head of school remains in post. The vast majority of pupils are White British. The percentage of socially disadvantaged pupils or those with special educational needs are below the national averages. A higher than average percentage enter or leave at other than usual transfer times. The united benefice, which includes All Saints and St Richard's churches, is about to welcome a new incumbent after a period without clergy.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of All Saints and St Richard's Voluntary Aided Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- Based on its Christian and inclusive ethos, the school is a welcoming and happy place where pupils and adults are valued. There is a strong sense of community and belonging.
- In line with its Christian vision of service, the school effectively balances the academic attainment and progress of each child with their personal development and wellbeing.
- The head of school, ably supported by executive headteacher, is positively shaping continued improvement of the school as a church school serving its community.
- The school is set in an area of outstanding natural beauty and is increasingly making the most of its setting as evidenced by the recent improvements to the school grounds which now include a pond, shaded area and outdoor gym.
- Daily worship contributes effectively to the school's good provision of spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development opportunities which pupils respond to positively.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that the school's core Christian values, reviewed over the course of the academy year 2016-

2017, are embedded into policy and practice and consistently drive forward developments as a church school.

- Establish the work of the newly formed Christian ethos group so that it effectively shapes, monitors and evaluates the school's Christian distinctiveness and effectiveness.
- Refresh teaching in religious education (RE) by incorporating the content, approaches and assessment practices linked to teaching key concepts and beliefs outlined in the new resource and training package, 'Understanding Christianity'.

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

The school is a friendly and welcoming community with a strong 'family feel'. This is a clear expression of the Christian underpinning reflected through its vision and values. The school is in the final stages of reviewing its Christian values which have not yet had time to impact on school policy and practice in any deep way. However, Christian values such as love, forgiveness, justice and thankfulness are clearly demonstrated across the school and seen by pupils and staff as guiding and developing its life. Consequently, relationships are mutually respectful and affirming and pupils' behaviour is very good. Pupils are developing as thoughtful individuals. They take responsibility for themselves and others in an assured manner both formally through, for example, the pupil leadership team (PLT) and informally through friendship groups and games. Standards of attainment have been variable since the time of the previous denominational report due in part to the very small cohort in some year groups. In keeping with the school's Christian vision, and under the leadership of the new head of school and executive headteacher, there is a clear focus on raising academic attainment and ensuring good progress. This is plainly influencing practice. Attainment is broadly in line with or above the national and local averages. Progress is at least good for all groups of pupils including those in upper Key Stage 2 who have entered the school very recently. Whilst academic attainment is seen as important, so too is pupils' personal development and wellbeing. This is based on the idea that each individual is unique and special and from a Christian perspective, 'a child of God'. Consequently, pastoral systems within the school are strong and pupils feel well respected and cared for. 'In our school there is always someone to talk to and if you're worried or upset the adults will help'. This results in pupils feeling happy and safe in school. Attendance is around the national average and improving. There are very few occasions when poor behaviour or attendance gets in the way of learning. The school works fairly and compassionately to resolve issues. The school building and grounds are carefully maintained and good quality displays celebrate its Christian vision and supports pupils' learning well. The school has ensured that there is a good range of opportunities that promote pupils' SMSC development addressed appropriately across the curriculum. This includes RE and personal, social and health education (PHSE) which make a positive contribution to pupils' academic learning and personal development. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities that also promote SMSC well. Pupils respond very well. Charitable giving is important within the school and seen as an expression of its Christian ethos. RE is effective in supporting pupils' appreciation of a variety of religious beliefs and practices. This includes a basic appreciation of the multi-cultural and world-wide nature of Christianity.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The daily worship programme has a central role in expressing and supporting the school's Christian ethos. Pupils and adults engage with it well and express its significance to school community life. As a pupil reflected, 'It helps us be with each other and think about God'. The programme is well planned to take into account the Christian year, key Christian beliefs, school values and events of local, national global significance. Pupils respond positively in worship. They enter and leave respectfully and calmly. They join in with singing and praying appropriately. They listen attentively and respond to leaders positively. Through worship pupils have a wide range of opportunities to recognise the importance of Jesus and of the Bible for Christians. The worship programme has key aspects of Anglican worship built into it. For example, the focal point for worship in the hall is a table covered with an appropriately coloured cloth for the time of the

church's year. On this is placed a lit candle, a cross and an open Bible. 'The cross is there because Jesus died on the cross and the Bible is God's word,' as one of the youngest pupils in the school said. Pupils recognise the significance of a lit candle as 'Jesus, the Light of the World' and also it is, 'God's light to help you concentrate and pray'. Worship in school is well extended and enhanced through regular worship in church. This is mainly in All Saints because it is a short walk away. When worship is at St Richard's a coach for transportation is needed. Worship is led by a range of people including the head of school, teachers, classes, local church representatives and the pupil leadership team. This variety supports pupils' engagement well. Prayer is given a high priority across the school. In worship pupils say the Lord's Prayer and the prayer of St Richard as well as other significant Christian prayers. They explain that prayer is 'speaking and listening to God' and that there are 'different types of prayer like when you ask God for something or thank God for something'. Prayer and reflection areas are placed around the school and this gives pupils opportunities to think, reflect and prayer at times other than during worship. When asked if this happens, one pupil responded, 'Yes, not all the time but definitely and regularly'. Strong and mutually supportive links are made between worship and the RE curriculum. Whilst being explicitly Christian, the programme is properly inclusive of those very few from other faith backgrounds and those who come from families that are not practicing any faith. The programme is monitored and evaluated by leaders and pupils and there is some evidence that feedback contributes to improvement. Firm plans are in place for this to be enhanced further through the work of the newly formed Christian values group. This group is made up of governors, staff, parents and members of the pupil leadership team.

The effectiveness of religious education is good

The head of school is the RE subject leader. He has heightened the status of RE across the school so that it is clearly regarded as a 'core subject'. It is taught as a discrete subject and appropriate links are made with other areas of the curriculum. It contributes well to pupils' spiritual and moral development and to their academic attainment and progress. Attainment is broadly at national expectations but is variable, due partly to the very low pupil numbers in some year groups. The RE curriculum is in a state of transition with fresh approaches and higher expectations beginning to be evidenced. The school has recently invested in training to enhance the teaching of Christianity through a resource and training package called, 'Understanding Christianity'. Materials and approaches are beginning to be trialled by the head of school but as yet their impact is positive but limited and have yet to be implemented across the school. Pupils enjoy RE and see its significance in developing 'knowledge and understanding of what people believe about God and about what is right and wrong'. Teachers provide a range of activities that enable pupils to learn about religious beliefs and practices and relate them to life today. Pupils engage well with varying approaches such as discussion, drama, role play, art and group work. They are also given a range of opportunities to express their RE learning through different styles of writing which links well with their literacy work. Pupils enjoy RE and find it challenges their thinking. There are examples of work being closely matched to pupils' ability levels such as, for example, in Reception and Year 1, where different frameworks are provided to support pupils in writing a visitors' leaflet for All Saints church. However, this is not consistently the case across the school. This is because planning does not always focus on the expected outcomes for different groups within the class. This also limits assessment opportunities and means that pupils are not fully aware of what they need to do in order to improve their work further. That said, progress overall is good. Routine monitoring by the head of school, governors and pupils is in place with clear evidence that this has impacted on improvements over the course of this academic year. Firm plans in place to embed the work of the newly formed Christian values group includes a focus on improving RE. There is evidence that this is making a difference despite the short time the group has been in existence.

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

Over the academic year 2016 to 2017 the school has been part of an effective partnership with three other church schools. Leadership has been restructured. The head of school works closely with an experienced

executive headteacher, who is in the school one day a week. This partnership has successfully begun the process of revitalising the school's Christian service to its community. From September 2017 a new partnership begins with a different church school. The head of school remains in post and the new executive headteacher has been assigned to the school for two days each week. This is with the aim of strengthening leadership capacity still further. This means that whilst the school is in a period of transition, its leadership is stable through the head of school and the committed and engaged governing body. Governors are appropriately supportive and challenging of the school. They have a clear vision for its collaborative working with the church, its families and local community, as well as with other schools in the area. There are currently two foundation place vacancies on the governing body along with a parent governor vacancy. This means that the governing body is under-strength but it is working optimistically and constructively to ensure progress. Governors have secured good leadership of RE and worship, both of which meet statutory requirements. Areas for improvement identified in the previous denominational inspection have been well addressed to guide developments in the intervening period. The wellbeing of staff and their professional development is taken seriously. They are appropriately supported for working within the church school sector. Building on its established Christian ethos, the school is in the final stages of a process of reviewing and refreshing its Christian values. It is part of an ongoing cycle of development and is being well led by the head of school. Pupils, staff and governors are very well aware of the Christian values underpinning the school's life and work and have been fittingly involved in shaping the refocusing of these. However, the revised Christian values are not yet finalised or embedded in school policy and practice. Parents are clear that the school's Christian ethos impact positively on its 'family feel' and influences the children's behaviour, attitudes and attainment constructively. Staff at all levels are working well together with a clear focus on the needs of the child. This in turn means that pupils and their families feel valued and engage very well with school life. Links with the churches of All Saints and St Richard's remain strong, despite the united benefice having gone through a period without clergy. Lay people, particularly from All Saints church which is a short walk away, have kept links strong through being involved in worship, hosting visits to the church, governor involvement and attending school events. Examples of pupils' work are displayed in the churches which acts as a visible reminder of the ongoing links. The school draws appropriately on support from the Diocese through, for example, visits from the diocesan improvement partner, briefing meetings for leaders and training courses for staff and governors. In addition to its formal partnership, the school is part of the Heathfield Area School Partnership (HASP). This successfully provides opportunities for pupils and staff to work together.

SIAMS report [June 2017] All Saints' and St Richard's (CE VA) Primary School, Old Heathfield, TN21 9AE