

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

### St. Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

The Village, Buckland Monachorum, Yelverton, Devon. PL20 7NA

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Exeter</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Devon
Date of inspection	17 October 2017
Date of last inspection	21 September 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided Primary 113479
Headteacher	Phillip Harvey
Inspector's name and number	Revd David Hatrey 844

#### School context

Saint Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary is a smaller than average school. The majority of the children come from a White British heritage. The number of children who are entitled to pupil premium funding and the number who have special educational needs and/or a disability (SEND) are below national averages. The school appointed a new headteacher who started in September 2017.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School Buckland Monachorum as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Leadership passionately articulates a distinctive and vibrant Christian vision which has a profound influence on the lives of the whole school community.
- Christian values, spirituality and religious education (RE) are so intrinsically woven together providing children with numerous meaningful experiences which deepens their understanding and nurtures their achievements.
- There is exemplary standard of behaviour across the school, children make rich relationships which they consistently attribute to Jesus' teaching and example.
- The religious education coordinator brings a wealth of knowledge to the subject, initiating new approaches, leading by example so children's achievements are high and they perceive the importance of the subject for their daily lives.

#### Areas to improve

- Create a rigorous system for assessing children's progress in RE which informs teacher's planning.
- Re-establish links with different communities and schools which provide opportunities for children to further enrich their understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural faith.

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

Christian distinctiveness is outstanding because Christian values and spirituality are so intrinsically woven together, with children so immersed in experiences, that they perceive the importance of these and the profound impact they have upon their lives and attainment. The school's Christian values are; love, respect, friendship, perseverance, self-control and forgiveness. Children experience these values in the deep relationships they form with staff and peers. A frequent comment was they feel 'valued and special.' Discussions with staff indicate that they do not see teaching as just a career, but rather a Christian vocation where they model values to show Jesus' love. All children confidently articulate how Christian values influence their thoughts and actions giving numerous examples. One of the school's focuses is character education, exploring Christian values which influence their decisions. The weekly award of the 'character cup' extends the importance of values further. Children showing values can be nominated by either staff or peers. Reasons for the award are clarified so children see where values are influential. Children's distinctive understanding of values is apparent by the number of biblical stories they link to values, which they recall in considerable depth. Furthermore, older children identify stories which reflect a particular aspect of the value. The high quality of behaviour is a real strength with the school clearly operating as a caring Christian community. This also overflows into children's responses and fund raising projects for local homeless people. Younger children talk about following Jesus' example as 'He shows us how to live out' these values. Christian values have been effectively used to shape children's attitudes to learning, where they make connections between this and values. For instance, perseverance with challenging work and also friendship and the place of collaboration. Attainment by the end of Key Stage two is consistently above national expectations with significant numbers achieving the higher levels. Disadvantaged children are well supported so they make accelerated progress developing self confidence. In 2014 spirituality was a whole school focus, where a shared understanding was agreed and regular opportunities for reflection put in place. Children make thoughtful links from Christian values and RE to spirituality. For example, children reflect on the wonders of space using the language of creation explored in RE. Their thoughts and pictures show the variety of ways they are confident to express their deepening ideas. When children think about the nature of God, the language children use shows a mature level of insight as well as understanding specific religious vocabulary. High quality experiences such as the 'labyrinth' enable children to consider their relationship with God and others. Rich links were established with different communities in Europe and Africa. Staff visits to these and visitors extend children's understanding of other cultures. Children are well aware of how Christians celebrate their faith in different ways. Other world religions are explored supported by visits to places of worship. This develops children's understanding of Christianity through insightful comparisons. Children show a high degree of tolerance and respect for those who hold different views.

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

Collective worship is outstanding because it has such an important role in school life and makes a significant difference to children's lives. Children perceive this is a special time for the school family to come together and express their worship to God. They relish the opportunities to contribute, acting out dramas, selecting relevant songs and writing prayers. Older children have opportunities to lead worship for younger children every month. Their comments show that they find this rewarding. They are enthusiastic, deepening their own understanding of Jesus' teaching. Each week there is a rich variety of worship, for instance Key Stage worship which appropriately matches themes to children's ages. Another is a class reflection/discussion time where the relevance of the value on children's daily lives is explored. This leads to a thought or prayer written in their reflection journal which shows their deepening responses. Another opportunity sees family groups of children sharing ideas based upon the vicar's talks of inspiring people which shows how values and faith shape lives. Younger children feel they learn much from older peers in these times. Children are fully aware that worship contains messages that challenge them. They give examples of when this has made them think or where their actions have changed. Detailed planning for worship compiled by several staff, ensures that an aspect of the value is explored in greater depth each week. The school has invested in a range of media resources to support this which evidently engages children. Children enthusiastically share their knowledge of Jesus and His teachings in considerable detail. Moreover, children have the ability to explain the Trinity in a variety of ways. For example, they use different symbols and colour to explore the nature of the Trinity. Comments of some children are insightful because although they may not believe in God, felt that worship was valuable as it developed their understanding of Christian values. Prayer is seen as a natural way of sharing ideas with God. Children are confident to write and say prayers recognising there are different forms. Examples of children's prayers show a growing maturity, notably as they respond to national events including their hopes. They say prayer helps them to feel cared for and relaxed. Monitoring and evaluation is thoroughly undertaken, every day children evaluate worship. There is very good evidence of children's suggestions leading to developments. Examples include greater use of media and asking for more stories about people who inspire them.

Governors' evaluations build upon this; they thoughtfully consider whether worship has benefitted each child. Their responses have led to developments, such as time for family discussions in worship.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.**

Religious education is outstanding because children are knowledgeable of a range of world faiths and have an extensive understanding of Bible stories which they draw upon to relate to spirituality. A scrutiny of RE books and class scrapbooks demonstrates the depth of children's understanding. Nearly all children are consistently achieving age related expectations, with a significant number attaining the higher standards. Teachers support children by enabling them to record their responses in different ways. Children feel they do well in RE, talking through their ideas with teachers which deepen their understanding. The quality of teaching is at least good and frequently better. Staff are inspired by an advanced skills teacher who coordinates RE. She draws upon new approaches in RE teaching determining which ideas will enhance the already effective programme. Children experience a range of approaches; they particularly enjoy the discussions which the enquiry approach develops. They feel this challenges their own understanding but they like to share their thoughts, listen to others and refine their own beliefs. Big questions of meaning and purpose are explored such as, "Can I always say what I want?" or "What happens after death?" Children's responses draw upon biblical ideas which they wrestle thoughtfully to determine their relevance. Staff have an excellent subject knowledge and great enthusiasm which children pick up. Teacher questioning is a particular strength, as it challenges children's thinking using probing questions. A fine example is the way staff often include an extension question in response to children's ideas when marking their work. These encourage children to pose their own questions which they explore so the relevance of RE is extended. More detailed planning supports staff in delivering high quality learning experiences. Lesson observations are meticulous undertaken with governors identifying strengths and aspects to develop. With effective support this leads to the quality of teaching and learning continuing to rise. New resources from 'Understanding Christianity,' particularly visual images, further engage children. Another of her ideas was the introduction of class scrapbooks where photos and artwork show children's growing understanding. The coordinator leads in-school training as well as supporting other schools in the hub who greatly benefit from her wealth of knowledge. Conferencing with children informs the RE development plan and demonstrates how much children enjoy their learning and perceive its relevance for their lives. Currently, assessment systems are being reviewed to take into account the variety of new approaches being used.

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

Leadership and management is outstanding because at the centre of school life, a distinct and vibrant Christian vision inspires all they do. This is an undoubted strength. A governor working party agreed a statement of Christian principles which underpin this vision. This recognises that 'we are made in the image of God and are unique.' Education is seen in a holistic sense, enabling each child to fulfil their God given potential, not just academically, but equally spiritually and socially. Relationships are an integral part of this, with God and each other. The vision is, "Learning what is good and right," a biblical quotation. Children confidently explain its meaning for them, often referring to the motto, "Making good choices." They talk about looking to Jesus' example which shows them the choices they should make. Both staff and children talk about 'shining' which they explain as showing the values Jesus did. Leadership therefore ensure that RE and collective worship have a high profile in daily life reflecting the school's Christian distinctiveness. Another fine example of the school's Christian distinctiveness is the support for children whose parents are in the armed forces. Various activities and links through the 'keeping in touch' programme when parents are posted away, reflect the school's concern. The quality and impact of the school's monitoring and evaluation is exemplary. Much of this is undertaken through the governors' ethos team with staff and parents adding their skills. They observe RE and collective worship, undertake book scrutiny, learning walks and conference with children regularly about being a church school. Strengths are celebrated and aspects for development identified and actions swiftly taken. A detailed improvement plan to raise the impact of being a church school is frequently updated following evaluations of the impact of these actions. This is a rigorous process which effectively drives improvements. Examples of this include ensuring key religious vocabulary is explained and highlighted. This has extended children's understanding. Diocesan expertise is effectively drawn upon with the introduction of the 'Understanding Christianity' resource enriching the RE curriculum. Moreover, the benefits of church links are a particular strength. Examples include, financial support, notably for Christian literature in the library, a youth worker leading worship and clubs. Children have shared in church projects such as the Erasmus links with churches in Hungary, Spain and staff visiting groups in Lithuania, which enriches children's understanding of their place within the wider church. In addition, there are significant contribution to governance. The school exceeds the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.