

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Aldrington Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School	
Aldrington Church of England Primary School, Eridge Road, Hove, East Sussex, BN3 7QD	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Chichester
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Date of inspection	21 June 2017
Date of last inspection	11 November 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary VA 114555
Headteacher	Mike Jee
Inspector's name and number	Cathy Slow 826

School context

Aldrington is an oversubscribed, expanding primary school in Hove with 336 children on roll. Following the expansion from a one to a two-form entry in 2014, there are now two classes in each year up to year 3 and one class for all other years. The number of children eligible for Pupil Premium funding is below national average, 13% of children have English as an additional language. There is a growing number of children joining the school from other faith groups or no faith. The headteacher is leaving the school at the end of the summer term and a new head has been appointed from September 2017.

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

- The clear, embedded Christian character and vision is integral to school life leading to everyone feeling highly valued.
- The gospel message is lived out in the school community and as a result children and adults experience the teachings of Jesus which they are encouraged to apply to their own lives.
- Worship is inclusive, engaging, varied and deeply Christian, promoting individual reflection.
- The richness of religious education (RE) enables learners to ask important questions, learning to express and reflect on different views in Christianity and other faiths.
- Leaders, including governors, have a clear understanding of the school as a Christian place of learning, based on rigorous monitoring and evaluation, which promotes the ethos and results in high standards of achievement.

Areas to improve

- Ensure both collective worship and RE remain inclusive, accessible, engaging and relevant to the whole school community as the cohort changes.
- Increase the involvement of children in the planning and leading of worship to enable them to build on their current experience of worship and explore their own beliefs and creativity.

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

Aldrington is a vibrant, welcoming and caring church school with Christian values at the heart of everything the school does to meet the educational and spiritual needs of all learners. The school motto, chosen by children, of 'learning God's way' is evident in all the school does, in relationships, in the high value placed on forgiveness and respect and frequent links to the teachings of Jesus. As a result, children say they feel cared for, safe and happy and behaviour is excellent. Children commented 'no one ever judges you here', 'no one is mean', 'the school is Christian and it helps us to get through life'. The high value placed on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of everyone in the school leads to a strong sense of self-worth and confident learners who are encouraged to express their views through a broad range of experiences, including a strong focus on art, drama and reflection. This is evident through excellent displays, interactive reflective spaces, worship and RE lessons as well as in the strong sense of community clearly shared by all. Parents said that unconditional acceptance, clear boundaries and love for one another create a strong community where each child is known and valued as an individual. One parent said, 'everyone finds a way in through the community here'. This is reflected in the school's own vision for community, 'we believe that God has called us to experience His love in relationships with each other'.

Children make good progress at the school and levels of attainment are high. Each child is known as an individual, all are supported to reach their full potential with additional help being given where needed. Parents described staff as 'going the extra mile' to meet the needs of all the children.

Diversity is embraced through high levels of respect for each individual. Tolerance and respect for other faiths is explicitly taught in RE lessons whilst the school's clear Christian ethos and focus is welcomed by parents of other faiths who choose Aldrington because 'it knows what it stands for'.

Through regular support for local groups, local and charities and international, often organised by the children, learners experience the importance and value of supporting others. This includes successful fundraising and a recent visit to a centre for elderly people, to play games and talk together. This was so appreciated by the elderly, children and staff that they would all like it to be a regular part of the school week!

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Inclusive and sincere worship, strongly focused on the life and teachings of Jesus, is clearly highly valued by the whole school community. Thorough planning ensures that themes are relevant to children and include Bible stories which link to school and British values. Worship is broadly Anglican and linked to the church year. Children have an age appropriate understanding of the Trinity through worship and RE. Regular monitoring and evaluation take place through children's voice, questions and responses in reflection areas and a programme of regular governor monitoring. This informs the planning and is central to ensuring that worship remains relevant to the expanding and changing school cohort. Each theme is explored for a half term giving time to consolidate and really understand the teachings. As a result, children have a clear understanding of the themes and talk about how they 'make me think' and help them to know God. Whilst children regularly take part in worship, there is limited evidence of children planning and leading acts of worship. Worship themes extend into the classroom through references in RE lessons and in the interactive reflection spaces, where written or pictorial responses and questions are displayed. These areas are well used throughout the school and children say they value time to reflect and to pray. A prayer room, supported by Prayer Spaces in School, has been established following a request from the children. This was described as 'a safe space to ask questions' by one child whilst another said 'it helps us to be kinder'. Many children spoke freely about prayer as part of school life and each class has a prayer written by children at the start of the year.

There is strong support of worship from clergy. Worship is regularly held at the nearby Bishop Hannington church, where children take part in services supported by the vicar and youth workers. Church workers lead a weekly themed worship club at the school.

Children are encouraged to explore the meaning of Jesus' teaching at a level appropriate to their development through engaging and creative worship. Worship is interactive and involves the whole school community through drama, singing, prayer and reflection. For example, drama, involving staff and children, illustrated the familiar parable of the Good Samaritan, which was then explored further as a teaching about grace. An annual 'Faith through Art' theme week, where the whole school community set aside time to explore faith through art, drama, dance and music, is highly valued by children, staff and parents. The excellent art work from these weeks are displayed around the school with the most recent being a beautiful wall mural of a tree and river, to which all the school contributed, based on Psalm 1 (a tree yielding fruits in season) and Jeremiah 17 (a tree with roots in the water).

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious education is central to the school ethos with a high profile in the curriculum and throughout the school. From regular professional development, induction and individual support for new staff, teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and teach with confidence, drawing on their individual strengths. The result is a rich and engaging experience which children clearly enjoy and which enables achievement at or above the national expectations for their age. The foundations of questioning, exploring and reflecting in RE are solidly laid in reception, where RE is taught with respect for the different backgrounds and experiences of all children. As children progress through the school, teaching challenges children to question and reflect on Christianity and other faiths through a broad and varied curriculum.

The emphasis on reflection in their learning, beginning in the early years, enables children to acquire a mature understanding of and deep interest in RE and its relevance to their own lives and the lives of others. Each child is given a bible by Bishop Hannington and St Peter's, West Blatchington churches in Year 3 which they use regularly throughout the school and take with them when they leave. As a result, they become very familiar with scripture and by year 6 are confident in finding references to biblical texts.

RE books are a delight, each including individual decoration and carefully presented work of a high standard which show how children and staff value the subject. Through regular recording throughout the individual units, the progress children make is clear. The value of RE is also evident in wide range of high quality resources to support the teaching and learning, many of which are used to enhance the reflective areas. Religious education is very well led by a dedicated subject leader and the headteacher, who both monitor and evaluate RE and its impact through an annual cycle of lesson observations, book scrutiny and pupil conferencing. This is well supported by foundation governors who regularly observe and evaluate RE, particularly focusing on the teaching of Christianity and on different ways of assessing and capturing the learning experience.

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

Strong, caring and insightful leadership is at the centre of the success of the school's Christian mission and all this offers for the whole community. The leadership team, led by a dedicated and committed headteacher, all share and promote a strong Christian vision which is underpinned by personal commitment to the school and the Christian faith. As a result, there are very high standards of well-being, achievement, excellent parental engagement and clear enjoyment of children and staff in being part of this lively Christian community.

The leadership of the school is distributed so that staff share responsibility for school development and evaluation. Regular, thorough and detailed evaluation ensures that all leaders are aware of school achievement, progress, and the next steps to ensure high standards and the strong ethos are maintained and developed further. Governors have an in-depth knowledge of how the school meets the needs of all the community, gained from regular visits, monitoring and evaluating the school's performance and supporting the vision through an active ethos committee. Partnerships with parents are strong; they clearly value the cohesive sense of community at the school, unreservedly saying how well the school is led.

Local clergy and church members make a significant contribution to school life. Clergy are often in school and regularly lead worship, youth workers from the church support the school and members of the church give their time and expertise through foundation governor roles. Parents support through attending acts of worship and a group of parents meet weekly to pray for the school. Many parents attend monthly school worship at the church as well as Harvest, Easter celebrations and Carol services at the church.

The future direction of the school, with a new headteacher from September 2017, and a changing cohort, is high on the agenda for the leadership team. Governors are confident that the school, supported by a dedicated staff team, is in a strong position to welcome the new head. The current leadership team are committed to ensuring the vision, ethos and standards remain strongly Christian and relevant for the whole community as the school enters its new phase of leadership and growth.

The diocese provides regular visits and has recently been very supportive in the process of appointing the new headteacher.

The areas for development in the previous inspection around standards, curriculum and assessment in RE, and the evaluation and spiritual impact of CW have been fully met. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.