



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Amberley Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School	School Road, Amberley, West Sussex BN18 9NB
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Chichester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Good
Local authority	West Sussex
Date of inspection	22 September 2016
Date of last inspection	27 September 2010
School's unique reference number	125970
Headteacher	Jon Gilbert
Inspector's name and number	Hilary Ferries 276

School context

Amberley CE First School draws its pupils from the village of Amberley and the surrounding area. Most pupils are white British. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disability is 22% and the proportion of pupils entitled to the pupil premium is below average.

The headteacher took up post in September 2014 and is also the head of another local church school, which is in a collaborative partnership with Amberley. Amberley will become a primary school from September 2017.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Amberley CE First School as a Church of England school are good

- The development of the Christian values, articulated by all, make a significant contribution to the positive, inclusive ethos of the school
- The leadership team, including governors, are committed to the development of the school as a church school and know the school well
- Religious education supports the Christian character and distinctiveness
- Opportunities for discussion, reflection and prayer encourage spiritual development

Areas to improve

- Develop the whole community's understanding of the Christian nature of the school through greater involvement in evaluation as it evolves into the new primary school
- Review the planning of collective worship to give pupils exciting and engaging opportunities to explore the nature of the Trinity
- Give pupils greater ownership of worship through innovative and creative involvement in the planning and delivery of collective worship

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

The Christian values of Amberley are love, friendship, honesty, respect and trust. They are evident in school life, and expressed clearly and confidently by pupils, parents and staff. Pupils interviewed could name the values and talk about the importance of them in their lives. One pupil said, 'it is important that we are friends and try to be like Jesus'. The values underpin the strong relationships and the caring and inclusive nature of the school where everyone is welcomed and valued.

The development of the Christian ethos has been a successful focus of the school leadership team. There are many and varied opportunities for spiritual, moral and social development. The leadership has addressed the issue from the last inspection to improve the environment to support spiritual development, both in the building and school grounds. There are well used prayer and reflection areas in every classroom where pupils say they can 'go to be quiet, to think about things or to pray'. In the school grounds, the quiet garden with a sculpture of the tree of life is used regularly and pupils say it helps them to pray and to think. Activities such as Forest School enhance spiritual development and care for the environment. There are also opportunities, in religious education (RE) and across the curriculum, for pupils to reflect on big and puzzling questions. Pupils think deeply about spiritual issues and are confident in expressing their thoughts and feelings. The clear code of behaviour, based on the Christian values is followed by pupils and behaviour for learning is very good. Pupils say they feel safe at school; they know there is someone they can go to if they have any concerns or worries and that adults in school listen to them and take action. They say the adults are 'always there to help us'.

Pupils are very positive about RE. They are engaged in lessons and enjoy the wide range of learning activities, including drama, video and discussion. It contributes well to the Christian character of the school as pupils are encouraged to discuss and explore different aspects of beliefs. Pupils talk about the importance of respect for those of all faiths and of none and explain how this is linked to Christian values and the way that they behave in and out of school and welcome new class members.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Since his appointment, the headteacher has worked successfully to improve the impact of worship in school life. Pupil and parent questionnaires and interviews during the inspection confirm that this has been effective. The introduction of fortnightly class worship, to which parents are invited, has raised the profile of worship in the school community and encouraged parents to come into school and the church. Worship held at church, such as the Mothering Thursday service, Christingle and Harvest also forge links with church and school community. Well planned worship themes ensure that the school's Christian values are clearly understood and applied to daily life and the quality of the resources, an area for development from the last inspection, contribute well to this.

The development of prayer corners in each classroom has enhanced the opportunities for pupils to reflect and they readily write prayers that are displayed on prayer trees. The children's prayer book in the hall shows that they understand a range of prayers that are regularly used in daily worship. Pupils are positive about prayer. One pupil said, 'It makes me feel better because God is there listening'. Parents say that their children pray as a matter of course. One child said to his parent, 'If I have had a good day then why wouldn't I say thank you'. Following the parent questionnaire there has been an emphasis on the Lord's Prayer as an important prayer for pupils to know and understand.

School leadership listens to pupil voice. As a result of the most recent pupil questionnaire, pupils have expressed that they want to be more actively involved in planning and delivery of worship. The leadership of the school are beginning to develop this and pupils enjoy taking part in drama and reading prayers, but they do not as yet have significant involvement and this is an area that has not yet been fully explored. Each day three candles are lit in worship and pupils are told these are for Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but the headteacher and governors are aware that not all pupils are able to talk about what this means.

The school community has positive links with the church and its clergy. This is further supported by a

range of local ministers who supplement and enhance the pupils' experience of Anglicanism. The churchwardens and congregation welcome the school community into the church for services and have an area of the church for displays from the school which keeps the school in their thoughts and prayers.

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

Since his appointment the headteacher, well supported by the foundation governors and RE subject leader, have made improvements to the school as a church school, particularly in the quality of worship and the opportunities for spiritual development. Following a thorough and effective self-evaluation, they sought advice and validation of evaluation from the Diocese, which confirmed the accuracy of their judgements and supported the leadership in the development of a strategic plan to address the areas identified for further development.

There are good relationships with the families and the local community. Parents are very supportive of the school and positive about the Christian ethos. They like the 'strong foundation that the school provides'. Parents say that their children talk about the Christian ethos of the school and their worship sessions. There are 'parent breakfasts' run by governors. Parents welcome the open door policy saying that the headteacher and staff are approachable and always ready to listen. However, they have not always been effectively consulted on changes and developments. The school will become a full primary school next year and the headteacher plans to improve consultation with parents and the school council over the further development of the school and include the Christian character within this. This work has started, but the impact has yet to be seen.

Religion education is a strength of the school. The subject leader has worked with staff to increase their confidence and knowledge of the subject and as a result it makes significant contribution to the spiritual development of the pupils. Pupil surveys and conferencing confirm the enjoyment and engagement with RE. The subject leader has relished the opportunity to develop her leadership skills.

The school meets statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report September 2016, Amberley CE First School, Amberley, BN18 9NB