

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

<b>Ashington Church of England First School</b>	
Foster Lane, Ashington, Pulborough, West Sussex. RH20 3PG	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	Chichester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	West Sussex
Date of inspection	24 March 2017
Date of last inspection	30 September 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 125971
Headteacher	Philippa Fairweather
Inspector's name and number	Connie Hughes 765

### School context

Ashington CE First School has 178 pupils on roll in six classes from Reception to Year 5. In September 2017, the school will become an all through primary school, taking their current Year 5 pupils into Year 6. The majority of pupils are of a White British heritage with a range of social and economic backgrounds from the village of Ashington. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average. The headteacher was appointed in April 2015. There have been significant changes to the staffing of the school since September 2015. The school has an established close partnership with the parish church of St Peter and St Paul in the village of Ashington.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ashington First School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The passionate commitment of the headteacher, staff and governors ensures that Christian beliefs and values strongly underpin pupils' inclusive daily learning and pastoral experiences, nurturing the well-being of the whole child.
- The school's explicit Christian vision and values statement, 'Love is patient...' from 1 Corinthians 13: verses 4-8, collective worship and religious education experiences impact significantly on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Collective worship, inclusive of biblical teaching, Anglican traditions and beliefs, inspirational prayer and outstanding singing impact strongly on pupils' spiritual development.
- The effectiveness of the school leadership team and governing body has established a range of monitoring and evaluation strategies, involving pupils, staff and parents, in the continual development of the Christian ethos of the school.

### Areas to improve

- Provide structured learning experiences for upper key stage 2 pupils which explore a greater awareness of the school's spiritual life within their everyday experiences; further developing personal responsibility, collaboration and mutual support for each other as the school goes through a period of significant change.
- Put in place a professional development programme to secure expertise and best practice for all staff and governors in understanding and developing the distinctive Christian character of the school in preparation for future leadership of church schools.

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

The school is led by an excellent senior leadership team who are fully committed to establishing and maintaining the Christian character of the school in its day to day life. The distinctly Christian vision and core values strongly impact on pupils' personal development, academic achievements, attendance, attitudes and behaviour. The well-being of the whole child is embedded in the breadth of individual, personalised and group daily learning experiences. Teaching and support staff, consistently apply their core Christian values of love, trust, forgiveness and hope within an outstanding caring and inclusive learning environment. The school creates a learning environment where 'each child is valued, respected and loved', explained a parent. Provision for all pupils, including the most vulnerable is exceptional; parents and carers unanimously agreeing their children are 'always included and never made to feel different'. Pupils from Year 5, when undertaking a learning walk, explained the school vision and values found in I Corinthians 13: verses 4-8, 'sums up our core and Christian values... we look after one another.'

The stimulating and eye-catching cross-curricular, religious education and worship displays throughout the school reflect the school's Christian distinctiveness and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. They are inspirational, challenging and of a high quality, valuing all pupils' achievements, for example, outdoor hands-on learning through the Forest School curriculum. Pupils' spiritual experience is enhanced through well-resourced themed reflection areas in the classrooms and communal areas. Applying enquiry skills to explore and question religious beliefs through 'big questions', Year 1 pupils reflected upon, 'What does God look like?' A vibrant artistic interpretation, of 'Reflection on who Jesus is' by Year 2, with biblical referenced quotes from John's gospel is significantly placed in the centre of the school.

Religious education (RE), taught through discrete and cross-curricular teaching, embeds the distinctive Christian character of the school. It purposefully contributes to pupils' understanding of Anglican beliefs, Jesus' teaching, biblical knowledge, SMSC development and Christianity as a world religion. The range of organised visitors and visits to places of worship from world faith groups enables the pupils to learn and respect at first-hand a range of beliefs and cultures in their local and diverse world, including Jehovah Witness, Judaism, Buddhism and Islam. A twinning project with a nearby town primary school, is enabling pupils to extend their knowledge by meeting and corresponding with pupils from other faiths and cultures.

A breadth of information on the school website, parent and parish newsletters significantly embraces the school's Christian foundation, strong relationships and active engagement with the community. For example, The Ashington Church café, is well attended by parents and children after school on Tuesdays, dates of monthly communion services and an invitation to a 'Vintage Afternoon Tea' for grandparents, senior friends and neighbours. A range of charitable events raise pupils' awareness and response to local, national and global issues, e.g. distribution of Harvest gifts within the locality and parish church foodbank, Children in Need and Save the Children.

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

Daily collective worship is celebrated as an integral part of school life, incorporating Christian values, biblical stories, Anglican liturgical responses, traditions and beliefs. An interactive, informative and colourful worship display focuses pupils on the life and living legacy of Jesus, core Christian values, symbols, prayer and reflection. The creative use of multimedia, drama, prayer, music and song inspires, engages and purposefully contributes to the SMSC development of the whole school community. Prayer is central to the school's Christian ethos, signifying its inclusive importance in enhancing pupils' spiritual reflection, personal and collective responses. Through a breadth of outstanding prayer experiences all pupils have the opportunity to develop a sense of trust in God. For example, Reception class pupils using a telephone as 'a direct line to God... He listens to us'. The 'prayer bear' and postbox for pupils to write requests for the well-established weekly adult prayer group is vitally important to the pupils. Every other year explicit 'Prayer Spaces' from the 'Off the Fence' team offer all pupils and staff, attended by governors and families, an outstanding rich spiritual experience of the Christian faith and application of their core values; 'I loved it so much it made me think of others easier.' Pupils share and explain their deep understanding of the Trinity, as 'the power of three', and exemplified through songs, prayer and worship responses.

There are strong links with the vicar of Ashington Parish Church, who regularly leads school worship. As an ex-officio governor and parent, 'he is approachable and caring, within the church and the school family'. During special festivals in the year the whole school community come together to celebrate their Christian distinctiveness. Members of the parish and governors created Christingles with all pupils in preparation for the family church service. Visitors leading worship from other Christian denominations, including a Baptist minister and Christians who work overseas reflect how the school's faith foundation is consistently explored.

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher, as worship coordinator, provides structured guidance for staff, key stage 2 pupils and visitors to confidently lead acts of Christian worship. Governors attend collective worship and are actively involved in supporting the school's monitoring and self-evaluation strategies. Pupils' responses are regularly sought; following a School Council review of worship experiences and SMSC, the prayer postbox was provided with display lights, valuing and supporting pupils' personal experience of prayer and reflection.

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

The explicit Christian ethos, combined with the embedded school motto 'Aspire, Care, Enjoy and Succeed' (ACES), underpins every aspect of staff and pupils' daily school life. The outstanding visible leadership of the headteacher, chair of governors and the commitment of a highly skilled governing body reflect a strong Christian fellowship. They work in strategic partnership, strongly supported by all staff, to articulate the embedded vision and values of the school as a Church of England school. Their commitment and success in 'defining ourselves, and developing our unique identity as a church school' as a school priority is exemplary. Reflecting the responses of the whole team, a member of staff explained, 'Christian values weave in and out of everything we do here'. Established collaboration with parents, neighbouring schools, the local authority and specialist education providers secure outstanding provision for the inclusive care, well-being and achievement of all pupils. As they prepare to become a primary school in September 2017 school leaders and staff are focussed upon effective transition, challenging and extending whole school provision in line with end of key stage 2 national expectations.

The governing body actively promote the school's distinctive Christian foundation in appointment of all staff and are effective in sustaining the staff commitment to the school's Christian ethos. Although there is an established relationship with the diocese, there is limited planned provision for explicit professional development to secure expertise and best practice for all staff and governors in Christian distinctiveness, religious education and in aspiring to future leadership of church schools.

'Our Christian vision is at the heart of everything we do in school and central to our relationship with our children's families and the wider community' explains the headteacher. Through the school's highly informative and engaging website and newsletters, parents are kept well informed of the school's Christian foundation, the success, fun and enjoyment of pupils' learning experiences and community events. For example, the importance of prayer through 'Prayer Spaces' week, Easter Services, the school choir invited annually to sing at the village Carol Service and the Actor's Church in Covent Garden. Free use of land from a neighbouring farmer, enables all pupils to take on challenges, explore and experience awe and wonder, boosting personal confidence and self-esteem through the Forest Schools curriculum. Friends of Ashington Church of England School (FACES) are actively involved in fund raising and supporting school events, including, preparing a range of reasonably priced potted plants for pupils to buy for Mothering Sunday. The embedded partnership with the vicar and Parochial Church Council enhances the school's Anglican foundation, pastoral and the spiritual life of the school community. The redevelopment of the school's 'spiritual garden' and outdoor classroom is being financed from a 'trust fund' managed by members of the church.

Parents reflect, 'Ashington is an exceptional school, it creates a learning environment where each child is valued, respected and loved... teaching kindness, peace, patience and many other core values... and has a strong Christian ethos'.

Statutory requirements for religious education and collective worship are met.

SIAMS report March 2017 Ashington Church of England First School Ashington Pulborough RH20 3PB