

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

All Saints Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	
All Saints Lane, Sidley, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex, TN39 5HA	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Chichester
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	East Sussex
Date of inspection	10 March 2017
Date of last inspection	July 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary – Voluntary Controlled - 114491
Headteacher	Sally Forbes
Inspector's name and number	Pamela Draycott - 161

School context

This smaller than average-sized primary school serves the area in and around the parish of All Saints, Sidley. The percentages for whom the school receives extra funding due to social disadvantage and those with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) are both well above the national average. The vast majority of pupils are White British. Very few families attend church outside of their involvement through school. Since the previous denominational inspection the school has been through a period of significant challenges and changes, including having three different headteachers. Nursery provision on site opened at Easter 2015.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of All Saints Bexhill as a Church of England school are good

- There is a revitalised emphasis on the school's key Christian values which are clearly expressed and lived out across its life. This is impacting positively on the progress pupils are making, on their very good behaviour and on the high quality of mutually supportive relationships evident.
- The headteacher's vision for school improvement is ably supported by senior leaders and governors and appropriately shared by staff, pupils and parents. It is expressly linked to the school's Christian foundation and leads to a positive and happy atmosphere which supports pupils in their learning well.
- There are constructive links between the worship programme and religious education (RE) which reflects the central place of both areas in school life.
- Refreshed links with the parish church expresses well both the church and the school's Christian mission of service to the community.

Areas to improve

- Embed regular and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the school's Christian distinctiveness by the governing body, in order to keep this as a driving force for future developments.
- Refine worship practices in school to bring about both a greater appreciation of Anglican worship, such as the use of opening and closing sentences with responses, and a deeper understanding of the pattern of the Christian year, including the significance of All Saints' Day.

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

The school's core Christian values of trust, forgiveness, endurance, friendship, thankfulness and koinonia (community) are clearly linked with Christian teaching and appropriate biblical references. These values are well known by all members of the school community. 'The school values help to make you a better person, if you put them into practice,' as stated by a Year 5 pupil. Based on its Christian foundation the school is a happy, caring place which models high expectations and aspirations for both the pupils and adults involved in its life. This is clearly shown in the strong and supportive relationships in evidence. Behaviour is very good which contributes to a calm and purposeful learning environment. Pupils are eager to learn and are keen to share their achievements with others. This is reinforced by the class sharing worship times and parents going into class on a Friday afternoon each month to look at what their children have been doing. This appropriately reflects the growing partnership between school and home to the benefit of the academic and personal wellbeing and development of pupils. Attendance remains just below the national average but is on an improving trend. On those occasions where behaviour or attendance falls short of the high standards expected, the school has strong pastoral and academic systems in place to work compassionately and consistently with pupils and their families. On the whole, pupils enter Foundation Stage below or well below national expectations but make rapid and sustained improvements. Across the school that progress continues so that the vast majority make very good progress from their various starting points. This is because the school is aspirational for its pupils and sets consistently high standards for them. The progress of individuals is regularly and closely mapped, with appropriate interventions put in place. RE supports the school's Christian foundation well through elements of the curriculum that expressly link to Christian values and the worship programme.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is well catered for and pupils respond well to the opportunities provided. The curriculum is broad and balanced with successful approaches that encourage reflection and creativity evident. The worship programme and RE contribute deeply to SMSC development as do the range of subsidised extra-curricular activities made available to pupils. RE successfully provides a range of opportunities for pupils to explore the importance of religious belief and practice in the world today. Pupils say they enjoy RE because it is interesting and a variety of tasks keep them well engaged. Although there is regular assessment by teachers the current system of assessment in RE is not sufficiently rigorous for comparisons to be made with progress in the other core subjects. There is a good balance between teaching that focuses on Christianity and that which addresses other world faiths such as Judaism and Hinduism. As a consequence, pupils are developing an understanding of respect for difference and diversity in God's world. They also have appropriate opportunities to consider Christianity as a world-wide, multi-cultural faith.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship has a central role in the school's daily life. As an expression of this importance, the headteacher takes the lead in this area as worship co-ordinator. In this she works in close relationship with the subject leader for RE, who is also a member of the senior leadership team. Pupils have recently begun to evaluate the worship programme and their comments have been taken on board to bring about improvements. Their role in planning and leading worship is less well developed. Definite plans are in place to involve them more in these aspects. Pupils' positive attitude to worship is because they feel well included. They enjoy singing and the way in which 'stories from the Bible are explained so that we can think about them'. Pupils and staff engage well in worship and recognise its importance in exploring school values and considering the impact of these on life in and outside of school. Pupils are respectful, good at listening and eager to respond.

Worship is well planned around the school's Christian values, linked appropriately to a set of themes which explore social and emotional aspects of learning (the SEAL programme). Through worship pupils develop an age-appropriate knowledge of the life and teaching of Jesus and of his importance to Christians. They make effective links between biblical teaching and the school's Christian values and consider how these might relate to their own actions. As a Year 4 pupils reflected, 'Sometimes when I'm angry or upset I think about being a good friend or forgiving someone instead of arguing'. Pupils have a basic but developing appreciation of the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Governors, including the parish priest, are regular visitors and are very well involved in the worship programme. However their role in monitoring its effectiveness and impact is less well developed. Pupils are familiar with some aspects of traditional Anglican worship practices such as a lit candle representing Jesus as the light of the world. Other features of Anglican worship, for example, opening and closing sentences with set responses, are less well developed. Principal Christian festivals, such as Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, are recognised. However, there are some missed opportunities for broadening understanding of the pattern and significance of the Christian year. For example, through the celebration of saints' days, including All Saints' Day.

The importance of prayer and reflection as a key feature of worship has improved since the previous denominational inspection. Pupils know the school prayer well. Their grasp of the Lord's Prayer and its importance

to Christians is less developed but improving. A prayer display in each classroom is refreshed termly and themed alongside the Christian value being focused on at that time. These are well used by pupils, who recognise that prayer is both 'asking God for things and thanking God for the world'. These prayer opportunities are well taken by many pupils who recognise prayer and reflection as being supportive for them in their daily lives. Formal prayers before lunch and at the end of the school day are not used as a matter of course which means that the school day is not consistently framed by prayer.

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

The strong focus on agreed Christian values is driving forward all aspects of the school's life and work. The headteacher, well supported by her senior leaders and governors, has refreshed the school's Christian underpinning by a clear focus on its values. Key issues for improvement from the previous denominational inspection have been well addressed, particularly from 2015 onwards. There is a clear and shared vision for future development, based on encouraging all pupils to flourish as, 'unique children of God'. Pupils and their families, as well as staff, feel valued and well-supported by the school. As a result, aspirations have been raised and support put in place to bring about improvement. An expression of this is the school, working in partnership with the local authority, opening a nursery on site. The nursery works closely with the school and its impact is already evident as children move into Reception and begin to progress through school. Staff are well supported for working within the church school sector through both recruitment and on-going professional development opportunities.

Governors challenge and support the work of the school well. However, regular and explicit monitoring and evaluation of its Christian distinctiveness by governors is not in evidence. This is recognised by the school and firm plans are in place to address this so that governors can improve the rigour of their evaluation and thus contribute to driving forward its effectiveness as a church school further. Senior leaders know their school well and have clear strategies in position to effectively support continued improvement. This leads to accurate action planning. Governors have secured very good leadership for both RE and worship which leads to good practice in both areas. RE and worship are appropriately resourced and supported and meet statutory requirements.

The school works effectively with parents to help them support their children's academic learning and personal development. During an extended period when the church was without a priest, links between the school and church were kept going by lay people. However, with a new priest in post the relationship has been revitalised to mutual benefit. A supportive partnership through visits from the priest to school and the school to church as well as shared fundraising and charitable giving activities are clear expressions of their shared mission of service to the community. The school also has good links with other primary schools in the vicinity, which provide, for example, good opportunities for moderating teacher judgements about pupils' progress. They also give a positive indication of the school's outward looking character. The school draws well on help offered by the diocese, for example, through taking part in training and development opportunities for governors and through acting on the advice from the link adviser, in relation to Christian distinctiveness and effectiveness.

SIAMS report [March 2017] All Saints CE (VC) Primary School, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex, TN39 5HA