

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Fletching Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	
Church Street, Fletching, East Sussex TN22 3SP	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Chichester
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	East Sussex
Date of inspection	14 June 2017
Date of last inspection	16 November 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	VC Primary 114503
Headteacher	Gemma White
Inspector's name and number	Susan Costa 902

School context

Fletching is a small, rural primary school, with pupils attending from the wider surrounding area. In April 2017 the school was judged to be Good by Ofsted. Currently there are no pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion of pupils in the school who are disadvantaged is very low compared to the national average. There have been significant changes in school leadership and in teaching staff over the past two years. September 2016 saw the appointment of a new headteacher, new incumbent and a new governing body. The school works in partnership with the church of St Andrew and St Mary the Virgin.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Fletching as a Church of England school are good

- The governors and leadership team have a shared and clear vision for the school as a church school. This has led a journey of rapid improvement since September, resulting in a community where staff, governors, pupils and parents are united.
- Key values are explored, and there is a calm, purposeful learning environment where pupils are nurtured as individuals. Pupils' behaviour both in classrooms and around the school is positive and respectful.
- Wide-ranging opportunities for prayer and reflection outside collective worship make good contributions to the pupils' developing awareness of personal spirituality
- Good practice in religious education (RE) makes a strong contribution to the school as a church school.

Areas to improve

- Improve pupil leadership of collective worship in order to deepen engagement, give them greater ownership of worship, and provide opportunities to make links between Bible stories and their own experiences.
- Embed the understanding of the Christian vision and mission by exploring them through clear, consistent and explicit links to the Christian values which are rooted in biblical teaching and explored in worship.
- Consolidate a values-rich vocabulary to ensure that pupils can articulate their understanding of the impact of these values on their own choices and opinions.

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

The school reviewed its Christian vision in September 2016. The new vision, 'A small school with big ideas,' is underpinned by the mission, 'nurturing a Christian mindset'. The whole school community was involved in the development of the vision and the motto was devised by pupils. A key strength of the school is the sense of community where staff, governors, parents and pupils are united, recognising how the renewed vision has led to improvements this year. Leaders describe how the Christian vision 'motivates the children to aim high' and how it has informed their determination to raise standards in the school. The vision is articulated clearly by the pupils who are very positive about their school, but do not always make the links between this and the Christian character. Pupils talk about wide-ranging values which influence their behaviour and relationships within school and the wider world. However, their ability to relate this to biblical teaching is at an early stage of development. A clear impact of values is on behaviour, which is positive and respectful of all in the community. As a small school, Fletching focuses upon developing the individual, and staff know each child well. The nurturing environment enables staff to find the best in every pupil creating self-belief and confidence, which in turn impacts upon academic progress and personal development. Nurture groups support vulnerable learners to help them thrive. Parents remark on the care and family feel of the school and relate this to the Christian values of the school community. They describe Fletching as 'a stable base to learn right from wrong, and a foundation for building children's understanding of community.' Parents recognise there has been a greater emphasis on making the Christian values more explicit through displays and newsletters, but they are not sure to what extent the children understand them. Parents commend the positive leadership and improvement in standards this year, and appreciate the focus that there has been to develop the Christian character of the school through 'modelling behaviour and beginning to give it language through the values words.' RE contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural growth, and it guides them to understand that Christianity is a world-wide faith. A broad RE curriculum embraces the study of a number of different faiths and this develops pupils' understanding and respect for other cultures. Parents appreciate this aspect of teaching and how the school 'opens the door to other faiths.' A successful focus this year has improved opportunities for pupils to develop their sense of personal spirituality, with places for prayer and reflection established both in classes, and in the outdoor environment. As a result, they are beginning to develop the ability to express these thoughts.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is a distinct time in the school day where the community meets together to explore themes that are clearly planned. It is led by a range of staff and the priest from St Andrew and St Mary the Virgin. The themes support the pupils' developing understanding of the school's Christian values and key Christian festivals. A recent focus on compassion inspired pupils to respond through acts of random kindness. Pupils are proud of class prayer books which they bring to worship, containing their own prayers. Pupils are respectful through participation in singing, praying and thinking of others. They know that worship helps them to 'remember we are a Christian school' and that they can 'learn about God' through worship. In school they light a candle 'to let the light of God in the room' which they say helps them 'to make a connection with God'. Pupils talk with some understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The singing of Christian songs and the regular use of Bible stories enhances pupils' understanding of Jesus and his importance for Christians. However, the pupils do not confidently relate stories from the Bible to their own choices or actions. Teachers feel that worship is a 'thought-provoking time' when they are able to relate to their own experiences. The priest regularly leads collective worship in church which enhances pupils' understanding of the Anglican traditions, and pupils enjoy going to church as they 'feel that God is there'. Aspects of Anglican worship such as the structure of gather, engage, respond and send are used. The services at the parish church to celebrate Christian festivals such as Harvest and Christmas appropriately extend the opportunity for parents to join the school community. The focus this year on widening opportunities for pupils to develop their own sense of spirituality has been successful. Prayer and reflection spaces in classes are varied and age-appropriate. They make creative use of elements such as prayer stones, questions and biblical references to guide pupil thoughts. A prayer net in the hall captures pupils' reflections on recent events in the news, enabling them to make a personal connection and think about the needs of others. Members of a pupil-led Faith Council are proud of the outdoor spiritual space they have been involved in creating. They describe it as 'a place to relax, reflect and be calm'. Pupils and staff talk positively about the opportunities that outdoor worship has offered. Pupils, leaders and governors are involved in monitoring worship. The evaluations from a skilled and knowledgeable governor have guided improvements to enhance the ethos for worship. Opportunities to develop pupil understanding of the impact of Christian values on their own choices and opinions through involving them in the planning and delivery of worship are limited. Pupils say that they would like to be more involved in aspects such as drama to illustrate stories from the Bible.

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

The ambition and partnership of the leadership team and governing body have resulted in clear improvements in standards within a short time. They consistently describe the vision for the school which sets out to motivate pupils to learn within a Christian community that nurtures each individual. Leaders know their school well. They recognise the progress that has been made, and are aware that the work to establish and embed Christian values is at an early stage of development. Staff comment that there is 'a positive and common outlook' from leaders and governors who provide feedback which promotes further improvement. Leaders have introduced a systematic programme of monitoring and evaluation and members of a governors' ethos committee make regular visits to the school as part of the planned programme. Reports following these visits show that strengths and progress are celebrated, and that areas for improvement are identified for further action. This systematic monitoring has addressed the area for development following the last inspection. Parents are very positive about the school and the improvements brought about by the new leaders. They have been consulted on changes and feel involved in developments which they see 'are all for the good.' During the time of rapid improvement, leaders have welcomed support and challenge from the local authority and diocese. Visits to local schools, recognised for their exemplary practice, have resulted in the introduction of elements that have benefited the learners at Fletching. An example of this is the success of the varied and distinctive class reflection areas which have enabled pupils to develop their personal awareness of spirituality. Staff have benefitted from training led by the diocese to improve collective worship and RE. RE is promoted by the subject leader who has supported staff to ensure that it is taught in a manner that is active and creative. A wide range of quality outcomes shows the pupils' growing awareness of diversity of faith and culture, including Judaism, Islam and Hinduism. During a whole school 'journey into faith' project pupils explored different faiths and cultures across the world. Links with the community of Fletching are evident and a recent Garden Trail saw a range of private gardens in the village open their gates to raise funds for the school. This is an annual event. The school has a good relationship with the parish church, and the priest has worked with older pupils to explore the Bible through art. Leaders consider worship to be an essential attribute of a Christian school and statutory requirements regarding its provision are met. Although there have been significant changes in leadership this year, good progress has been made to improve Fletching as a church school. The skills, drive and dedication of the headteacher and governing body indicate further capacity to continue the journey of improvement.

SIAMS report June 2017 Fletching VC CE Primary School, East Sussex TN 22 3SP