

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Southover Church of England Primary School	
Potters Lane Lewes East Sussex BN7 1JP	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Chichester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	East Sussex
Date of inspection	15 November 2016
Date of last inspection	11 November 2010
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled, Primary 114510
Headteacher	Stephen Elliott
Inspector's name and number	Hilary Ferries 276

School context

Southover CE Voluntary Controlled School is in the town of Lewes. The school is larger than the average primary school and expanding. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The headteacher has been in post for seven years. The RE leader retired in July 2016 and the head has temporarily assumed the role. The children, families and schools minister at the parish church has been in post for two years and is a foundation governor. A very small number of families are practising Christians.

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

- The headteacher is committed to developing the school as a church school. He leads by example, ably supported by the foundation governors, the deputy headteacher and other key staff and lives the vision of 'every child is unique and loved by God'.
- There are very positive relationships between all members of the school community, based on the Christian values of care, service and respect.
- The involvement of stakeholders in the review of Christian mission and values has improved the Christian distinctiveness of the school.
- There are strong links with the church and the involvement of team members from the parish church, including the children families and schools worker, is contributing well to the development of the school as a church school.

Areas to improve

- Improve the pupils' voice in the development of worship and enable them to have more involvement in the planning and leadership of worship to engage them further.
- Create more opportunities for pupils to develop their own spirituality through reflection and prayer.
- Make the Christian distinctiveness more explicit in the classrooms and hall to enable the children to make better links between the Christian values and their lives.
- Develop a more systematic approach to governor monitoring and evaluation of the school as a church school and link this to the strategic planning to accelerate the pace of development.

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

The school reviewed its Christian vision as a result of the previous inspection. The new vision, that 'everyone will know that they are unique and loved by God and the whole school community so that they flourish in body, mind and spirit', is underpinned by the 'motto', 'Live love learn'. The whole school community was involved in the development of the vision and the motto was devised by pupils. It 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. They appreciate the work that the staff put into their education. The good behaviour seen during the inspection confirms the self-evaluation that there are very good relationships between pupils, pupils and staff and the parents and the school, underpinned by the Christian vision. Pupils appreciate the importance of respect for all and are aware of Christianity as a world faith and the multicultural nature of modern Britain and the relevance of this to them. There is a high level of care, for example the Robin class gives vulnerable pupils the opportunity to spend time in smaller groups and then be integrated back into class, which leads to improved progress for these learners.

Moral, social and cultural development are a strength of the school. Parents describe the school as having a 'strong moral compass'. Pupils are aware, through the Christian values of justice, fairness and 'care for each other, our community and the world' of those less fortunate in Britain and beyond and they raise funds for many different charities and appreciate the importance of this. This is linked well to learning about social diversity in the UK and beyond. RE makes a positive contribution to the Christian character of the school. Pupils are positive about their learning in RE, say they enjoy learning about Christianity and other world faiths. In the lesson observed during the inspection pupils were learning about Christian customs in Europe, which helped their awareness of Christianity as a world faith and to understand their place in the world-wide Christian family.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Collective worship is important to the school community. There is an established pattern to the days of the week. The weekly themes planned by the headteacher, who is also the worship coordinator, and clergy members, ensure a breadth of experience and are linked to the Bible and the church year as well as themes such as 'getting on and falling out'. The theme for the week of inspection was 'sacrifice' and the worship observed engaged the pupils and related the theme to their everyday lives well. The children families and schools worker, the associate minister and the youth minister from Trinity Church, and other Christian groups such as City Mission, lead worship on a regular basis and the pupils talk positively about these worship opportunities and the messages that they can take from them. The associate minister from Trinity Church comes to lead singing worship and has introduced some modern Christian worship songs which are explained during weekly singing worship and sung enthusiastically. Pupils say they enjoy these contributions and talk positively about the impact they make on worship. Some pupils talk about the 'religious assemblies' and 'other assemblies', which they do not see as collective worship, despite the elements of worship that are included. Pupils interviewed talked about the importance of collective worship for the school community coming together and sharing as well as learning about God and Jesus. They enjoy taking part in worship – acting in dramas, reading the Bible and reading prayers, but they do not have opportunities to plan and lead worship and so do not always feel fully engaged. Their views have been sought, but at quite a broad level and so they have not been able to contribute their thoughts to what would improve worship for them. Mention of the Trinity has been made, but the significance has not yet been made explicit and as a result pupils are at an early stage of awareness and understanding.

There are opportunities for prayer in worship, but there are limited opportunities in other areas of the school day for pupils to reflect and pray and develop a personal spirituality. This has been identified in the school's self-evaluation as an area for development. Although City Mission and the team at Trinity Church have made a commitment to supporting the introduction of prayer spaces and Godly Play into school these have not happened yet and this is an area for improvement.

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

The headteacher articulates and lives a Christian vision for the school. He promotes the Christian values in collective worship and in the development of policy and practice in every area of school life. The vision underpins his work and can be seen in the high level of care for the students and the high expectations for them. Pupils say they know that they are cared for, that school is 'kind' and 'fun', but that the teachers 'expect us to work hard'. This results in high standards and every child is important and their needs are known and addressed. He is supported in this by his deputy headteacher, senior team and committed staff. The RE leader retired in July 2016 and the headteacher is temporarily leading this area. He has made sure that RE is seen as important in the curriculum and supported the development of a rich and wide ranging curriculum in school that gives space and time

to 'celebrate life, play and creativity', another of the school's Christian values. There are several newly qualified teachers in the school this year and they are being well supported and developed as teachers in a church school through personal mentoring, support with the teaching of RE and guidance on collective worship. There is a strand in the school development and improvement plan for the development of the school as a church school and each year there has been a different focus. Evaluations of previous plans show that the Christian character and distinctiveness have been developing over time since the last inspection. Recently completed self-evaluation shows that the school knows itself well as a church school and has developed some action points, which are in progress. The foundation governors have welcomed the input of the children families and schools worker to the governing body. They say this has brought 'fresh eyes' to the work of the governing body and they are supporting and challenging the school to improve further through more systematic monitoring and evaluation and identified this as an area for further improvement.

Parents interviewed are very positive about the school, the leadership, high expectations and standards as well as the nurturing ethos. They are aware of the school as a church school and appreciate the school's open attitude towards the Christian ethos that welcomes questions and debate and that underpins the support for their children. The school has a very good relationship with the parish church, who provide considerable support from their team. In addition to the associate minister and the youth minister, the children, families and schools minister is a regular visitor and makes a strong contribution. He leads collective worship, supports the teaching of RE and is a governor. The church also involves the school community with events such as 'Lewes Sings Gospel' and the Lewes Passion play which offer the pupils opportunities to be involved in workshops and experience Christian outreach. The holiday club, run by the church, has also seen more pupils taking part each year as the relationship has developed. The school is developing links with the diocesan school team to support them on the journey of improvement identified in their action plan.

Arrangements for religious education and collective worship meet statutory requirements.

SIAMS report November 2016 Southover CE Primary School, Lewes BN7 1JP