

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

<b>St. Michael's Church of England Primary School</b>	
Houghton Green Lane, Playden, Rye, East Sussex. TN31 7PJ.	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Chichester</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	East Sussex
Date of inspection	18 May 2017
Date of last inspection	13 January 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled. 114520
Executive headteachers	Keith Cheetham Kevin Tomasetti Cherane Marshall
Head of school	
Inspector's name and number	Kelly Dillon (886)

### School context

St. Michael's Church of England Primary School is a rural village school in East Sussex. There are currently 94 pupils on roll, taught in four mixed aged classes. Pupils are mostly from a White British heritage. Vulnerable groups of children, such as those with special educational needs or receiving pupil premium, are slightly below the national average. At the end of Key Stage Two attainment is broadly in line with the national average. Since the previous SIAMS inspection the school has experienced a period of instability in its leadership. In January 2016 two executive headteachers were appointed, they have overall responsibility for a number of schools in the Diocese. A head of school started in September 2016 and has overall responsibility for the day to day running of the school. Since February 2015 the school has been overseen by an Interim Executive Board (IEB). The IEB is working with the Local Authority and the diocese to secure permanent governance arrangements for the school. It is anticipated that the new governance arrangements will be in place during this academic year.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. Michael's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- All pupils know the school's core Christian values which are reflected and permeate all aspects of school life.
- Outstanding church school leadership whose drive and energy inspires all members of the school community. The head of school is committed to the development of the school as a church school and has ensured that it has made significant progress since her appointment at the beginning of this academic year.
- The high quality of collective worship engages and inspires pupils and uplifts other members of the whole school community.
- Pupils openly share their views on matters on belief and faith in an environment that values each child.

### Areas to improve

- Embed the self-evaluation process as a church school within the whole School Improvement Plan so that church school distinctiveness is integral to overall school improvement.
- Enable improvements in the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship by building upon pupil voice and continuing the good work of the 'dream team.'

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

The outstanding Christian character of the school is pivotal to the development of all its learners. Central to this is the depth to which the school's four core Christian values of love, forgiveness, respect and honesty have been successfully embedded. Children are very clear that these values are based on Christian teaching and specifically in the teachings of Jesus. All stakeholders speak powerfully of the impact of these core values on attitudes, behaviour, belief and a commitment to learning. Whilst talking about forgiveness one child stated, 'no-one holds grudges here.' Behaviour is of the highest standard. The core Christian value of respect is seen as utmost importance by the whole school community in creating an open, peaceful environment where all feel valued and listened to. Described by one child, 'Respect is a lot like love, but not in your heart, but deep inside your soul.'

The school is a living Christian family where all God's children are known and treated as valued individuals. Pupils are particularly comfortable in sharing their own beliefs and views. Diversity is celebrated. The school, very conscious of its rural, idyllic setting consciously seeks ways to develop pupils' awareness of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. Their horizons are widened through links with a school in Uganda and their sense of responsibility developed through a commitment to charitable giving.

The Christian distinctiveness of the school drives its holistic approach to effective learning. A commitment to 'unlocking each child's potential' is energised by the school's drive for excellence. The staff, parents and pupils all work together to create a real love for learning, where all are challenged and catered for. Academic achievement is in line with national expectations for most pupils and the school is quick to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and deal with these very effectively through targeted support. As a result most groups are achieving at age expected outcomes. At the school all achievements are celebrated. Many stakeholders talked about the confidence that is instilled in pupils during their time at the school. Children are given the confidence to follow their own interests and the courage to go forward with their learning. Teamwork is especially strong and is evident across all areas of school life. When tackling a Maths question the children were asked by their teacher, 'How could we help someone who didn't answer it?' As one staff member suggested, St. Michaels is the epitome of teamwork.

The wide range of opportunities provided ensures that pupils grow spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. All are encouraged to be mindful and reflective across the curriculum. Pupils have time to pause and to consider the wonder of our world. The recent addition of a reflective space in the school grounds has been especially effective with pupils responding positively to the opportunity that the 'HUT – Here you think' provides.

Religious education (RE) makes a positive contribution to the Christian character of the school. Learning is enriched and exciting developing a sense of awe and wonder. A broad RE curriculum embraces the study of Christianity, as well as a number of different faiths. Pupils enjoy the more creative approach to teaching and learning of RE although the extent to which this has been fully realised has not yet be fully developed.

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

Collective worship is outstanding because of the overwhelming impact that it has upon all members of the school community. It is inspiring and uplifting, positively influencing relationships across all aspects of school life. Children have an excellent understanding of the connections between the Bible messages that they hear and how values, based on the teachings of Jesus, have meaning for them today.

Whole school worship takes place in a calm environment with all children engaged, attentive and enthusiastic. Biblical teaching sends a strong Christian message and pupils are especially confident in sharing how this theological knowledge informs their own choices and their own excellent behaviour. Learners are regularly challenged through moral reflection and their own spirituality developed accordingly. All pupils, even the very youngest are accustomed to asking 'big questions' which challenges themselves and others around them. One recent example of such a question from a child is, 'What is the difference between mind and soul?'

Prayer is embedded in school life. Pupils have a mature understanding of prayer and have regular opportunities to pray throughout the school day. Prayer areas in every classroom and around the school are firmly established and used daily by pupils and adults alike for their own personal prayer. One child stating, 'a prayer is a way to communicate to God or to have a conversation with Him about any of your struggles. You can speak to Him in any place or anytime.'

A rich experience of worship is offered with an increasing range of leaders delivering acts of worship across the school year. During Holy week children led worship each day, focusing on each part of the Easter story, culminating in a service at one of the parish churches. This focused, clearly planned approach helped children to become more aware of the real meaning of Christ's death and resurrection and to reflect upon its significance to Christians.

Over the last academic year the new head of school has worked hard to develop the pivotal role that collective worship plays in securing pupils' understanding of the Christian faith. As a result, all pupils are confident in their

understanding of key Christian traditions, including the Holy Trinity. Opportunities for pupil involvement in the planning and leading of collective worship have also increased. Whilst pupils report that they enjoy worship and some informal feedback is beginning to be collected, systems for the monitoring and evaluating of worship are in the early stages of being embedded. The newly established 'dream team' take their role of monitoring worship very seriously and are beginning to see the impact of their work.

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

The inspirational head of school, in conjunction with the two executive headteachers, has developed a strong Christian vision that positively impacts upon all areas of school life. This vision, alongside the drive and energy of the head of school, is inspirational and is largely responsible for making such rapid changes to the school over the last academic year. Her calm, reassuring leadership described as a 'gracious presence' has been instrumental in highlighting and celebrating the Christian distinctiveness of this school. As one member of the local clergy described 'this place now shouts – we are a church school.' The executive leadership have delegated full responsibility for this important aspect of the school to the head of school, drawing upon her clear strengths and experience. Through regular school and IEB meetings they have been fully aware of the progress and supported this in meetings with the diocesan IEB member.

The school vision of 'unlocking every child's potential to develop spiritually and emotionally through the example of Jesus Christ,' underpinned by the Christian values and their biblical foundations, positively energises the work of all stakeholders. At every level of this Christian community all members live this vision. Pupils are warmly invited to take responsibility for their own learning and wellbeing, to take risks and to learn from their mistakes. Through encouragement and praise children are allowed to be the best that they can be. As a result pupils grow in self-respect and are spiritually aware. Members of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) share this commitment and have a good grasp of the strengths and areas to improve as a church school.

In this caring and nurturing Christian environment all are given the opportunity to excel and flourish. The exceptional leadership of the head of school directly impacts upon the professional development of each of her staff. All members of the school team feel very well supported and nurtured. They spoke strongly about the ability of school leaders in recognising the strengths of staff and building positively upon these.

The vision of the school is secured through careful evaluation and strategic planning. The school is never complacent, always seeking ways to be even better. This drive for excellence is fuelled by the shared vision and is overwhelmingly responsible for making such great changes to the school in such a short amount of time. The interest of every child is at the heart of any plan. All are seen as leaders. Although evaluation as a church school is not yet integral to overall school improvement planning, and its potential to underpin school improvements therefore not fully developed, overall self-evaluation as a church school is accurate. The leadership of collective worship and RE are both given a high priority with the Head of School taking the lead for both. Religious education and collective worship hold a central place in the curriculum and statutory requirements regarding their needs are met.

There are strong partnerships between the school, parents, members of the IEB and the wider community. The school is very well supported by the current incumbent who leads both collective worship and RE lessons regularly. School services such as Harvest and at Christmas are very well supported by parents and members of the wider school family, and there has been a raise in the number of families attending services at the two churches linked with the school. Parents are very involved in the life the school. In fact, parents and other stakeholders are positively encouraged to recognise children displaying any of the school's four core values. The key value of respect shapes the school's approach to the teaching of world faiths and wider global communities. These are introduced by looking at similarities and drawing out the same foundations which are the basis for all religions. The school meets statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report May 2016 St Michael's CE Primary School, Playden TN31 7PJ