

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

### Salehurst Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

George Hill  
Robertsbridge, East Sussex, TN32 5BU

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Chichester</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	East Sussex
Date/s of inspection	16 November 2016
Date of last inspection	23 November 2010
School's unique reference number	114521
Executive Headteacher Head of School	Liz Avard Debbie Reilly
Inspector's name Quality Assurance assessor	Susan Costa Jayne Pavlou 628

#### School context

Salehurst is a one-form entry primary school with a lower than national average number of children from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils with SEN support is higher than national. Following the retirement of the previous headteacher who had been in post for 11 years there has been a change in organisation. In September 2016 the school entered into a Collaboration Agreement with Staplecross Methodist Primary School and is now led by an Executive Headteacher and Head of School. There have been significant senior leadership, governance and staff changes during the last year. The school has links with the local church, St Mary's, where the incumbent has been in post since August 2016.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Salehurst Primary School as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- The focus on providing an environment of care, nurture and support is valued by all members of the school community and contributes positively to pupils' well-being and personal development.
- Behaviour and relationships are warm and welcoming and create a positive, happy and secure environment.
- Established global partnerships impact positively on pupils' attitudes and their respect for diverse communities.

#### Areas to improve

- Review the school's vision and values to ensure they are distinctively Christian, rooted in biblical teaching and fully understood and articulated by all members of the community.
- Establish effective systems for leaders and governors to monitor and evaluate the impact of collective worship and religious education on the school's Christian distinctiveness and the development of the whole child.
- Improve pupil involvement in leading collective worship so that they have greater ownership of how worship themes are explored, along with increased opportunities for spiritual development.

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

The quality of relationships throughout the school, characterised by care and trust between pupils and adults, make a positive contribution to the pupils' personal development. Teachers are good role models for children. The focus on the well-being of pupils and support for inclusion, results in a community with a sense of belonging where children are valued. One parent summed up the views of parents when explaining 'This is a kind and friendly school where my child is nurtured and supported.' The impact of this approach on the pupils' learning and academic progress leads to some focused support for vulnerable pupils and parents appreciate the school's sensitive approach. Attendance is good. Standards across the curriculum are improving. A recent initiative, the Power of Reading, has offered the opportunity to develop pupil voice, enabling pupils to debate and reflect on social issues and dilemmas. Older pupils act as buddies to younger pupils and this is valued by children and adults alike and builds community. Pupils of all ages act in a polite and calm manner and staff speak positively of the mutual support provided by the team, but these aspects of school life are not under-pinned by policies which are expressed from a distinctively Christian perspective. As a result, pupils have not yet acquired the language to link school values with biblical teaching and are unable to talk about them in depth. Pupils show awareness of diverse communities through an established link with a school in Malawi and they explain how their fund-raising has provided new buildings and improved facilities. Pupils are keen to talk about enrichment opportunities such as visits to places of interest that support their learning and the school is proud of their musical tradition which includes an orchestra involving pupils, parents and people from the village. Recently the school identified the need to improve opportunities to promote the pupils' spiritual awareness and as a result classroom reflection areas are beginning to provide opportunities to develop pupils' spirituality. The understanding of 'spiritual development' is limited and not consistently provided for and therefore opportunities to explore this in everyday learning are sometimes missed. Experiences in RE provide the opportunity to explore other faiths but there is limited opportunity for pupils to reflect on how faith impacts on the lives of believers. Pupils talk about Bible stories and what they have learned in RE but they are less confident about the link with key values. There is limited leadership monitoring and evaluative evidence of the impact of the school's Christian ethos in meeting the needs of all learners. To improve Christian distinctiveness leaders should review and select a group of Christian values to support the out-working of the vision; ensuring that all members of the community understand what makes these values distinctively Christian, rather than just a selection of shared human values.

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

Collective worship brings the school together each day and pupils recognise this as important. Some acts of worship are theme-led and include use of biblical material and some enable pupils to celebrate their own hobbies, interests and talents. Pupils enter in a calm and quiet manner as music is played and images displayed but pupil participation is limited. To recognise collective worship as a special time, a table holds items of significance including a cross. A candle is lit but opportunities for reflection are missed, restricting opportunities for pupils' spiritual development. Prayers that the pupils have written are used within worship, but when reflecting on experiences pupils lack confidence to express how worship makes a difference to them. Pupils share prayers before lunch and show respect when giving thanks for their food. Their knowledge of the Lord's Prayer and the school prayer indicate that these are not fully understood. Generally the pupils have an understanding of God and Jesus, however, their knowledge of the Holy Spirit and symbolism in worship is restricted, resulting in a limited understanding of the Anglican tradition. Staff attend collective worship and they value the opportunity to celebrate children's talents. St Mary's church is used for services to mark Christian festivals and parents speak positively about these occasions. Pupils understand the key festivals of Harvest, Christmas and Easter, but have less understanding of other festivals such as Pentecost. Pupils occasionally lead class assemblies where they follow a theme and select prayers and songs, but opportunities for them to plan, lead and evaluate collective worship are not developed. The leadership and evaluation of collective worship has yet to be developed by the new leaders and new incumbent. Consequently, the effectiveness of worship on the wider school community is not fully known. Planning for collective worship follows themes across a term but there is no evaluation of its impact on the pupils and as a result, improvements are not identified. Pupils are keen to contribute more drama to worship as they feel this helps them remember key messages from Bible stories. There are opportunities for pupils to make basic connections between values and Bible stories and pupils say that worship has helped in their relationships with peers. For example, 'Just because you look bigger doesn't mean you're stronger on the inside.' However, pupils do not articulate how values have a direct impact in many other areas of their own lives. Recent work on developing reflection areas in classrooms is beginning to provide some opportunities for spiritual awareness but this is not consistent across the school.

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

Parents appreciate the pastoral support that all members of the school community provide for their children. A comment made by one parent who described the school as a 'welcoming and nurturing community' was echoed by many who recognise the school as a church school with links to the local church. The school has recently had a number of changes to staffing and through the collaboration there is a new leadership structure. Governors and leaders explain that decisions regarding the collaboration were made as they sought to retain the school's ethos of 'a friendly, family environment'. A member of the staff reflected, 'There is real strength in our team to support each other.' Parents are confident that all staff care for the well-being of their children and parents speak positively of how their children are 'proud of their school'. Parents feel that the school provides opportunities for their children to learn about Christianity and other major world religions but pupils lack confidence in talking about the links between faith and action. Although the school's values are impacting on relationships and families are well supported, these values are not sufficiently explored or linked to biblical teaching to ensure that their contribution to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is clear. There is a vision for the school as a church school but it is not fully developed or understood by the different members of the school community.

The Diocesan Improvement Partner supported the previous headteacher to improve academic standards and has rightly identified the need to develop opportunities for pupils' spiritual development. Since the last inspection the school grounds have been developed to include a reflection area but the children are uncertain how this contributes to their personal or spiritual development. School systems for self-evaluation have not focused on evaluating the Christian distinctiveness and therefore have not sufficiently informed priorities for improvement. The input of governors into the monitoring and evaluation of the school as a church school is limited. The new leadership team, working with the new incumbent have the opportunity to improve this focus to advance the partnership between school and church. During the interregnum the school was well supported by a leader from a local community church. Pupils and staff speak positively about the impact through her response to pupils' 'big questions' arising from RE as well as the pastoral support provided. RE is included within the current school improvement plan which recognises the importance of professional development to support RE leadership. Pupils' understanding of the church as a resource for RE is beginning, as visits to church have only recently been introduced. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

The overall leadership and management of Salehurst as a church school is not yet good because there is limited quality evidence of its effectiveness in monitoring and evaluating the effect that the Christian ethos has on all pupils. Sharing strengths within the collaboration, combined with reflective governance and effective partnership with the local church, provides the potential to strengthen the school's capacity to improve.

SIAMS report November 2016 Salehurst CE Primary School, Robertsbridge TN32 5BU