

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Slindon Church of England Primary School

Meadsway, Slindon, Arundel, West Sussex. BN18 0QU

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Chichester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	West Sussex
Date of inspection	8 November 2016
Dates of last inspection	9 and 13 December 2010
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled. 125994
Headteacher	Jane Walters
Inspector's name and number	Kelly Dillon (886)

School context

Slindon Church of England Primary School is a very small, rural village school in West Sussex. There are, on average, 62 pupils on roll, aged between 4 and 11 years old, working in three mixed aged classes. Pupils are mostly from a White British heritage. Cohorts are typically very small with children joining the school at different stages. Pupils, of all abilities, make good progress. The current headteacher has been in post for 15 years.

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

- The Christian ethos drives a focus upon the whole child. As a very inclusive school, all God's children are valued, nurtured and cared for.
- The quality and range of collective worship provides pupils with a wide experience and develops a good understanding of Christian teachings and traditions.
- The Christian character positively affects relationships across the school.
- Cross curricular links provide an enriched and exciting curriculum helping pupils to develop a sense of awe and wonder in God's world.

Areas to improve

- To enhance the school's vision, rooting it in explicitly worded values to ensure that it is clearly identifiable as Christian.
- Demonstrate pride in the Christian foundation of the school by making its distinctiveness as a church school more explicit, for example through the school website and school policies.
- Give pupils of all abilities the language and understanding to make connections between Christian values, biblical teachings and the choices that they make in their own lives so that they experience Christianity as a living faith which has relevance to them.

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

The Christian character of the school provides a warm, friendly, caring atmosphere where all are welcomed. The nurturing environment enables staff to find the very best in every child and to build upon this potential. As a small school, Slindon focuses upon developing the individual. They truly recognise that each child has been, 'blessed by God with unique potential.' School staff work with the whole child, creating self-belief and confidence, which in turn impacts upon academic progress and personal development. New pupils are welcomed especially well and settle in very quickly. The school is particularly successful in catering for vulnerable children or those with special educational needs who make good progress. One parent described the school as a 'safe haven' identifying its Christian character as instrumental in providing such a high level of support by installing in each child, 'belief, meaning and direction.' The Christian values are known and expressed by most members of the school community. Pupils are able to apply some of these to their own lives, in particular, respect and tolerance, as lived out daily through the inclusive nature of the school. However, pupils across the ability range do not consistently possess the appropriate language to enable them to articulate connections between Christian values, biblical teachings and how they inform their own daily lives and achievements. At Slindon everyone knows each other especially well and relationships across the whole school community are strong. Behaviour is good with pupils enthusiastic and keen to learn. Children are eager to come to school and are motivated by all that it offers. Pupils express their spirituality, emotions and responses to the world in a variety of ways; music, drama and art. They are beginning to develop a personal spirituality and the ability to express these thoughts with confidence. Religious education (RE) makes a positive contribution to the Christian character of the school. At every opportunity RE is brought into other areas of the curriculum for example younger pupils making Diwali lamps in Art. Pupils' learning is enriched and exciting, developing a sense of awe and wonder of God's world. Learners understand Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. Their study of Christianity and other world faiths gives pupils the opportunity to look at how having faith affects life choices. A broad RE curriculum which embraces the study of a number of different faiths, together with a wide range of visitors to the school, is effective in encouraging respect for diverse communities and deepens pupils' understanding of multi-cultural Britain.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship has a strong impact upon all members of the school community. Worship is carefully planned giving all an experience of biblical teachings, reflection and spiritual growth. It heavily influences the behaviour of the whole school community, with the Christian value 'Koinonia' at the heart – a community, where all work together. Staff, parents, governors and children all value worship and the opportunities that it provides for reflection which results in a calm and loving school environment. Worship is engaging and pupils respond positively and are very keen to participate. Older pupils reported how much they enjoyed being involved with worship and the roles that they play in preparing for it. The Christian life of the school is especially celebrated through song. All pupils sing hymns with passion, whole-heartedly contributing towards an uplifting experience. Both staff and children talk about their singing as a highlight of worship. One staff member stated that, 'it is lovely to hear the pupils sing with such enthusiasm. It makes me feel very happy.' Over the course of each term, collective worship is led by a range of leaders including members of staff and visiting speakers. Pupils felt that by having a range of people leading worship it made worship 'more fun.' Different approaches to teaching about the same themes help to instil a better understanding within all pupils. Regular contributions by a range of clergy from different Christian denominations has impacted positively upon children's understanding of Christian teachings and traditions. Pupils spoke with confidence about the Holy Trinity showing appropriate understanding. Collective worship is distinctively Christian. Pupils use Anglican liturgical responses with confidence and are beginning to apply Christian messages from worship to their own lives. One child remembered that worship had taught him to, 'be the shepherd, not the sheep.' Children share prayers with self-assurance, and have the confidence to share appropriate prayers with the rest of the school spontaneously. Since its last inspection the school has taken steps to fully involve pupils in the monitoring of collective worship. Pupils formally evaluate collective worship regularly, recording key comments from their peers and making suggestions for improvements. Governors and staff are also involved and this regular monitoring is always considered and leads to future developments.

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

The headteacher, along with the governing body, has created a vision that impacts directly upon pupil development and nurture. Since the last inspection, there has been a drive, by all school leaders, to improve Christian distinctiveness throughout the school by ensuring that the school's values are beginning to be woven into policy and practice. The 'DNA of the school – Develop, Nurture and Achieve,' encapsulates the school's drive for the well-being of all of its pupils. Staff work particularly well as a team, striving to provide the best opportunity for each individual child in their care. They dedicate much time in developing the whole child often working with families to remove any barriers to learning. This dedication to the children of Slindon is the primary way in which the Christian vision of the school is put into practice. Honouring each individual and helping them to be the best that they can be is seen as the main priority by all stakeholders at the school. Although the school's values are celebrated they are not always clearly identified as distinctively Christian, for example on the school website. Good practice in classroom reflective areas is not consistently shared. Whilst leaders do regularly evaluate and are able to share the school's main priorities as a Church school not all stakeholders have a understanding of their Christian vision and how this should influence the school's Christian distinctiveness.

Slindon does provide opportunities for the identification and development of staff and governors as leaders of church schools through school INSET, with past staff members going into school leadership. Links with St. Mary's Church in Slindon are strong with clergy involved in many different aspects of school life. The previous incumbent had an extremely strong relationship with the headteacher and was instrumental in developing Christian distinctiveness at the school. The new incumbent is now strengthening school and church links even further through initiatives such as the travelling nativity and Open the Book. Leaders consider high quality worship and religious education to be an essential attribute of a Christian school and statutory requirements regarding their provision is met. The school plans to further develop the teaching of Christianity within the RE curriculum by implementing the national Understanding Christianity programme.

SIAMS report November 2016. Slindon CE Primary School, West Sussex. BN18 0QU.