

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Martin's Church of England Primary School

Hartington Road Brighton BN2 3LJ	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Chichester
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Date of inspection	14 March 2018
Date of last inspection	23 and 31 May 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 114539
Headteacher	Alex Wingham
Inspector's name and number	Rosemary Appleby 749

School context

St Martin's CE Primary School is smaller than most primary schools with 225 on roll including those in the nursery. The headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in March and June 2017 respectively and there has been a large turnover of staff since the last inspection. The school has strong partnerships with St Andrew's CE Primary in Brighton and St Nicholas and St Mary CE Primary in Shoreham. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average as is attendance and special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most pupils come from a White British heritage.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Martin's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Christian values have a significant influence on pupils' daily lives resulting in exemplary behaviour, positive attitudes to learning and the ability to discuss the Christian character of the school with confidence.
- Inspirational and passionate leadership from the school leadership team ensures that the Christian ethos is consistently interpreted and applied across all aspects of school life. They lead by example through their faith making it a nurturing and inclusive Christian community.
- There is a strong effective partnership with the church, where the school and parish church are seen as one and this enriches the spiritual life of the community.
- There is a strong ethos of nurture which is underpinned by Christian values and results in the school community feeling that they are all valued and part of a family.
- Worship is seen as central to school everyday life and inspires families to extend prayer into their personal lives.

Areas to improve

- To improve pupil evaluative skills so that they are more able to communicate their reflections of worship and how worship impacts on their lives.
- Ensure that all pupils experience appropriate differentiation in religious education (RE) to fully enable them to produce work which illustrates their individual ability and depth of understanding.

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

The impact of the Christian character of the school is outstanding because the school's Christian values are consistently understood and clearly and confidently articulated by all members of the school community. The school motto of 'Loving to Learn, Learning to Love' is underpinned by five Christian values chosen by the school community and recently revised. This has promoted an excellent shared ownership and consistency of understanding. The school's core Christian values of respectful, achieving, caring, positive and inspiring are seen as 'golden words' and link to biblical references sourced by both clergy and pupils. For example, pupils link being positive to the 'tricky situations' in the Bible that Noah, Jesus and David found themselves in. The five Christian values are displayed in all classrooms, outside in the playground, in corridors, on the website and in shared spaces and this ensures that they remain high profile and embedded in the heart of school life. Parents state that they understand the key values and that these values 'help with attitudes to learning' and that the 'community feeling at school is really easy to see and that comes from the ethos and values'. The Christian value of achievement supports the strong progress that all pupils make in their learning across the school. School data indicates that standards across the school are in line with national averages. Pupils who have gaps in their learning are very well supported and are catching up rapidly. Pupils' aspirations are raised by exciting opportunities such as the whole school visit to 'KidZania' in London where they were able to test their skills in a variety of professions. Parents reported that this provided the pupils with a chance to 'see all jobs are valued' and give them 'opportunities that they might not otherwise have'. Stunning displays around the school make a significant contribution to social, moral, spiritual, and cultural education and reflect the strong Christian character of the school. Displays about the school's partner school in Sierra Leone, celebrating faith week, and learning about religions such as Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism develop compassion, empathy and respect for other cultures. Pupils know that 'you need to be respectful and respect other religions' as 'everyone is equal even if of different faith' and they link this to the Christian values of caring, respect and being positive. Pupils' understanding of the global nature of Christianity is secure and they told the inspector that 'It's different culture, same faith'. Pupils are able to talk about the difference between a spiritual experience and a nice experience and this is evidenced through the class spiritual journals which are a celebration of pupils' life through St Martin's school. Pupils understand that giving money for charity, such as raising money for a well for their partner school in Sierra Leone, links to the Christian values of caring and respect.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is at the centre of the school's daily life. Christian values, linked to biblical references, are effectively and creatively reinforced. This ensures that the vision and values of the school remain central to the life of the school community. Aspects of worship such as saying the Lord's Prayer, lighting a candle, reflection and singing hymns, are established and reflect the shape of Anglican worship. When Year 6 attend the leavers' service at Chichester Cathedral they go on a 'pilgrimage'. Festival services held in church reinforce Anglican tradition and practice. When, at Easter, the pupils are led to and from the church by a donkey this is both an aid to developing knowledge of the Easter narrative and a powerful illustration of Christian humility. Pupils are actively engaged and respectful through participation in all elements of worship. They know that worship is important because it is a time 'to think about Jesus' and that 'when we light the candle the light is in our souls' and 'the spirit is always with us'. Pupils know that candles are lit to show Jesus is the light of the world and believe that the smoke takes their prayers up to heaven, reflecting the mass which they attend at their parish church of St Martin. Prayer has a high profile. Pupils know that the Lord's Prayer was 'the prayer that Jesus taught us'. Pupils write their own thoughtful prayers for inclusion both in worship and in church reinforcing its importance. They say they pray to 'show Jesus you love him' and 'it's a moment to reflect'. The recent focus on prayer spaces has ensured that prayer remains central to the school. One of the school aims is to continually extend their Christian ethos throughout the community and prayer spaces is one effective example of this in action. After experiencing prayer spaces one parent said that she had learnt that 'I can pray in different ways and it does not make prayer any less important'. Parents have supported their children to recreate prayer spaces at home because they have been inspired at school. There is an appropriate focus on the centrality of Jesus Christ in worship and pupils talk about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit with a growing appreciation and as 'one person with three forms'. Pupils have a wide knowledge and understanding of biblical material and can relate this to their own lives and Christian values with clarity. One pupil interviewed said that the prodigal son story from the Bible linked to the Christian value of being positive when his father welcomed him back into the family. Pupils know that the cross on the school logo is a Christian symbol and relates to the Easter story in the Bible and that Jesus died on the cross and 'sacrificed his life for everyone else'. Pupils experience a range of settings and leaders for worship which enriches the experience of worship. Planning and evaluation of worship involves a range of stakeholders and ensures that the high quality of worship is maintained. It is evident from pupil and adult interviews that biblical material is extensively used. Pupils confidently plan and lead worship in a creative way often using drama, art and power points. All classes have a reflective area with a reflection tree where they can write comments about worship and these are consistently used by staff and pupils. They evidence

the worship themes and understanding of pupils but they do not yet evaluate worship in a way that fully illustrates the impact of the themes and how these could be applied to pupils' own lives.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

All staff recognise and value the importance of RE which is seen as a core subject. RE training for staff through the Understanding Christianity work is enabling teachers to inspire pupils in their learning. An enquiry based approach to the teaching of RE enables learners to reflect on what it means to have a faith and to develop their own spiritual understanding. The 'Big Question' approach such as 'What difference does the resurrection make to Christians?' and a termly RE challenge such as 'How many women can you name who appear in the Bible?' linked to the use of Bibles for research has increased pupils' reflection and analytical skills. The RE leader is passionate, knowledgeable and proactive in ensuring staff and learners develop sound RE knowledge and understanding. She has been supported in developing leadership skills through the effective partnership with leaders of RE from St Andrew's and St Nicholas and St Mary CE Primary schools and attendance at deanery network meetings. She undertakes moderation of RE work and work scrutiny, interviews pupils, gives written reports to governors and observes RE practice across the school. This enables her to take action, where needed, to improve RE provision. For example her RE action plan identifies that 'differentiation needs to be clear and concise throughout planning, books and outcomes'. The inspector concurs with this as the use of the same worksheets for all pupils is not illustrating their true depth of understanding. For example in one lesson pupils showed insight and had the confidence to debate when researching evidence about the resurrection. Two pupils chose to read and compare accounts of the resurrection in their personal Bibles from Luke, Matthew, Mark and John as they considered that points of view can get changed in history. This contrasts with the view of another child that you 'don't need evidence because the Holy Spirit is almighty and there is no lawyer or scientist that can challenge this'. However this level of debate came from the pupils and not through explicit planning or the worksheet used. Pupil interviews show that learners enjoy RE because 'it is fun' and they like the variety of teaching methods used such as drama, art, debate Godly Play, circle time and videos. Assessment has been recently revised to integrate understanding Christianity with the Guildford syllabus. Although this is not yet embedded pupils understand that the use of different colour pens shows them their achievements and points for improvement. The use of assessment through teacher questions and pupil responses takes learning forward and illustrates RE progress across the school. Current data indicates that RE attainment is higher than other core subjects and exceeds expectations in the majority of year groups.

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

The headteacher, staff team and governing body consistently articulate a strong understanding of how their Christian vision gives direction for the whole school community. They have effectively maintained and grown the school's positive Christian ethos through times of considerable change and are passionate about serving the needs of the school. They have been proactive in addressing the key issues from the previous inspection with significant impact. Effective use is made of regular RE assessment which ensures good progress. Pupils have many firsthand experiences of world faiths and beliefs through visits to synagogues and a Baha'i centre and workshops from staff and parents on Judaism, Holi, and Hinduism, Sikhism and as a result pupils are able to effectively articulate their thoughts and views on world religions. The headteacher's leadership is inspirational and he is passionate about the school. He leads by example and works in partnership with the incumbent of St Martin's church to secure the best outcomes for all the school community with the result that all stakeholders view the church and school as extensions of each other. Parents say that 'the church is not a building, it's the people. We bring the church back with us'. The headteacher, RE leader and incumbent of St Martin's church have all visited Walsingham and planned a residential visit for pupils. The importance of this visit is understood by parents; all Y5 pupils are attending and the school has been overwhelmed with offers of support from staff at school and members of the church community to accompany the pilgrimage. This ensures that the Christian ethos permeates through the school and church and into the wider community. Strategically improving St Martin's as a church school is an element in the school improvement plan. These action plans reflect the commitment of leaders to continually improve Christian distinctiveness. Governors are committed to the Christian ethos of the school and support and know the school very well. They write evaluative reports which are discussed in governors' meetings about their learning walks, book scrutiny and pupil interviews and their points for action are followed up. During staff interviews candidates are asked about their reasons for wanting to be part of St Martin's to ensure that the school appoints staff committed to promoting a Christian ethos. Staff and governors are well supported in their professional development through use of diocesan training and working with other church schools and this effectively increases the skills and knowledge they have to develop the school as a church school. The school community are united in their affirmation that 'St Martin's is a very special school and its Christian ethos underpins all aspects of staff and children's experience'. The arrangements for RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements