

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

### Five Ashes Church of England Primary School

Five Ashes Church of England Primary School, Five Ashes, Mayfield, TN20 6HY	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Chichester</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	East Sussex
Date of inspection	28 February 2018
Date of last inspection	28 June 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 114526
Executive Headteacher	Debbie Bennett
Head of School	Anna Newington
Inspector's name and number	Jan Meyer 921

#### School context

Five Ashes is a small voluntary controlled village primary school of 44 pupils. There are three mixed age classes. It has strong links with St Dunstan's Church in Mayfield. The head of school joined in April 2016. Since January 2018 the school has been in a soft federation with The Saxonbury Federation, having previously federated with Mayfield school in 2016 to form The Aspire Federation. A newly appointed executive headteacher leads the four church schools in the federation. The percentage of pupils for whom the school receives extra funding due to social disadvantage is below average. The majority of pupils are White British.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Five Ashes Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The Christian character at Five Ashes Church of England Primary School is very effectively promoted so as to make a significant impact on the personal development of pupils.
- The expertise of the religious education (RE) leader has driven forward improvements in the RE curriculum.
- Collective worship and RE are seen positively by members of the school community and have an impact on pupils' daily lives.
- Pupils readily make links between biblical teaching and the way that they conduct their lives.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) provision is highly effective.

#### Areas to improve

- Leaders, including governors, can use their insightful monitoring of the school's Christian distinctiveness to plan further improvements.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to plan and lead aspects of collective worship in school as well as in church so that pupils contribute to the rich experience of worship provided by a range of leaders.
- Develop learners understanding that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith in order for learners to understand the difference and diversity within global Christian communities.

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

The school's core Christian values, which are taken from the 'Values for Life' programme, are clearly linked with Christian teaching and biblical references. These values are well known and articulated by all members of the school community. They underpin the Christian character of the school and have a direct impact on the way pupils choose to live their lives. The school vision, which has recently been rewritten with a group of pupils, is known by the school community and impacts on the Christian character of the school. The vicar reported 'this school has an enthusiasm for being a church school'. The Christian values are clearly shown in the strong and supportive relationships within the school and in the good behaviour which contributes to a calm learning environment. One pupil stated, 'we can always think back to our values and think how we can improve'. The school's behaviour for learning policy is based on the core behaviours of compassion, courage, respect and responsibility, the policy states 'our core behaviours and Christian values underpin our behaviour expectations'. Governors, pupils and parents remark on the special atmosphere and close community feel of the school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is highly effective, all groups of the school community state that the school is a very compassionate place. One parent stated, 'the quality of teaching and compassion is outstanding, which is an excellent example for our children for the future.' The children are given a wide breadth of spiritual experiences such as 'Woodland Days', these days include outside worship which the children enjoyed so much that they have requested that worship take place outside more often. The worship programme and RE contribute well to pupils' SMSC development. The whole school RE curriculum plan was revised and improved for September 2017 following the 'Understanding Christianity' training undertaken by the RE subject leader. Recent training undertaken by all teachers has strengthened their knowledge and understanding of Christianity, and as a result, RE supports the school's Christian foundation extremely well. RE and other planned activities successfully provide a range of opportunities for pupils to explore the importance of religious belief and practice in the world today. Pupils say that they enjoy RE lessons. One pupil said, 'I love RE because it helps me reflect and remember God and what he says in the Bible and I don't always have time to do that'. Teachers plan some excellent cross-curricular links between RE and the rest of the curriculum which deepens pupils' understanding and learning. The RE syllabus provides a good balance between teaching that focuses on Christianity and that which addresses other world faiths such as Judaism and Islam. Learners are able to discuss the similarities between Christianity and other faiths. Although pupils are developing an understanding and respect for difference and diversity in God's world they do not fully appreciate that Christianity is a multi-cultural, global religion. However, exposure to a range of local Christian traditions in worship provides a sound basis for further exploration. The school environment, the displays and reflection areas in the classrooms deepen the understanding of the school's Christian values extremely well and are well used by the children for quiet moments of reflection. The school has invested in an outside 'tree house' reflection area, which is peaceful and welcoming and considerably enhances pupils' opportunities for prayer and reflection during the school day.

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

Worship is systematically planned around the school's Christian values and is based on the 'Values for Life' programme, which is based on biblical texts and the cycles of the Anglican year. The collective worship policy states that during worship at Five Ashes the Bible is used as a source of inspiration and learning. The RE subject leader, supported by the head of school, takes the lead as worship co-ordinator. In this, she is supported by the vicar from St Dunstan's and the children and families' worker from the church. Major Christian Festivals are celebrated in St Dunstan's church, pupils play an active role in these services and parents are warmly welcomed. Pupils are familiar with aspects of traditional Anglican worship practices such as opening and closing worship with a call and response 'Peace be with you' 'and also with you' and a lit candle representing Jesus as the light of the world. The physical environment shares features with Anglican practice with a cross, candle and Bible placed on the focal table. Through worship and RE pupils have developed an age-appropriate knowledge of the life and the teaching of Jesus, his importance to Christians and of the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They make effective links between biblical teaching and the school's Christian values and consider how these might relate to their own actions. One pupil said, 'God's sayings change the way we do things in the future'. Pupils and staff engage well in worship and recognise its importance in exploring school values and considering the impact of these on life in and outside of school. Pupils are engaged, respectful, good at listening and eager to respond. All staff lead worship, the vicar and children and families' worker lead worship weekly and the school regularly invite clergy from a variety of local churches to lead worship which develops pupils' ecumenical understanding of Christian tradition. The local clergy use school plans to guide their themes when delivering worship. Pupil questionnaires show that they enjoy collective worship, particularly the 'singing and stories'. Pupils

respond well to questions and discussions during worship and are enthusiastic participants; however, although pupils plan and lead worship in church, there is a lack of opportunities for children to plan or lead worship in school. Monitoring the impact and consistency of the quality of worship is undertaken by governors, pupils and staff but there is not a coherent whole school evaluation system in place that gives leaders a secure knowledge and understanding of the impact that worship has on all members of the school community. The school offers frequent opportunities for prayer during the school day, the school provides reflection areas for prayer and holds a bi-annual prayer week. Reflection areas around the school are very well presented. The reflection area in each classroom is refreshed termly and themed alongside the Christian value being focussed on at that time. They are welcoming spaces and learners are encouraged, should they wish to, to record their reflections and prayers in the class reflection books. This has supported pupils in their understanding of the nature of prayer and reflection.

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

The head of school, supported by her governors and staff, has developed a school with a strong Christian character. The newly appointed executive headteacher understands and supports the impact that the school's Christian vision has on every member of the school community. It is clear that the school's Christian values have a strong influence on the lives and behaviour of pupils. This leads to high aspirations for all and a focus on the development of the whole child. As one parent stated, 'it is very holistic here'. The head of school has refreshed the school's Christian ethos by a clear focus on its Christian values. The original school vision was redrafted by the head of school and a group of pupils at the beginning of this academic year to make its meaning clearer to learners. Christian values are systematically and explicitly communicated. Staff and parents identify the positive impact they have on relationships in school and parents say that these values develop their children's broader development. Parents report that children tell them who has shown compassion at school that day. Pupils and their families, as well as staff, feel well supported by the school. Leaders are determined that pupils and staff will continue to flourish and the school reflects the mission statement 'Respect, Responsibility, Compassion and Courage'. The school has actively sought leadership solutions and expects to be strengthened by belonging to a federation of four local church schools. The recent 'Understanding Christianity' training has supported leaders in developing the staff; the RE subject leader's monitoring shows that this has enabled all staff and pupils to develop a greater understanding of Christian concepts. The school governors support the school and undertake regular monitoring. Self-evaluation and RE and collective worship monitoring take place by all stakeholders regularly. However, it is not clear how all aspects of monitoring are drawn together by governors and leaders to evaluate the impact of the Christian vision. However, senior leaders have written a school development plan which has clear strategies in place to support continued improvement of the school as a church school as a result of their observations from monitoring. RE and collective worship are led well which is leading to improved practice in both areas. RE and worship are appropriately resourced and supported and meet statutory requirements. The school works very effectively with parents to help them support their children's academic learning and personal development. Parents are fully involved in learning about and understanding each termly value through information in the newsletter and the value homework project. Parents strongly support the school and all that it does. One parent stated, 'children achieve different levels of academic achievement but with the values every child can excel, and this is encouraged'. The school has developed good partnership links. A strong and mutually supportive partnership between the school and the church exists, with regular visits from the vicar and the children and families' support worker as well as visits to the church. School leaders and clergy work effectively together. Regular use is made of diocesan support and training. The school works closely with their partner federation church schools, the newly appointed executive headteacher is determined that this will continue and greatly enrich the Christian foundations of all four schools. The school's approach to attendance is strongly influenced by the desire to be inclusive, support all families and to give hope. Relationships have been built with those who have found attendance difficult; this approach has had a positive impact. Attainment across all phases and pupil groups is mostly in line with or above national expectations for pupils at the expected standard, with all groups of pupils supported to achieve. The school welcomes the wider community to school events, such as carol singing and is planning to open the tree house reflection area at appropriate times for community use.

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