

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Cross-in-Hand Church of England Primary School

Sheepsetting Lane, Cross In Hand, Heathfield, East Sussex, TN21 0XG

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Chichester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	East Sussex
Date of inspection	22 May 2018
Date of last inspection	17 October 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 114496
Headteacher	Sarah Massheder
Inspector's name and number	Susan Thompson 714

School context

Cross-in-Hand Church of England Primary School is a voluntary controlled school of 277 pupils. The majority of pupils are from a White British background. Six percent of pupils have identified special educational needs and 8% are in receipt of pupil premium. The school roll has decreased due to the reduced number of children in the local area. This has contributed to the financial challenges faced by the school in recent years. The current headteacher took up post in September 2015 following a time when the school was led by an interim headteacher. The OFSTED inspection in October 2015 rated the school as good. The school offers Forest School provision and wrap-round care.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Cross-in-Hand as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Compassion and forgiveness touch all parts of school life. They are exemplified through the support given for each other, charity works and strong links with the local community.
- The pastoral support for all members of the community, based on Christian values, is strong.
- Collective worship is very well planned and pupils are active participants in facilitating and evaluating the impact of collective worship.
- Collective worship is seen positively by all members of the school community and impacts on their daily lives.
- Church school developments are central to the whole school development plan.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is highly effective.

Areas to improve

- Develop the confidence of the whole community to articulate the specific Christian teachings underpinning the vision and values and ensure these links are overt in all school documentation.
- Further increase challenge by governors to senior leaders relating to the strategic leadership of church school development.

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

The school vision is 'With faith in our future, we learn hand in hand'. Pupils understand this to mean that they should 'help each other to go further in life' and that 'God loves and is with us, and has everything planned'. The school vision underpins provision for all groups of pupils to achieve. Attainment across all phases and pupil groups is in line with or above national expectations for pupils working both at the expected standard and at greater depth. The vision is supported by twelve Christian values. The values include: trust, compassion, hope, friendship, justice and forgiveness. These were selected by a range of members across the school community, since the last inspection. Governors, pupils and parents remark on the special atmosphere in the school. Pupils talk about how their values motivate them to be kind to others, forgive each other, show compassion and support charities. One pupil said, 'Jesus helped the disadvantaged and socially unacceptable people'. Members of the school community express compassion to those who have lost loved ones both within the community and beyond, demonstrated through writing letters, attending local services or joining in national minutes of silence, such as for those killed in the Manchester bombing. Displays strongly support Christian values and distinctiveness, for example the pupils talk proudly of their entries to last year's diocesan art competition. Pupils value the opportunities to perform in productions and have enjoyed the range of experiences across ages in the school, from Nativity and The Gospel Show to Joseph and His Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat. 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. The whole school attendance figures are just below national targets; absence rates are generally very low. The behaviour of pupils seen during the inspection was exemplary; pupils are supported through the excellent role models of their peers, support from peer mediators and a strong prefect system. Restorative justice is a key principle underpinning the behaviour system in which pupils are supported to forgive each other and move on. Pupils say that the peer mediators help them by 'working hand in hand with others' and helping them to forgive. Pupils can talk about a range of learning in religious education (RE). It is valued by the pupils who all said they 'enjoy RE'. Opportunities to learn from people within the community have been grasped to ensure that pupils develop an understanding of different world faiths. They are aware both of Christianity as a global faith and of similarities in the beliefs celebrated across the world. Trips are organised to the church and local mosque to give breadth to the learning. Pupils can identify differences between Jewish and Christian beliefs about Jesus. RE is not studied in isolation but supports and is supported by other elements of the curriculum through carefully planned links. For instance, a Year 1 class made links between their church visit, stained glass windows, the story of Noah and their topic on beasts. They were encouraged to use their reasoning skills to explore the story and Noah's obedience to God. Pupils were creating a screen depicting the Bible; meaningful links had been made to Van Gogh or cubism, as influences on their designs. RE books reflect care, marking is informative and learning supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social, emotional and cultural development (SMSC). For instance, in asking 'what qualities did Jesus show?' In literacy pupils were asked to consider friendship, compassion and hope when considering the Christmas night in World War I when Silent Night was sung across the trenches. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) of the pupils is evident throughout the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is very well planned and reflects the key festivals in the church year. Pupils enjoy the time of coming together and can articulate how it makes a difference to their lives; for instance, 'it helps me be a better friend'. Another pupil talked of a song based on a verse in Matthew's Gospel which helps him to think about how to treat others. Pupils are active participants in facilitating and taking part in collective worship. For instance, they lead the prayers or act out Bible passages. The worship ambassadors are efficient in their support of collective worship and capture useful evidence for the leaders as to pupils' responses. The theme of collective worship during the inspection was honesty. Pupils demonstrated understanding of how this is relevant to them, for example to finish the sentence 'Honesty is the best key because' one pupil answered, 'it builds trust'. They were familiar with the routines and physical environment. This reflects Anglican practice: a cross, a three branched candle stick, a Bible and a coloured cloth are placed on the focal table. Both the parable of the dishonest servant and Exodus 20:16 were used to explore the value. Pupils understand the term 'Church of England' and participate in a range of traditions, including saying a greeting, lighting a candle, regular Bible readings, prayers and singing. They recognise that these are aspects of worship shared with the church. Due to space restrictions collective worship does not take place regularly in church, however pupils visit the church as part of their RE learning. Pupils understand there are different denominations in Christianity and named many found locally. This understanding is supported by the involvement of Churches Together in Heathfield who occasionally visit the school. Each class leads one act of collective worship each fortnight on a Christian theme; these follow the same format as those led by the staff. The visual aids from these times are on display in the school. The pupils and parents talked enthusiastically and knowledgeably about the previous week's class collective worship about the Trinity. One class evaluates the collective worship led by their

peers; the evaluating class then lead the next class collective worship. Parents have seen the impact of the pupils' evaluations, for example if one class spoke too quietly the next class is much more audible. Pupils could all talk knowledgeably about the role of each of the three parts of one God, speaking of the Creator God, the human and saving act of Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit who helps believers and whose arrival is remembered at Pentecost. This understanding was reinforced last week by a class collective worship about the Trinity. There is a clear correlation between the class reflection areas and the collective worship. Staff interpret the presentation of these areas to suit the needs of their class; they are engaging and of a high quality. Pupils are given opportunities to consider their worries through the use of worry boxes in the reflection areas. Pupils value the opportunity to be quiet in the reflection areas saying 'it helps me calm down and find peace'. There are many opportunities to pray in the school, including in Forest School. Prayers included, 'praise you God that you are always with us', another was 'thank you for your help in times of trouble'. Pupils write prayers which are valued by the pupils and well presented. A pupil's prayer is selected to say together at the end of each day. Pupils know that these opportunities give time to talk to God or to be quiet and think if they don't want to pray. One pupil told the inspector 'those with no faith feel included'.

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

The school vision leads to high aspirations for all and a focus on the development of the whole child. All stakeholders speak of compassion and forgiveness being central to all they do. This is rooted in the school vision which is understood by everyone. Leaders and parents link the values to a range of Bible teachings including the fruit of the Spirit and Jesus' life. They articulate that these teachings provide a theological foundation for the Christian vision of the school. Church school developments are a part of the whole school development plan and Christian teaching is prominent in the personal, social and health education policy. The current self-evaluation document gives a clear description of all that the school offers. The full governing board minutes show that aspects of church school distinctiveness are reported on with increasing regularity. In March 2018 opportunities for engaging with cultural diversity were discussed. Governors principally monitor during an annual governors' day although other governor visits concerning RE and collective worship take place throughout the year. Despite challenging financial circumstances the governors have invested in new resources and training to develop the teaching of Christianity. Recruitment processes include expectations regarding working in a church school. Staff feel very well supported personally and professionally. They benefit from training to equip them to work and lead in a Christian environment, for example regular discussions take place in staff meetings about how the Christian values impact on school life. Two of the previous deputy headteachers were promoted to headteacher positions in church schools. RE is highly valued and developed across the school by a committed subject leader. She is conversant with the Church of England's RE statement of entitlement and is supported by a member of staff who is a RE specialist. The subject leader has led the introduction of the Understanding Christianity materials to great effect. Evidence of creative examples of this learning fills the school. These materials have sparked rich cross-curricular links and impressive displays, for instance a Key Stage 1 creation display. An area for development identified by the pupils was the lack of knowledge the pupils had of how the whole Bible story fitted together. As a consequence, the whole school has explored the Bible 'Big Frieze'. The school's connection with the church family is reinforced by regular contact with the part-time vicar, who supports Monday collective worship. Local partnerships are strong and serve to exemplify the school's Christian values, especially friendship and service. The choir performed at a church charity event and harvest food boxes are taken to local people. Parents feel valued and recognise the school's desire to work in partnership with them. They comment, 'I cannot fault the care shown my child' and 'my child's confidence has grown in a way we couldn't have imagined'.

The school meets the requirements for collective worship and religious education.

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