

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Infant School

Winchelsea Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN22 7PP

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Chichester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local Authority	East Sussex
Date of inspection	11 May 2018
Date of last inspection	March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Infant Voluntary Controlled - 114534
Headteacher	Carol Meakins
Inspector's name and number	Pamela Draycott 161

School context

This is a larger than averaged size infant school serving pupils who are mainly of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils for whom the school receives extra funding due to social or economic disadvantage is slightly below the national average. Similarly, so is the percentage with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). The school has a largely long-serving staff and very few children enter or leave at other than the usual times. There are longstanding and strong links with St Andrew's parish church.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness the St Andrew's Infant School as a Church of England school are good

- The strong and established leadership of the headteacher, suitably supported by senior leaders and a well-focused governing body, provides effective leadership and management of this church school.
- Its longstanding Christian vision has served it well in providing a firm foundation for school development and improvement.
- Behaviour is very good and close relationships express well the school's Christian underpinning.
- Pupils' positive response to the good and varied provision of spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development opportunities is a strength of the school.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that the school's vision and associated values are reviewed so as to ensure their ongoing effectiveness for the next stage of its development as a church school.
- In order to refine practice and enhance pupils' learning within RE when teaching about Christianity, identify and focus on key concepts such as creation, forgiveness and incarnation.

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

As an expression of its Christian foundation and values both adults and pupils respect and care for each other. This means that there is a deep-seated 'family feel', behaviour is very good and relationships are strong. In keeping with its vision statement of, 'Learning Together in Friendship and Faith', it is a welcoming and inclusive community. Pupils are happy in school and feel well supported and cared for. Attendance is around the national average. On those few occasions where poor behaviour or lower attendance gets in the way of learning, the school deals consistently and compassionately to successfully resolve issues. The school's vision is also distinctly expressed through a fitting focus on various Christian values, including peace, kindness, hope and forgiveness. These values impact positively on pupil behaviour. 'It's important to be kind to others, just like Jesus was', as a Year 1 pupil said. A Year 2 pupil was able to identify the symbol of the dove as both a sign of peace and of the Holy Spirit, saying, 'Peace is being calm inside and feeling God with you'. A belief in the 'fullness of life' based on John chapter 10 verse 10 is well expressed in the wide range of activities offered to pupils within the well-planned curriculum and through extra-curricular opportunities. Good educational use is made of the local environment with, for example, focused learning walks looking at Victorian Eastbourne or exploring and enjoying a park or the beach. Belief in the school's need to support 'life in all its fullness', leads to it taking seriously its pupils' academic attainment and progress alongside their personal development and wellbeing. These are clearly 'two sides of the same coin'. It means that, since the time of the previous denominational inspection, academic standards have shown a positive upward trend. Progress is good. On average children enter the Foundation Stage with slightly below national averages of development whilst they leave at the end of Year 2 with above average attainment. Careful tracking of pupils' attainment and progress is appropriately used to support purposeful teaching that meets the learning needs of different groups of pupils well. As an expression of its Christian ethos, the school has a well-defined focus on pupils' SMSC development to which pupils respond positively. There is a detailed policy which rightly influences provision across the curriculum and wider school life. This is well linked to the Department for Education's 'British Values' and to the school's Christian underpinning. Pupils are consequently, well supported for growing up in Britain today with the school providing a firm foundation for the next stage of their education. Pupils are beginning to understand and appreciate difference and diversity in God's world. The RE curriculum supports pupils well in fostering their understanding of religious diversity. A good balance of learning about and responding to Christian, Jewish and Hindu beliefs and practices is evident. For example, through the recently introduced RE work books as well as through various cross-curricular topics addressed. In addition, appropriate opportunities are provided to explore diversity within Christian practices through, for instance, considering how Christmas is celebrated by Christians in different parts of the world. Thus pupils are beginning to appreciate the multi-cultural dimension of the Christian faith. A link with a Ugandan charity helps pupils to understand how other children across the world are both similar and different to themselves. RE and the worship programme contribute well to supporting the school's Christian vision and associated values.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Daily worship is given a high priority and its importance in expressing the school's Christian foundation is rightly recognised and celebrated. It takes place in various groupings throughout the week and is led by different people. This helps to maintain interest and also reflects the shared importance placed on worship by members of the school community. Whilst whole school worship does take place, the school now provides worship for the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 separately. This follows the same theme with a very clear focus on enabling the developmental stage of pupils. Thus moments of stillness and the level of engagement in worship is strong for such young children. The timing of worship has been changed since the beginning of this academic year. It now mainly occurs immediately after morning registration, 'to set the tone for the day'. Pupils and adults enjoy worship and can articulate its importance within school life. As a Year 2 pupil reflected, 'Worship is good because we sing and praise God'. Worship is well planned with pupils' needs and interests in mind. Thus it supports their spiritual and moral development well. Good support for those leading worship is provided by the worship co-ordinator, who also leads RE. Those present engage respectfully and well. Close links with the school's Christian values centre on the life and teachings of Jesus, alongside an appropriate focus on biblical material. This means that pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of the importance of the Bible and the significance of Jesus for Christians. As a Year 2 pupil said, 'Jesus was God's son. He died and rose to life again to forgive sins'. Similarly, they are able to talk about Christians worshipping one God with three aspects – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This reflects an age-appropriate, basic appreciation of the Christian concept of the Trinity. Various Anglican practices, such as the use of opening and closing sentences with responses and different colours, provide a focus at different times of the Christian year and are used well. They provide a flexible structure for the worship that takes place. Clergy from the parish church lead worship weekly in school and this is well extended through whole school worship in church for Harvest, Christmas and Easter. Thus pupils, many of whom do not attend church regularly outside of their involvement through school, are developing a good appreciation of Anglican worship practices. Pupils have a developing understanding of prayer. They know that there are different types of prayer including, for example, 'saying thank you to God and asking God

to forgive you when you've done something wrong'. The faith table is a prayer and reflection area in each classroom. These areas are nicely presented and well used, enhancing opportunities for pupils to pray or reflect. Similarly an outside quiet garden is well used, 'not only to sit but to pray and ask God for things'. Pupils know the school prayer and have a growing appreciation of the importance of the Lord's Prayer for Christians. Monitoring of worship is now conducted regularly and includes asking for pupils' views and comments. These are taken appropriately into account when making decisions about developments.

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

The headteacher is well established and effectively leads a team of mainly long-serving staff. In this she is very well supported by her senior leadership team and by an effective and dedicated governing body. Staff and governors clearly recognise that, 'every child matters because they are each a child of God'. Decisions at governing body level are guided by that principle. Governors are very well informed and appropriately involved in school life, providing effective support and challenge. They have secured good leadership for RE and worship, both of which are well managed and meet statutory requirements. In documentation and planning the overlap between RE and worship is clearly expressed. However, the differences between RE and worship are not outlined as clearly. Whilst being well embedded, the school's vision and associated values do not fully take into account recent developments in church school education nationally. The headteacher and governors are aware of this. Some initial discussion has taken place to include this along with the upcoming review of the RE and collective worship policies. The wellbeing of staff has a high priority and their professional development opportunities are taken seriously, subject to time, school need and financial constraints. Staff are appropriately supported for working within the church school sector. Senior leaders and governors have a very clear understanding of the school's performance and its Christian distinctiveness. This is based on thorough and accurate self-evaluation. In turn this leads to a clear short and longer term actions for sustaining and improving its effectiveness and distinctiveness as a Church of England school. The areas identified for improvement in the previous denominational report have been very well addressed and have led to positive improvements. The school has recently invested in training for an approach to teaching called, 'Understanding Christianity'. This explores beliefs and practices through addressing key concepts. Whilst only being part way through this training there is already a clear plan in place for implementation, including rightly linking it with the East Sussex Locally Agreed Syllabus. The headteacher leads by example, knowing her pupils and their families extremely well. This enables, for example, effective support for any in need to be put in place as quickly as possible to minimise any impact on pupils' learning. Parents are kept closely informed of their children's attainment and progress and are appreciative of the approachability and commitment of staff. Many parents recognise this as an expression of the school's Christian foundation. The relationship with the parish church is deep and very well established. Clergy are directly and productively involved in school life, including leading worship and being active on the governing body. A weekly coffee morning in church is attended by some school parents. The school has constructive links with the Diocese through, for example, training of both staff and governors. Links with other Church of England schools locally provides effective mutual support for the headteacher and for other members of staff, such as through moderating literacy and mathematics standards across schools.

SIAMS report May 2018 St Andrew's CE (VC) Infant School, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN22 7PP