

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Lawrence Church of England School	
St Lawrence Church of England School, Trinity Road, Hurstpierpoint, BN6 9UY	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Chichester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	West Sussex
Date/s of inspection	24 April 2018
Date of last inspection	26 November 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 139879
Headteacher	Paul Dyer
Inspector's name and number	Jan Meyer 921

School context

St Lawrence is a large three-form entry primary school, which serves the area around the parish of Holy Trinity. The school has a stable leadership team with the headteacher being in post for more than 25 years. In 2013 St Lawrence became a stand-alone academy, in 2013 it became a National Support School and in 2014 a National Teaching School. The percentage of pupils for whom the school receives extra funding due to social disadvantage and those with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) is significantly below the national average. The majority of pupils are White British.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Lawrence Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- At St Lawrence Church of England School the values, which are implicitly Christian, are well known and very effectively promoted so as to make a significant impact on the personal development of all pupils.
- The expertise and commitment of the religious education (RE) leadership team has driven forward improvements in the RE curriculum resulting in outstanding provision.
- The worship programme plays an important role in school life. It is very effective in supporting pupils reflections on the impact of worship on their own lives.
- The provision of opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) is very strong resulting in very positive responses from pupils.

Areas to improve

- Make the links between the Christian foundation of the school and its vision and Christian character more explicit.
- Develop regular strategic self-evaluation by all members of the school community, including governors, which evaluates the impact that the Christian character of the school has on learners.
- Refine the assessment system so that leaders have an analysis of whole school achievement to inform their monitoring and evaluation of RE.

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

The school's core values of Respect, Independence, Caring, Teamwork and Reach for the Stars, are closely linked to the bible through assemblies and RE. The values are very well known and articulated by all members of the school community and underpin the Christian ethos of the school. Parents state that although their children talk about the values outside of school they do not talk about the links between the values and the Bible. The school vision, 'Enjoying and Achieving Through Creativity and Challenge', is not an explicitly Christian vision, but does have a significant impact on learners' personal development and achievement. Senior leaders feel strongly that the Christian aspect of the values and vision is implicit in the daily life of the school. The 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 parent stated 'ethos, caring and the pastoral side of this school are second to none.' The school is successful in its aim to create a culture of tolerance and understanding and has achieved the international school award. Learners' SMSC development is reinforced by worship. Pupils and staff recognise the importance of worship and the reflection time that follows every worship, in embedding the school values into everyone's lives, one example being the support that the school has given to others through local, national and global charities. Parents say that their children 'understand the importance of kindness and caring through assemblies'. The school is consistently above the national average for achievement and the national average for attendance. 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. The whole school RE curriculum plan provides the correct balance between teaching that focuses on Christianity and that which addresses other world faiths such as Judaism, Islam and Hinduism. As a result, pupils have a good understanding and respect for difference and diversity in God's world. Their understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural global faith is not so well developed. Learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well catered for and pupils enjoy and respond well to the many opportunities provided. They express their thoughts articulately and with confidence. The worship programme and RE contribute well to SMSC development. Pupils and their families, as well as staff, feel well supported by the school and pupils flourish at St Lawrence.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is planned around weekly themes. The first theme of each term is the value in focus for that term. Parables are used to link the value to teachings from the Bible. The headteacher takes the lead as worship co-ordinator and creates the termly plans himself, rather than using the additional expertise of clergy from the local churches. Worship is taken by a range of leaders including clergy from Holy Trinity and the local Methodist church who lead worship once a month. Worship is held regularly in the parish church of Holy Trinity. It is well established practice in the school for pupils to have regular opportunities to plan, prepare and lead worship and they do so with care and enthusiasm. House captains plan and lead worship for their houses every three weeks. They include links to the Bible and create their own slideshows and resources. Class worship, which takes place every 3 weeks, has developed and improved over the years resulting in the worship of exceptionally high quality seen during the inspection. Learners' enthusiasm to engage in worship was evident in the spontaneous prayers from pupils from other classes, which were eloquent and thought provoking. Pupils have a positive attitude to worship. Through worship and RE, pupils develop 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. Using mainly parables and at times the ten commandments, pupils make effective links between Biblical teaching and the school's values and can articulate the impact worship and RE have on the way they choose to act. The parish priest and governors, many of whom are involved in other local churches, are regular visitors to worship. Governors often visit and monitor worship, however, their monitoring and evaluation does not have a clear strategic purpose leading to planned improvement. Monthly visits from clergy impact on pupils' knowledge of Anglican worship. However, although it was an area for improvement in the last SIAMS inspection, not all learners are familiar with aspects of traditional Anglican worship practices such as opening worship with the call and response or a lit candle representing Jesus as the light of the world. Important Christian festivals are marked by worship in the local parish church and both inside and outside the school. Church services are well attended and enjoyed by parents. Prayer is a key feature of worship. One Year 4 pupil said that worship 'encourages us to pray inside and outside of school'. Pupils know the Lords Prayer well. Formal prayers before lunch and at the end of school frame the day. The school recently held a successful 'prayer space' week with help from local church communities.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious education is considered a core subject and has a high profile within the school. Work produced by pupils is of an equally high standard as that in other subjects. Across the school RE is taught by a team of experienced RE teachers who plan together using the West Sussex Agreed Syllabus with the 'Understanding Christianity' project integrated into it. 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. Teachers plan cross-curricular links between RE and the rest of the curriculum which deepens pupils' understanding and learning. Learners use skills such as enquiry, analysis and reflection well. They articulate their own personal reflections and answers clearly, demonstrating high level thinking skills. One Year 3 pupil said RE 'makes me think quite deeply'. There has been a strong commitment to staff training, with the RE subject leader attending diocesan courses and cascading the training to other RE teachers. Teachers across the school have attended an INSET focussing on 'Understanding Christianity'. This professional development of the staff has greatly enhanced the Christian character of the school. RE lessons provide clear Biblical links to the school values and it is clear from the pupils' excellent behaviour that RE lessons impact on the way they choose to behave. One Year 5 boy said it makes you 'think before you act so that you can change your way so that the outcome is better'. RE lessons include varied and creative activities and culminate in a final piece of high quality written work. Learners are given a good knowledge of many aspects of Christianity and the Bible as well as the main practices and beliefs of Islam, Hinduism and Judaism. Pupils are keen to learn about, and speak with great respect for, other faiths and religions. Links with each pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are intrinsic to the RE curriculum and have an impact on attitudes and behaviour. RE action plans drive forward improvements and leaders have a clear understanding of the direction in which they are travelling. Monitoring is undertaken by both subject leaders and senior leaders providing senior leaders with a whole school view of provision. Teachers assess each learner's attainment and progress in RE. These assessments inform teachers' planning teaching and learning. However, these assessments are not collated as whole school or cohort data to give senior leaders and governors achievement information to inform their self-evaluation.

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

Although the school is underpinned by a Christian ethos, strengthened by strong partnerships with local churches, there are mixed perceptions in the community about the Christian distinctiveness of the school. Parents and leaders feel strongly that St Lawrence is a village school first and a church school second. One parent said 'there is a light touch of Christianity here and I think they get it right', whereas another parent commented 'we've been really impressed with the Christian ethos, my son says a prayer before lunch at weekends'. The vision, which is not explicitly Christian, has not impacted on the Christian character of the school, but the Christian ethos informs pupils' perspective on life and results in the wide-ranging promotion of their SMSC development. The focus on values, linked to the Bible and Christian teachings, is driving forward many aspects of the school's life and work. Leaders and all members of the community readily articulate these values and the impact that they have on the lives of pupils. Governors challenge and support the school, however, regular monitoring of the Christian distinctiveness of the school has not taken place. Governors visit the school often and contribute to the self-evaluation strategies. RE and collective worship are monitored, but leaders, including governors, do not collate and evaluate this information and therefore do not have a full understanding of the school's performance as a church school or the Christian character of the school. The school has secured very good leadership for RE which has led to improved practice with the introduction of 'Understanding Christianity'. RE and worship are well supported and resourced. The school works very effectively with parents to help them support their child's academic learning and personal development. Parental invitations to services in the church are appreciated and services are well attended by parents: they found the Remembrance Day service and parade to the war memorial particularly moving. There is a good relationship between the school and the church with clergy taking assemblies once a month and relevant RE lessons. Pupils have lessons about marriage and baptism in the church where they act out the ceremonies. There is potential for the parish church and other local churches to support the school further with its development of Christian distinctiveness and joint planning of collective worship. As a teaching school the school works in partnership with the schools that it supports and the diocese drawing on diocesan training. The impact of this training can clearly be seen in the whole school art project focussing on a stunning frieze, which tells the timeline of the Bible. The school meets statutory expectations for RE and collective worship.