

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Little Horsted Church of England Primary School

Little Horsted, Uckfield, TN22 5TS	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Chichester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	East Sussex
Date of inspection	30 April 2018
Date of last inspection	11 February 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 114557
Headteacher	Dr Michael Davies
Inspector's name and number	Jan Meyer 921

School context

This small village school is part of a rural community and serves the parishes of St Michael's and All Angels and St Margaret's. The long-standing headteacher joined the school in 1994. Little Horsted consists of 4 classes and a nursery. Key stages 1 and 2 have mixed age classes. The percentage of pupils for whom the school receives extra funding known as pupil premium is below the national average. The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) is broadly in line with the national average. The majority of pupils are White British.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Little Horsted Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

- The school's Christian values are strongly linked to biblical teaching. They are known and articulated by staff and pupils and impact very positively on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC).
- The Christian character of the school makes a significant impact on the way pupils live their lives although systems for monitoring its impact do not consistently support strategic planning.
- There is a strong mutually supportive relationship between the school and the church that is greatly valued by all members of the school community.
- Worship has a high profile in the school. It enables pupils to experience Anglican practices and includes the teachings of Jesus Christ and biblical links.

Areas to improve

- Develop the motto into a Christian vision that is rooted in distinctively Christian theology, is known and articulated by all members of the school community and makes a difference to the lives of learners.
- Develop rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the Christian distinctiveness of the school, particularly religious education (RE) and collective worship, to inform leaders and governors in planning strategically for improvement as a church school.

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

The school's Christian values are closely linked to the Bible through biblical quotes and worship. The values are very well known and articulated by all members of the school community. They underpin the Christian ethos of the school and pupils can readily explain how these weekly values impact on the way they live their lives. The values are clearly shown both in the strong and supportive relationships within the school at every level and in the good behaviour of the pupils. The Christian foundation of the school is reflected in the strong pastoral care the school shows to all members of the school community. One parent stated that this school has a 'very caring environment- there is no judgement'. Pupils use the classroom reflection areas for their own quiet thoughts: each reflection area has Bibles and pupils' own prayers. Worship and RE make a considerable contribution to pupils' SMSC development resulting in well behaved and caring children. Pupils enjoy and respond well to the many opportunities provided for SMSC development. Achievement at the school is broadly in line with the national average and above the national average for attendance. One parent reported 'Monday morning is thrilling for my children, they can't wait to come in'.

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 unanimously agree that they enjoy RE lessons. RE supports the school's Christian foundation well through developing knowledge and understanding of the Bible and Christianity. The whole school RE curriculum plan covers Christianity and other world faiths such as Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism and Hinduism. As a result, pupils have a good understanding and respect for difference and diversity in God's world. The school has a strong link with a church school in Malawi which serves both a Christian and Muslim community. Amongst other things they have sent them the Little Horsted school prayer, which the school in Malawi now uses as its school prayer. This supports learners in their understanding that Christianity is a multi-cultural global faith.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils and staff engage well in worship. They recognise its importance in promoting Christian values and the impact of these values on life in and outside of school. A year 4 pupil typically commented, 'It makes me feel I am enjoying myself and my life.' The weekly act of worship that focuses on the Christian value of the week clearly impacts on attitudes, behaviour and relationships. This was demonstrated by the show of hands from pupils of all ages when they were asked who had been shown friendship by the Year 6 child chosen for the week's value award of friendship.

Pupils are respectful, good at listening and eager to respond because a range of leaders, including local clergy and staff, capture their interest. This enables pupils to experience a variety of styles and aspects of traditional Anglican worship practices such as the call and response, and a lit candle representing Jesus as the light of the world. 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. One reception child said, 'Jesus was a good man and we follow him'. This is because the headteacher, with support from the rector, ensures that the Bible and teachings of Jesus Christ have a significant place in termly plans. Pupils share in planning and leading the celebration of Christian festivals in church. These services are open to the wider community. They are well attended and enjoyed by parents which raises the profile of the church's role in the school. The annual leavers' service is held at the church and described by the rector as 'always moving and inspirational'.

Governors are regular visitors to worship. Although they and the RE leader evaluate worship, pupils, parents and staff are not given regular and planned opportunities to feed back their views. Consequently, monitoring does not have a clear strategic purpose that leads to planned improvement.

Prayer is a key feature of worship: pupils understand the place of prayer and its purpose in their own lives. There is a school prayer, which has been set beautifully to music, and is sung during worship. Pupils' own prayers are read in worship and sometimes at the end of the day. Formal prayers are said before lunch and at the end of most days. As part of the diocesan year of prayer project, every pupil wrote and imaginatively presented a prayer for their Easter homework. Use of the reflection areas in classes and in the outside area of the reception class is developing and there are plans in place to provide further opportunities for personal prayer by creating communal reflection areas both inside and outside in the school grounds. The school meets statutory regulations for collective worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious education is considered a core subject. Improvements over the last year have enhanced the Christian character of the school and indicate that progress is being made towards meeting the Church of England's Statement of Entitlement for RE. The school uses the East Sussex RE syllabus and a commercially produced scheme that was introduced into the school during last academic year to ensure a consistently good standard of

teaching and learning. Teachers undertook training, led by the RE subject leaders on the new syllabus and resources. They are now more confident in their subject knowledge and, as a result, pupils are exploring Christian concepts with greater understanding. There is still more work to be done in the balance of time allocated to different religions so that the requirements of the syllabus are met for Christianity to be the majority study. The school is currently reviewing the long-term curriculum plan to rectify this. Pupils enjoy RE. Lessons are well planned to incorporate a variety of activities designed to support all pupils to reach the learning objective. One Year 3 pupil said 'what we do is amazing, we learn in a fun way'. By Year 6 learners develop the skills of enquiry, analysis and interpretation. One Year 5 pupil commented, 'It helps if, later on in life, we have a question we can explain and show our answer in different ways.' Learners have good knowledge and understanding of many aspects of Christianity and the Bible as well as the main practices and beliefs of a wide range of religions. They are keen to learn about, and speak with respect about all of these. All year groups have RE lessons in the church at appropriate points in the curriculum such as learning about baptism and marriage.

SMSC development is intrinsically linked to the RE curriculum and has an impact on learners because it enables them to make connections between what people believe and how they live. It provides a context for discussions around social and moral responsibility.

Monitoring has been undertaken by the headteacher and the school's diocesan effectiveness partner, which has contributed to whole school evaluation and led to improvements in RE provision such as the new assessment system. Teachers assess each learner's attainment and progress in RE using a thorough tracking system; these assessments inform teachers' planning, teaching and learning. Assessments show that the majority of pupils are meeting the expectations of each unit of work. However, there is no analysis of attainment and progress overall to provide leaders and governors with information to inform whole school self-evaluation.

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

The strong focus on Christian values and the importance of faith is made clear on the school's website and has a significant impact on the school community, driving forward many aspects of the school's life and work. The school vision, 'Working together to Achieve the Best for the Children in a Caring Christian Environment' is known as the school motto. It is not as clearly linked to the Bible as the values are and, consequently, has less impact on the Christian character of the school. Some useful discussion of a possible revision is underway to address this. In spite of this, all members of the school community feel strongly that the Christian values and vision are implicit in the daily life of the school.

The very strong relationship with the church greatly enriches the Christian character of the school.

Communion classes are made available to Year 6 pupils and sometimes lead to parents also being confirmed.

The serving team at the church is made up entirely from pupils and former pupils of the school. The parochial church council supports pupils with their fundraising for charity and other activities. The rector is a familiar figure who takes pride in 'what this school is achieving in the lives of our children, and in the seeds of faith it is sowing'.

The school places an appropriate focus on wellbeing for all. Parents report that they are always warmly welcomed into school and invited to church services which has embedded the values across the wider school community. The school works very effectively with them to develop their children's academic learning and personal development and consequently families feel well supported by the school and pupils flourish. They achieve well and become confident, articulate young people who have a pride in their work and their school. They respect and care for others. The school benefits from partnerships with local village schools which enrich the lives of pupils through sport and other activities.

Governors support and contribute to the life of the school. They regularly visit and feed back their observations.

These note good relationships and behaviour, for example that the children 'are kind, gentle and thoughtful'.

However, there is no formal system in place for governors to monitor the effectiveness of the school's performance as a church school in a way that directly informs development planning. RE subject leaders keep governors informed on aspects of teaching and learning in RE following the introduction of a new scheme of work to improve subject knowledge. Links with the diocese are good although staff and governors do not take advantage of the training on offer. However, visits from the diocesan effectiveness partner provide valuable support and challenge in moving the school forward and the deputy headteacher has embarked on the national Church of England Professional Qualification for Headship.

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