

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Stonegate Church of England Primary School			
Address	Station Road, Stonegate, Wadhurst TN5 7EN		
Date of inspection	15 January 2020	Status of school	Voluntary Controlled Primary
Diocese	Chichester	URN	114523

Overall Judgement	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	Grade	Excellent
Additional Judgement	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Excellent

School context

Stonegate is a primary school with 107 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is well below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national averages. In the last twelve months the school has welcomed over twenty new families.

The school's Christian vision

Stonegate Church of England Primary school is a community founded on Christian values: Courage, Friendship, Respect and Trust, embracing every child and their family. We provide a safe environment, where a lifetime love of learning begins, the whole child is nurtured and each child is valued and able to thrive. Love of learning for life.

Key findings

- The inspiring leadership of the headteacher has resulted in the school having a Christian vision and core Christian values that have a profoundly positive impact on the wellbeing of the school community.
- Pupils' personal and spiritual development and academic achievement are excellent. This is the result of an innovative and exciting curriculum. The golden thread of the school's four Christian values running through it gives pupils a deep understanding of how the values impact on them personally and on the world. Although spiritual development is wide ranging in the curriculum and across the school a shared definition of spiritual development is less evident.
- Partnerships with the church, local schools and the diocese, combined with strong relationships with families and the local community, nurture and support each individual member of the school family, as unique children of God, enabling them to thrive.
- Collective worship is integral to the exploration of the school's vision and core Christian values and there is clear evidence of the impact on pupils' behaviour and positive attitudes to learning and life.
- Religious education (RE) is strongly led and effectively planned. The expertise of the RE leader has driven forward improvements in the curriculum resulting in RE being accorded high status within the school. However, more able pupils are not always challenged to give of their best.

Areas for development

- Develop a shared understanding of spiritual development across the school so that it can be further deepened in a consistent way across the school's rich and broad curriculum.
- Provide further challenge in RE for more able pupils in order that they use their skills of enquiry, critical analysis and interpretation more effectively.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Inspection findings

The Christian vision, which includes the four values of courage, friendship, respect and trust, underpin all decision making in the school, its policies, curriculum and routines. It has created a highly inclusive school where staff and governors ensure that no child is left behind. This is summarised by a 'Love of learning for life', which is clearly in evidence. Driven by the school's Christian vision there is a transformative culture of success, and often, innovative leadership at all levels. This leads to a community which nourishes the wellbeing of adults and pupils, enabling them to flourish and achieve well.

The school knows itself very well. High standards in all areas have been achieved because of leaders' determination. Governors have sound systems in place to evaluate the effectiveness of Stonegate as a church school, ensuring that areas from the previous denominational inspection have been well addressed. The exciting and innovative curriculum is exemplary. It engages pupils and encourages them to reflect on and deepen their learning, resulting in all pupils making good progress, with most exceeding national expectations. Pupils are well nurtured on their journey with high quality support programmes tailored to their specific needs. They feel safe in their learning and consequently thrive. The frequent trips, high quality visitors, outdoor learning opportunities and extra-curricular activities are driven by the school's vision of nurturing the whole child. Parents affirm that Stonegate is a safe and caring school and see this as the outworking of its clear Christian vision.

The headteacher, staff and governors work in partnership with the diocese and take advantage of diocesan training, which has greatly influenced and benefitted many aspects of the school. The nearby St Peter's church supports a deep-seated relationship between Church and school and the incumbent leads worship weekly. Christian festivals, led by pupils, are celebrated in the Church with parents, members of the Stonegate community, past pupils and their parents invited and warmly welcomed. Once a year Stonegate pupils plan and lead the family worship in the church. The church congregation see 'the church and the school as one'. They give exceptional support to the school, which strongly enriches the curriculum, environment and provision. One such project sprang from Mark 1 verses 16-20, 'follow me and I will make you fishers of men' whereby curriculum enrichment sessions ran in the church on Friday afternoons looking at topics such as Advent and Epiphany and the Jesse Window.

Fulfilling their vision of embracing every child and their family has resulted in an exceptionally compassionate community. Staff, pupils and parents feel deeply valued. The stability of the leadership and staff contribute to this. All members of the school community contributed to the revision of the Christian vision and the further development of the existing Christian values. The culture is very much one of friendship and respect for all. New families are welcomed into the school community and the school is developing relationships with churches local to the new arrivals. One parent who moved her child to Stonegate stated that he 'has high needs, he has needed forgiveness and empathy, he has been given that and it has turned his life around.' Leaders and governors are unwavering in their commitment to setting high standards for the conduct of pupils and staff. As a result, the behaviour of the pupils is exceptional. It is clearly a school community where all live the school's Christian vision.

Pupils have a deep understanding of the Christian values because they are the golden thread which runs through the curriculum. The whole curriculum is built around the vision and the values, creating topics such as 'Respect for God's Earth'. This geography topic studies extreme weather around the world. Key Stage 1 study the courage of superheroes from around the world, such as Ghandi. Year 5 and 6 undertook a Windrush topic discussing the merging of cultures and looking at the language of diversity and respect. The topics result in the pupils organising successful charitable activities such as a local litter pick, fundraising for foodbanks and raising money for children with arthritis. The whole community are often involved in fundraising. Pupils routinely have time to reflect on their learning, explore theological and philosophical questions such as 'How does Greta Thunberg show our school's Christian values'. Spiritual development opportunities are created and embraced throughout the curriculum. However, there is no shared understanding of spiritual development to deepen and extend pupils' spirituality.

Collective worship is creative and engaging. Consequently pupils clearly enjoy worship. It follows the cycle of the Anglican year and focuses on the school's vision. It is the heartbeat of the school. Through the worship

programme pupils develop an excellent appreciation of biblical stories, linking these to life and actions in the world today. Pupils articulate how worship gives them confidence to explore and challenge themselves in the choices that they make. The programme is well planned and includes giving time for reflection, resulting in extremely thoughtful insight from pupils. Worship areas in the classrooms provide excellent reinforcement of the vision and contribute strongly to reflection opportunities. The incumbent and members of the congregation are closely involved in supporting the school's prayer life. For example, recently a series of worship has focused on the Lord's Prayer, leading to significant gains in appreciating its meaning and significance for Christians. Opportunities for prayer are evident inside and outside the building. The outside areas are managed and led by volunteer pupils, indicating their importance. Prayer is commendably part of the routine of the school day with pupils' own prayers being read as well as school prayers.

Pupils are confident in articulating their learning in RE and the impact it has on their lives in and out of school. At Stonegate pupils consider religion in contemporary British and global societies leading to a recognition of the importance of RE across the school. Pupils enjoy RE lessons, though more able pupils report that not all lessons are sufficiently challenging. RE is purposefully led by a subject leader. She is actively involved in local RE networks which results in the training that she leads for all staff being of high quality and supporting effective teaching and learning. RE is taught in a lively and engaging manner, using a variety of interesting and thought-provoking teaching strategies to engage and support pupils' learning extremely well. There is a good balance across a range of faiths including Christianity.

Headteacher	Jonathan Elms
Inspector's name and number	Jan Meyer 921