

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Hawridge and Cholesbury Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Hawridge, Chesham, Buckinghamshire, HP5 2UG

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Oxford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Date of inspection	3 July 2017
Date of last inspection	3 May 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary Aided 110445
Headteacher	Rosie Phillips
Inspector's name and number	The Revd Dr Jason Phillips 598

School context

This is a smaller than average school of 183 pupils. Most of the pupils are from outside the immediate catchment area. Twelve percent of the pupils attract additional funding for disadvantage which is a significant increase since the last inspection. The percentage of pupils with a special educational need is around the national average. Most pupils are White British but there is a growing proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. The headteacher is new in post since the last inspection and the governing body has also been newly re-constituted during that period.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Hawridge and Cholesbury as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The care of the pupils arising from the school's guiding biblical text is exemplary.
- The committed and caring leadership of the headteacher alongside strong governance promotes positive relations at all levels of the school and secures the school's dedication to the all-round development of each child.
- Based upon the school's Christian values, the school's commitment to spiritual development nurtures pupils so that they become caring, confident, thoughtful and respectful children and therefore makes a positive impact upon community cohesion.
- The Christian values and approach results in a positive sense of inclusive Christian community where all are valued as children of God and where second chances are given.

Areas to improve

- Ensure pupils have a strong awareness of the multicultural nature of Christianity both in Britain and worldwide and of different Christian denominations represented in nearby towns so children can articulate and experience the richness of Christian expression.
- Utilise diocesan training to ensure all recording tasks in religious education (RE) are of a high standard, challenging and deepening the learning of all pupils and reflecting the high level discussions work in lessons.
- Ensure all pupils by Year 6 are able to plan and lead collective worship confidently and competently in a range of contexts so that they have a good understanding of the elements that comprise an act of worship including distinctly Anglican elements.

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

This is a wonderfully caring school which reflects its guiding biblical text, 'love one another, as I have loved you.' This command is well developed and deeply embedded in the school's six core Christian values of respect, responsibility, understanding, honesty, teamwork and peace. As one governor says 'the values permeate everything like soft rain falling.' The exemplary care at the school results in a dedication by all to ensure that the God-given potential of each child is realised. Consequently, the school shapes its learning experiences in the curriculum and beyond to promote the all-round development of the children. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) work of the school is highly developed and articulated in the all-round care of each child. Supported by recent work on growth mind-set strategies, SMSC provision results in confident, resilient, thoughtful and happy pupils. Experiences in forest school lessons and philosophy for children (P4C) sessions further enhance pupils' spiritual development because they prosper respect for others and the environment. Attainment at the school is generally high and most pupils make good progress which is an improving picture. This arises from teaching that is good as well as a Christian learning environment that is positive. The headteacher models care for pupils and staff and this flows through the workings of the school and is exemplified in the conduct of the whole school community towards each other. This care for one another results in positive and thoughtful behaviour by the pupils towards each other. An image of 'filling your bucket with kindness' has particularly caught pupils' imaginations and is widely articulated at school and home as a support in behaviour choices. This caring behaviour is shaped by the Christian values and biblical precedent learned about in RE and through collective worship. The school exercises a firm but compassionate approach to attendance which is now above average. Commendably, the school supports pupils with varying learning and behavioural needs enabling most to achieve where they hadn't in previous schools. RE is effective in exciting pupils' understanding of various faiths and cultures as well as nurturing respect for others. An understanding and application of the school's core Christian values are clearly extended through RE lessons. Pupils have some sense of the diversity of Christianity but this is under-developed as are links with other multi-cultural Christian contexts within Britain and worldwide. This limits pupils' full appreciation of the richness of the Christian tradition. The caring nature of the school extends to supporting charitable concerns. Examples of this includes supporting the Chesham foodbank and involvement in 'Make a Difference Challenge 2017' where pupils considered the needs of the elderly and Syrian refugees. These charitable endeavours reinforce the school's Christian values.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

All members of the school community regard collective worship as an important and generally enjoyable part of the daily life of the school. Collective worship serves as a key time in which the school's Christian values are unpacked. Pupils talk enthusiastically about how the biblical stories relate to the values being explored and how these are then considered further in the classroom and by individuals in the playground. Most pupils understand and enjoy the regular opportunities for prayer and reflection offered by collective worship. This is enhanced by opportunities in class and by using the new outdoors Cathedral prayer/reflection space. Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of prayer and regard it as a real privilege when asked to lead prayer, both formal and informal. Parents and staff also articulate that they are affected positively by collective worship and prayer. For example, one member of staff also commented upon her thankfulness for being 'held in prayer' by the school community during a recent hospitalisation. The extended exploration over this year of the Lord's Prayer helps pupils appreciate the significance and meaning of this key Christian text. Pupils value the recent prayer writing competition that makes them think closely about what prayers are for. Pupils enthusiastically and confidently participate in acts of collective worship although some pupils at times find the language a challenge and the variety over time lacking. However, there are also examples where pupils are captivated and engaged for example in the use of a piece of music called 'Amen' by Enigma. Responsibility for planning, delivering and evaluating collective worship is distributed between the worship leader, staff, the incumbent and pupils and is generally well considered. Although given opportunities to lead collective worship, pupils' understanding of the elements that comprise an act of worship are under-developed. This limits their appreciation of the significance of different aspects of collective worship and their ability to construct quality acts of worship for themselves. The pupils' understanding of the significance of the major Christian festivals is good enhanced by links with the local benefice of churches to celebrate special occasions. Although the United Reformed Church (URC) building is used, links with the URC are minimal, missing a good opportunity to broaden pupils' Christian experience. As the school values the environment and outdoors, there is a strong sense of God-as-creator amongst the pupils. Less well developed, however, is their understanding of Christian seasons, Anglican practice and the position of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity. The ongoing monitoring of collective worship is undertaken in a number of ways by governors and through the school council, which shows progress since the last inspection. These evaluations provide an accurate measure of the impact of worship on the pupils' attitudes and engagement as well as identifying priorities for improvement.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The standards achieved by pupils are in line with national expectations, with many pupils making good or better progress. This is because teaching is good and the curriculum inspires pupils to learn about Christianity and other world faiths. It also gives pupils opportunity to explore and articulate differing perspectives on life and faith in a safe and respectful learning context. An example of this is a recent lesson where Year 6 pupils were comparing some Muslim and secular perspectives on dress in public. RE makes a good contribution to applying the school's Christian values through giving pupils' biblical examples and modelling respect for other faith traditions. The pupils particularly value work on contemporary inspirational characters and stories such as the Christian conversion of Nikki Cruz. This is because such examples illustrate the impact of faith on lives for the pupils. Lessons are appropriately structured and increasingly the new assessment system is utilised to shape lessons. However, pupils' recording tasks in books are often insufficiently challenging to deepen learning. This is a key reason RE is not yet outstanding. The RE curriculum is based upon the Oxford Diocese scheme of work and results in pupils that have a good knowledge of Christianity and sufficient knowledge of other world faiths to compare and contrast respectfully. However, pupils' multicultural awareness of all the world faiths is limited. The curriculum is enhanced by RE focus days and also some visits for example to the Hare Krishna House 'Bhak Tiv Edanta'. The best RE at the school is practically based such as building a sukkah from greenery on the local common because this fully engages the pupils. RE has a high profile in school secured by the dedication and enthusiasm of the skilled subject leader. The RE leader brings a wealth of knowledge, especially in Judaism and Christianity, to communicate expectations and to support teachers effectively in their teaching. The RE lead ensures that RE and P4C offer pupils specific times and opportunities to discuss deeper questions of life including those which arise from collective worship, which demonstrates progress since the last inspection. The subject lead and governors monitor and evaluate RE, including pupil attitudes and perspectives. Following this, they ensure actions are in place to raise standards still further.

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

The care by the headteacher for pupils and staff is exceptional. She consistently models and drives the school's Christian values. Her theological understanding for the workings of this school are clearly rooted in the command of Christ 'to love one another as I have loved you'. As a result, the school is confident in its self as a caring Christian community that accepts all pupils as children of God. This extends to giving some pupils second chances to achieve where experiences in other schools have not been so positive. Leaders have an exceptionally good knowledge of each child and therefore of the impact of the school's performance and distinctiveness on pupils. The school is monitored and evaluated by staff and governors to secure the good and often outstanding progress and achievements of pupils. The governors competently challenge the school to remedy areas of weakness such as spelling, grammar and handwriting. Their drive to ensure the best for each pupil results in careful development planning and quality interventions when help is needed. Leaders ensure the curriculum is exciting and inspires pupils to learn about their world and to develop their talents. It is a distinctly Christian curriculum where the Christian values are clearly taught and through which pupils experience awe and wonder. This shapes their behaviour and promotes spiritual growth. Together with seeking the opinions of children and other stakeholders, Governors use the SIAMS evaluations to make the school even better. Governors and staff have effected a significant change in the last eighteen months moving the church school dimension to the centre of its work. This has joined up the vision and practices of the school more effectively, resulting in exceptionally positive outcomes. The leadership of RE and collective worship are well supported. Leaders not only ensure statutory requirements are met but that RE and collective worship are quality experiences that shape the Christian character of the school. The school is proactive in developing the skills of its staff and their leadership potential. This supports Christian leadership across the wider family of church schools. Links with the local benefice of three churches and Emmanuel Church are mutually supportive and growing, for example the benefice run 'Jesus and Me' (JAM) club. This supports the school's sense of being an Anglican community. Links with wider schools, the diocese, community groups and parents are positive because the headteacher is proactive in prospering these relationships. This results in much goodwill towards this caring church school.

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