

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Lamberhurst St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Pearse Place, Lamberhurst, Kent, TN3 8EJ	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Rochester
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of inspection	12 January 2018
Date of last inspection	December 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary – Voluntary Controlled - 118604
Headteacher	Caroline Bromley
Inspector's name and number	Niki Paterson 883

School context

This small primary school serves the rural community of Lamberhurst and has 199 pupils on roll. The school was judged as good by Ofsted in July 2017. The school is part of the Cranbrook and Paddock Wood partnership collaboration with other local church schools and is an associate member of the Tenax Schools Trust. The number of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is below the national average. The number of pupils in need of support for special educational needs is above the national average.

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

- High aspirations and an understanding and celebration of each child's uniqueness ensure that every child flourishes.
- Excellent relationships with the local church support the school's mission of service to its community very well.
- Leaders have created a loving and nurturing environment which is highly valued by families and which embodies the school motto: learning for life in the love of God.

Areas to improve

- Develop more explicit communication of the Christian distinctiveness of the school's values so that it is understood by the whole range of stakeholders.
- Enhance the distinctiveness of the school's vision and consequently its policies so that they are clearly rooted in biblical teaching.

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

The school community draws on the Christian values of community, respect, aspiration, resilience, honesty and responsibility. These permeate both the curriculum and the physical environment. They are firmly embedded in the working life of the school and drive the headteacher's vision to enable every child to use their God-given talents. This is particularly exemplified by how well the whole community celebrates the achievements of its pupils whether they are achieved within or beyond school. Parents of various faiths and of none describe how well the school teaches children to embrace its values, in particular those of community and respect. Pupils are intuitively caring towards one another and an inclusive ethos has been particularly effective in welcoming families who are newly arrived to the school. Pupils and school leaders can articulate how the school's Christian values, embedded through daily practice, are supporting exemplary behaviour and attitudes to learning. For example, the school value of 'responsibility' has led to pupils taking several leadership roles within school which, in turn, has encouraged high levels of self-discipline. As a result, attainment has maintained a three year upward trend of being above the national average and all groups make strong progress. Attendance is also above the national expectation and there are no exclusions. Pupils can make reference to particular bible stories and how these exemplify the school's Christian values.

Pupils value the presence of the reflective spaces in their classrooms and an outdoor spiritual space which can be freely accessed. This is enhanced by other 'one-off' experiences, such as engaging with a prayer labyrinth which is brought into the school. Pupils have many opportunities for musical tuition and religious education (RE) which is well taught. These experiences contribute very well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development and, in turn, this is well supported by the school's Christian and inclusive ethos. Pupils have an understanding of their responsibility to love others in their community and beyond by organising their own fundraising to support local and national projects. For example, the school challenges its pupils to accept the responsibility of making a difference to others through their 'Step up to Serve' programme. This, in turn, deepens pupils' understanding of the links between Christian values and SMSC learning. RE has a high profile and is well taught through challenge and intuitive open questioning. Thus, it supports pupils' spiritual and moral development well. Pupils have some awareness of Christianity as a worldwide faith, particularly through their well-established links with the Chikombola School in Malawi. Pupils rightly recognise that RE encourages them to appreciate difference and diversity through, for example, helping them to learn about and learn from a range of faiths.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

Distinctively Christian collective worship, which is focused on the teaching and inspiration of Jesus, is clearly valued by the community. Pupils are attentive, behave well and are joyful in their praise. They understand the purpose of worship. For example, one pupil described worship as a daily reminder, 'that God is all around us'. Worship is well led by a wide range of leaders, including staff, clergy and Christian organisations, such as the Family Trust and Barnabas in Schools. This ensures that pupils experience a variety of styles in worship and helps to maintain high levels of engagement. Worship is mainly led by the headteacher and class teachers, with staff attending regularly. Pupils are developed as leaders of worship, as recommended in the previous denominational inspection. They play a regular role in the liturgical practice of every time of worship. They frequently plan and lead services in church with the local priest. This includes special services such as the international women's day of prayer and traditional services such as those for remembrance and harvest. Christian values are integral to the content of worship, which is informed by termly planning, rooted in biblical teaching. Daily planning is informed by diocesan planning and other sources of Christian worship guidance. Monitoring by pupils, staff and governors ensures that this evolves to meet the needs of the school community.

Through worship and RE, pupils have some understanding of the Christian concept of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and some are able to speak about this. Pupils are familiar with Anglican traditions, principally through the celebration and observance of festivals linked to the Christian calendar. Other key Anglican practices such as, for example, opening and closing sentences with responses and other liturgical forms of worship are familiar practices. Prayer is made meaningful, as both pupils and staff members write and deliver prayer which is relevant to the current needs of the community. Pupils are very familiar with the Lord's prayer and understand its importance for Christians. Parents welcome the opportunity to engage in worship with their children during these visits which supports the school's links with its parish church and families well. Clergy describe how worship and its impact exemplify how 'the heart of who we are is our faith'.

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

The distinctive and focused leadership of the headteacher is developing a whole school approach to enable every child to flourish. This is rooted in a shared Christian ethos of service to others. The staff embody the headteacher's belief 'that we can do all things through Him who gives us strength'. This has supported a continuous upward trend in high academic standards for all groups of pupils. A strong relationship with the parish church is clearly evidenced through the integral role of the parish priest and associate priest. They are highly involved in the governance and pastoral life of the school and are well known to the pupils and their families. Good communication with parents means that they are highly supportive of the school's distinctiveness and its Christian foundation. Parents fully appreciate the welcoming and hospitable ethos which they say is akin to receiving a 'big hug'. Staff are relentless in their drive to meet the needs of individual pupils. This exemplifies how the school embodies its value of aspiration for all pupils.

School leaders have been proactive in highlighting the values so that they have a personal meaning for every child. For example, families have been encouraged to explore at home how the values are individually important to each child. However, the Christian teaching which underpins the vision and values is not fully documented or shared beyond the school. Caring relationships exist between staff members who feel valued and nurtured by school leaders to achieve their potential. This has led to good staff retention and wellbeing as individuals are appreciated and recognised for their skills and efforts. Consequently, this supports staff well for working within a church school context. The headteacher and governors are supported by professional development at the diocesan level. This has resulted in a shared understanding of distinctiveness and has ensured that standards in RE are prioritised. Areas for development from the previous denominational inspection have been addressed. A cycle of reflective and insightful self-evaluation incorporates a range of stakeholder views, including views of pupils and parents. This is well matched to school improvement priorities. Monitoring by governors is in place and impacts fully on the effectiveness of the school as a church school. Statutory requirements for the provision of RE and collective worship are met and both areas are well led and managed. RE is taught discretely in line with time recommendations and appropriate links are made with other subject areas as necessary.

SIAMS report (January 2018) Lamberhurst St Mary's CE (VC) Primary School, Lamberhurst, Kent, TN3 8EJ