

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Chiddingstone Church of England School (Academy)

Chiddingstone, Kent TN8 7AH	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Rochester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	December 2011
Date of inspection	10 July 2017
Date of last inspection	21 June 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	137728 primary academy, previously VC
Headteacher	Rachel Streatfeild
Inspector's name and number	Anne Southgate 820

School context

Chiddingstone became an academy in December 2011, having previously been a voluntary controlled school. The school is smaller than the average sized primary school. Chiddingstone has expanded since the previous denominational inspection, having secured academies capital funding to extend the buildings. This helped to address the school's popularity, although it continues to be oversubscribed. The school is situated in the centre of Chiddingstone village. Pupils come predominantly from white British backgrounds in the local area. Far fewer pupils are eligible for the pupil premium for social disadvantage than the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special needs is growing, but is currently below the national average.

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

- Leaders share a very clear Christian vision, which is at the heart of daily life at the school, and which has an extremely positive impact on learning, on wellbeing and on behaviour.
- Pupils develop exceptionally well spiritually, morally, socially and culturally, so that their horizons are widened, enabling them to become confident, sensitive and thoughtful individuals.
- Governors have shown flexibility in offering many staff part-time contracts. This results in the retention of high quality teachers who develop very well as future leaders of church schools.
- Religious education (RE) is very well led and taught, resulting in standards which are higher than average.

Areas to improve

- Extend pupil involvement in the planning and delivery of collective worship to engage pupils still further.
- Ensure that all teachers, particularly those not teaching RE this year, are fully prepared and supported to deliver the new syllabus.

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

A shared and deeply Christian vision drives school improvement and underpins daily life at the school. Teachers are committed to helping pupils to explore their own spirituality and to have the confidence to ask challenging questions. This ensures that pupils are prepared very well for life. A wide range of Christian values is used by pupils and adults throughout the day. All of these values are understood by the whole school community to be firmly based on biblical stories. For example, a teacher talked about how she refers to Jesus' example of forgiving sinners to help pupils forgive each other. Pupils feel that there is always a value to apply to each situation. For instance, pupils apply the value of koinonia (community) to their learning by ensuring that everyone is supported to achieve. Pupils use the values in a very mature way and, as a result, they continually reflect on their behaviour, attitudes and on their learning. This means that attainment is high and that behaviour is exceptional. Pupils understand that the values are rooted in scripture, for example a pupil explained clearly that the value of friendship is based on John 15:12-13 'greater love has no-one than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends'. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is very strong as a result of the way in which pupils are encouraged to reflect deeply on their experiences. This is supported by a myriad of opportunities to learn about people who are different from themselves. Examples of this include visits to and from schools in Spain, and to places of worship of other faiths. Prayer stations are created at times of Christian festivals, often in the church. They give the whole school community very real and effective opportunities to reflect on the school's values and on Christian belief. At Pentecost, prayer stations led by pupils in the playground offered a range of activities to reflect on the significance of the Holy Spirit. Even the youngest pupils have a well-developed understanding of the Spirit as a result. Parents and members of the local community also visit and appreciate the prayer stations. A parent commented that these often 'have a profound impact' and that they discuss this with their children. Pupils are skilfully helped to have a wider perspective on life. They understand with sensitivity that many of them are privileged compared to others both nationally and internationally. This is aided by teachers regularly discussing issues that are in the news with pupils, such as the refugee crisis. The whole school curriculum is creative and offers a wide range of opportunities and learning styles. This means that pupils enjoy learning and that it contributes to their success. These experiences are enhanced further by the emphasis on music and language learning in the school. This helps pupils to fulfil the school's overarching aim for everyone to experience life in all its fullness, based on John 10:10.

RE is taught very well and, as a result, pupils attain standards which are often higher than in other core subjects. Pupils are helped to think deeply and to ask searching questions. RE makes a significant contribution to pupils' understanding of the differences between people. For example, Year 1 pupils commented that Jesus showed love for Zacchaeus, who was 'not liked by ordinary people because he was different'. They recognised that this means that 'we should show love for people who other people don't like'. This results in pupils who are interested in, and sensitive towards, diversity.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship, at the beginning of each day, creates a reflective atmosphere in the school. Pupils are given a question to consider throughout the day. Classes then discuss their thoughts at the end of the school day. Many pupils choose to reflect on or to pray about the questions posed using the interactive quiet areas around the school. Pupils also discuss the worship themes on the playground and they are often keen to help others as a result. This often results in raising money for charities such as Water Aid and Sight Savers. As a result, collective worship inspires pupils and it has a profound impact on daily life at the school. Worship is firmly grounded in Christian teaching and traditions. For example, Anglican sentences are used, and pupils know that the Lord's prayer is the prayer that Jesus taught us. Pupils' knowledge of Bible stories is impressive, largely as a result of hearing them every day in collective worship. This also means that pupils understand how the school's church values are grounded in biblical stories. The Leading Lights, a group of older pupils, take an increasingly key role in organising, delivering and monitoring worship. Pupils respond very well to this, but would like even more pupils to be involved in planning and delivering worship. At the end of each act of worship, pupils are invited to lead prayers. Many pupils volunteer to do so, and they display an impressive confidence in offering spontaneous prayers. Pupils have a mature understanding of key Christian beliefs, such that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is strengthened by listening to and acting out biblical stories in worship, as well as by creative curriculum activities. Monitoring of worship by senior leaders, teachers, governors and pupils, is regular. This helps to bring about improvements, such as the inclusion of more audio-visual experiences.

The relationship with the church is seamless. Pupils and adults, including parents, regard the church and school as a single Christian presence in the village. The incumbent is a frequent visitor to the school, and he attends or leads collective worship in the church on a weekly basis. Major Christian festivals are celebrated with parents in the

church. This brings a sense of belonging to the whole community. All teachers and groups from other Christian denominations sometimes lead worship. At Christmas, some of the service is conducted in Spanish, and Spanish traditions are observed. At harvest, African traditions and dance are used. The range of leaders, together with the fact that traditions from around the world are celebrated, means that pupils have a very rich experience of worship.

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

The headteacher and senior leaders have established a culture within the school which is very firmly rooted in Christian teaching. This is all pervasive and almost palpable. The heart of the vision, driven by senior leaders, is to offer pupils 'life in all its fullness'. The strength of the Christian character is well supported by rigorous monitoring and accurate self-evaluation. This includes the views of all stakeholders and it results in constant improvement. The development points from the previous denominational inspection have been successfully addressed and statutory requirements for collective worship and RE are fully met.

The wellbeing of all members of this highly supportive Christian community is taken very seriously. Leaders have ensured that all pupils, including those with special needs are included and cared for. The school's church values are deeply rooted in daily school life. This means that pupils refer to them naturally and that they apply them with ease to every situation that they face. This is because of the very strong leadership and the excellent way that senior leaders model the values. Governors also exemplify the school's values of compassion and wisdom in their decisions to allow most members of staff, including the headteacher, to work part-time. This responds to the personal circumstances of individuals, but also ensures that the school retains excellent teachers and leaders. As the headteacher does not work every day, others in the school have the opportunity to lead. This enables them to develop very well as future leaders of church schools. The headteacher, assisted very ably by the RE leader, has created a school where Christian values genuinely underpin everything that happens. This means that when she is not at school, the Christian character remains very strong. RE is given a high priority and the leader attends all of the training offered by the diocese. Her enthusiasm and commitment, to ensure the delivery of high quality RE across the school, are impressive. She cascades her training and expertise effectively to other teachers. As a result, teachers are confident and enthusiastic in delivering the new RE curriculum. They comment that the RE leader's approach is 'infectious and creative' and that it therefore motivates them to give of their best. Not all teachers, however, teach RE this year and so the training they are given is particularly important. Partnerships with other local church schools are mutually beneficial, enabling good support and a sharing of ideas. The church and school support each other extremely well. The school community, including parents, joins the church congregation for services throughout the year, such as carols by candlelight. This often results in the church being full to capacity. The incumbent visits classes and discusses 'big questions' with the pupils. This recently resulted in three pupils choosing to be confirmed. Parents are highly supportive of the school, having recently, for example, bought new Bibles for the pupils. No-one is complacent, but rather everyone strives constantly to be the best that they can be and to offer every member of the school community life in all its fullness.

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