

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Churchill Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Rysted Lane, Westerham, Kent, TN16 1EZ

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Diocese

Rochester

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Date of inspection

10 January 2017

Date of last inspection

December 2011

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Controlled 118616

Headteacher

Lena Pennacchia

Inspector's name and number

Pamela Draycott 161

School context

This slightly larger than average-sized primary school serves the market town of Westerham. Over 80 per cent of pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage with some sort of special educational need or disability (SEND) and the percentage for whom the school receives extra funding due to social disadvantage are below the national average. Around 3 per cent of pupils come from families who attend church regularly outside of their involvement with school. Since the previous denominational inspection, a new vicar has been appointed and there have been two changes of headteacher.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Churchill Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- Based on its key values, explored within a Christian context, there is a calm learning environment where the majority of pupils make good progress.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good and relationships across the school are strong. This reflects the school's Christian and inclusive priorities very well.
- The worship programme is of central importance to the school's life and work and contributes effectively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development which is good.
- There are strong links with St Mary's Church which impact positively on school life and work.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that the gap in attainment between more vulnerable pupils and their peers is closed as befits the school's Christian and inclusive ethos.
- Improve religious education (RE) by:
 - ensuring that written work more closely reflects the higher standards which pupils demonstrate in their discussion focused work;
 - providing consistent opportunities for pupils to respond effectively to teacher marking and assessment.

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

The school's vision statement of 'Kindness, Togetherness and Excellence, in the Light of Christ' impacts well on its life and work. This means that the school provides a supportive learning environment where pupils are encouraged to develop well both academically and personally. As a result, attainment is improving so that it broadly reflects national averages and most pupils are making good progress from their various starting points. However, the progress of more socially disadvantaged pupils lags behind that of their peers. The school is addressing this issue with caring and effective strategies being introduced to help these more vulnerable pupils. This support is expressly based on the school's Christian service to its community. In school assessment of progress currently accurately indicates that the gap is narrowing. Its values of kindness, respect, perseverance, forgiveness, tolerance and honesty helpfully express its Christian vision. Pupils and staff are well aware of the importance of these values in school life. The majority can relate them in general terms to specific Christian belief, teaching and practice. The vast majority of pupils are happy in school as reflected in the high attendance rates. On those few occasions where pupils fall short of the high standards of behaviour expected, the school works compassionately with pupils and their families to bring about improvements. The strong relationships across the school are a clear expression of its Christian grounding as they are based on mutual respect, kindness and perseverance. This leads to there being a deep sense of belonging across the school community. Parents recognise the positive personal development of their children and the support provided by staff as an expression of the school's Christian foundation.

Pupils respond well to the good range of opportunities for SMSC development provided through the curriculum and, more generally, across the school. Charitable giving is clearly seen as an expression of Christian kindness and as following the 'example of Jesus who loves everyone'. This includes supporting a school in Uganda linked through St Mary's Church and the charity Tearfund. Prayer continues to be recognised as an important aspect of school and community life and contributes well to pupils' religious, spiritual and moral development. 'We say our prayers to Jesus and he helps us' as a Year 3 pupil said. RE is appropriately based on the locally agreed syllabus with a good balance between content which focuses on Christianity and that which focuses on other world faiths including Hinduism, Judaism, Islam and Sikhism. 'This school teaches us to be respectful and tolerant of others', was a reflection by a Year 6 pupil. Through RE, issues of difference and diversity are well focused upon. There is an appropriate variety of creative and discussion activities provided to support pupils' attainment which is broadly in line with expectations. However, written work in RE does not always show the depth of responses evident through discussion work.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The daily worship programme is varied and central to school life. It underpins and expresses the school's Christian ethos and values. Staff and pupils rightly recognise its strong impact on the community and also on themselves as individuals. One Year 5 pupil said, 'even when we cover a Bible story that I already know there is always something new to learn and to think about'. The worship programme is explicitly Christian in nature but also inclusive of those within its community who are from other faiths or none. Worship is well planned, based around the school's Christian values and the Church's year. The programme is enhanced by the weekly involvement of the vicar and a team from St Mary's Church and by the school going to church for special services such as at Harvest, Christmas and Easter. A Year 2 pupil, reflecting on these visits said, 'Church is a special place where you can be quiet and think about God'. Planning, monitoring and evaluating worship has a high priority across the school, which means that elements of its worship life continue to evolve. Its worship policy is detailed and appropriate for a voluntary controlled school outlining its aims and intentions clearly. Pupils appropriately take leadership roles in planning, leading and evaluating worship. Pupils develop a good understanding of Anglican elements of worship through practices such as 'dressing' the altar at the beginning of worship in the hall with items such as a Bible, candle, cross and the school's

central prayer box. Opening and closing sentences with responses for worship and saying the Lord's Prayer is well established. Through such routines, pupils develop a good, age-appropriate understanding of the importance of the Bible for Christians, the significance of Jesus and the Christian understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pupils have a developing understanding of prayer, know that the Lord's Prayer is important because Jesus 'taught it to us', and know that there are different types of prayer where, 'you can ask God for things for yourself or others or thank God for everything that's good' (Year 5 pupil).

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

Since the previous denominational inspection, there have been two changes of headteacher, in addition to a period during which two assistant headteachers, 'held the fort'. This instability at senior leadership level has slowed the school's development as a church school. However, there is a clear recognition that, over this period, the school's Christian foundation 'provided some constancy'. The current headteacher has been in post since April 2016 and she has put into place a wide range of effective initiatives to ensure progress. This includes, for example, a more rigorous focus on assessment and using data to support improvement, as well as re-ordering some classrooms and some re-decoration to improve the learning and working environment. The headteacher, well supported by her senior leadership team and governors, is guiding the school well in the further development of its vision and values. The school has a church school team which meets regularly and plays an active role in monitoring and assessing the school as a church school. This team appropriately informs the full governing body and the Parochial Church Council (PCC) of its work. Governors ensure that RE and worship meet statutory requirements for a voluntary controlled school and they support the leadership of both areas well. Staff are well supported for working in a church school with effective induction training as well as other periodic in-service training opportunities. Following a recommendation from the previous denominational report, a spiritual garden was developed but is being moved, due to building improvements. By acting upon pupils' opinions, the garden has been located more centrally and with easier access.

In keeping with the school's Christian and inclusive ethos, parents are kept well informed of their children's progress. In recent months, the parent teacher association has become more active and engaged in school life which indicates a fresh impetus in relationships with parents under the leadership of the new headteacher. Parents recognise the Christian underpinning of the school. For example, the approachability and care of the staff towards children is rightly seen by parents as an expression of the school's Christian ethos. There are strong links with St Mary's Church. Links with other churches in the area and involvement with local events, such as on Remembrance Day and at the 'Forget-Me-Not café, are clear expressions of the school being part of the wider community. The school draws appropriately on support provided by the education department at the Diocese of Rochester through, for example, attendance at RE subject leader meetings and governor training.

SIAMS report [January 2017] Churchill CE VC primary school, Westerham, Kent, TN16 1EZ