

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### Hever Church of England (VA) Primary School

Hever, Edenbridge, Kent TN8 7NH	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Rochester</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Date of inspection	29 June 2017
Date of last inspection	29 March 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	VA primary118718
Executive headteacher	Wendy Fox
Inspector's name and number	Anne Southgate 820

#### School context

Hever is smaller than the average sized primary school and pupils are mostly taught in mixed age classes. New classrooms which will enable the school to expand will be ready in September. The substantive headteacher is on maternity leave. The current executive headteacher has been in post since Easter and she is also the headteacher of a nearby community school. Previously, there was an acting headteacher who left the school at Easter. In addition, the RE co-ordinator also left the school at Easter. Pupils are predominantly from white British families. About half of pupils are from worshipping Christian families. Proportions of pupils with special educational needs and of those who are eligible for the pupil premium due to social disadvantage are below national averages.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Hever as a Church of England school are good

- Teachers have reacted responsibly to the rapid changes in leadership and, as a result, many have developed well as future leaders of church schools.
- Clear Christian values, based on biblical teaching, have a strong impact on pupils' behaviour and wellbeing.
- The school environment proclaims its status as a church school and effectively encourages pupils to reflect and to pray.

#### Areas to improve

- Accelerate progress in religious education (RE) so that pupils achieve standards at least as high as those that they attain in other core subjects.
- Ensure that RE is taught consistently well so that all pupils are engaged in and inspired by the subject.
- Re-establish clear and consistent Christian senior leadership so that the school can continue to develop effectively as a church school.
- Ensure that the monitoring of RE, Christian distinctiveness and worship is robust and that it leads to action plans which drive improvement.

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

The school environment makes it abundantly clear that this is a distinctively Christian school. The clearly identified values of love, wisdom, and respect, are painted on walls around the school and displayed in every classroom. These values are known by all stakeholders, and pupils understand that they are based on 'how Jesus lived and the stories that he told'. Pupils and staff refer to these values throughout the day and relate them with ease to pupils' behaviour and attitudes. As a result, pupils are very considerate towards each other and their behaviour is respectful and courteous. Pupils feel safe, cared for, and happy at school. Consequently, attendance is good. School policies and systems are linked to Christian values. For example, a pupil who had been excluded from another school was shown forgiveness and given a fresh start at Hever and, as a result, is flourishing.

Pupils reflect both on their learning and on their behaviour. Many choose to use the interactive prayer areas to offer prayers or to stop and think about the questions posed. The school is a prayerful community. Younger pupils are able to be part of the 'soul purpose' group, which enables them to talk about their faith and to pray together. Even though most pupils come from similar backgrounds, they are very respectful of differences between people and show empathy well. Teachers create resources and learning experiences both in RE and in other subjects. This helps the pupils to understand that people are not all the same. As a result, pupils have a real interest in different expressions of Christianity and in other faiths. Pupils enjoy a wide variety of school clubs and talk about how this helps them to develop their talents. Consequently spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Christian values form the main themes for collective worship. These are usually set in their Christian context, so that pupils have a clear understanding of their roots in the Bible. Christian beliefs, such as that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are explained in worship. This means that pupils' knowledge and understanding of these is well developed for their age. Themes are applied very well to pupils' lives and they are referred to throughout the day. Pupils play an active role in worship, for example, by reading from the Bible and acting stories. Pupils frequently volunteer to devise and offer their own prayers in response to the stories and themes. All pupils are engaged by allowing them to reflect on and to discuss questions posed with their 'talk partners'. A group of older pupils form the 'Leading Lights' group. These pupils work with the vicar to plan and lead worship, both in the church and at school. There is a prayer group for parents, which enables them to feel a real involvement with the school community. Pupils appreciate the increased involvement which they have in collective worship. They would like to be still further actively involved. There is a wide range of leaders of worship. This includes all teachers, the vicar and local Christian groups. Therefore, pupils experience a range of styles and approaches to Christian worship. The school community worships regularly in the neighbouring church, including with parents, to celebrate Christian festivals. This helps pupils to have a good understanding of Anglican traditions and liturgy.

There is some monitoring of collective worship by governors and by older pupils. This is recorded and occasionally results in improvements. However, it does not always lead to effective action plans to respond to pupils' views.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory**

RE is usually well taught. Pupils are often, but not always, helped to consider thought provoking questions and to reflect on different answers to these. Most pupils show a real interest in learning about religious beliefs and reflect on the significance of these for their own lives. Teachers often make links between the beliefs studied and the school's Christian values. This means that RE generally makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, as a result of the staffing changes this year, some pupils have experienced RE which they find 'boring'. This has slowed their progress. Pupils' attainment is now recorded and monitored, but this is a very recent development. As a result, teachers have not been able to implement effective intervention strategies, which will help all pupils to make good progress. Much of the teaching is highly effective in enabling pupils to make links between the belief systems studied. For example, younger pupils were able to draw parallels and to see differences between Hindu gods and the Christian Trinity. This is not consistent however.

Since the RE leader left the school at Easter, monitoring has been sporadic. This means that teachers are not always supported to deliver quality RE. Teachers currently work together supportively, but there is no subject leader who has attended training on current developments in RE. Leaders have, however, sought support from the diocese.

This has led to some improvements, such as using enquiry-based learning, although this is not consistently used across the school.

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

Current leaders have embraced the chosen Christian values and use these as the basis of their work in the school. These values underpin school policies. These are abundantly clear in documentation, including on the website and in the prospectus. This means that it is very clear to parents and to the community that this is a church school. The executive headteacher does not have a background in church schools. She has wisely sought support from the diocese and from other local church school headteachers. This has enabled her to maintain the school's Christian distinctiveness, but not to develop it further. The turbulence in staffing this year has resulted in teachers taking responsibility for, and deepening, their understanding of what it means to be a church school. This has provided very real opportunities for some to develop rapidly and effectively as future leaders of church schools. There is an impressive level of commitment from senior leaders and governors to ensure that the school maintains its Christian distinctiveness during this period of staffing changes. Current leaders are honest about the development needs of the school. They have plans in place to address these. Statutory requirements for collective worship and for RE are fully met. The development points from the previous denominational inspection have largely been addressed, although there is still a need for more robust monitoring which leads to improvements. Partnerships with the local church and with parents are supportive and helpful.

Leadership has been affected by the many staffing changes this year. However, current leaders have ensured that the school continues to be driven by its Christian values. These have an obvious and positive impact on behaviour and wellbeing in the school. Plans for a new leadership structure in September aim to secure a shared, clearer Christian vision. This will more effectively drive school improvement as a church school.

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