

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

### Leybourne St Peter & St Paul VA Church of England Primary School

Rectory Lane North, Leybourne, Kent ME19 5HD

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Rochester</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	01 March 2017
Name of multi-academy trust	Tenax
Date of inspection	23 March 2017
Date of last inspection	21 February 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	118727
Headteacher	Tina Holditch
Inspector's name and number	Patrick Boughton-Reynolds 897

#### School context

Leybourne St Peter & St Paul primary school is a one-form entry school of 210 pupils. Very recently, the school became an academy and joined the Tenax Schools Trust, a Church of England multi-academy trust (MAT). There is an acting headteacher in post as the headteacher is on maternity leave. The school is successful and oversubscribed. The number of pupils with special educational needs is in line with the national average, and the number of pupils who speak English as an additional language and those from disadvantaged backgrounds are significantly below the national average.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Leybourne St Peter and St Paul as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The school's distinctive Christian character underpins everything the school does and has a significant impact on the school community.
- Christian values are at the heart of the school and are visibly 'lived out' in the daily life of the school.
- Collective worship is a vital source of spiritual nourishment for the school and an intrinsic expression of its Christian spirituality.
- Strong Christian leadership and governance enable the school to prepare well for the future.

#### Areas to improve

- Increase pupil involvement in the monitoring and formal review of worship so that outstanding practice can be maintained.
- Stretch pupils in religious education (RE), particularly in written work, so that they can demonstrate 'exceeding' the expected level of progress.

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

The school's Christian values of love, trust, compassion and respect are deeply embedded in the daily life of the school. All stakeholders can articulate the importance of these values upon the school community. The school's values are Christian because they are based in the teachings of Jesus and stakeholders use a rich variety of biblical quotes to demonstrate this. These values underpin both the policies and the practice of the school. This means that they have become tangible in the words and actions of all, especially those of the pupils. Pupils speak naturally about their beliefs and values, as one parent explained 'they talk about God's love in one sentence and what is eight times eight in the next'. The school's distinctive Christian character underpins everything that the school does and has a significant impact on the school community. Pupils are cared for, and they feel cared for. As a result, greater academic progress is enabled. Pupils meet expected standards in reading, writing and maths and the majority of pupils achieve above county and national averages in these areas. As a result of these firm foundations in Christian character and supported by excellent RE, pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is secure. Pupils can explain how the schools values help them to make moral decisions and deal with problems with their peers. One parent said that if pupils have a disagreement 'they use the core values as a toolkit to work through their problems themselves'. Pupils can explain how the Christian values of respect and compassion affect how they treat others, especially those from different cultures or religions. The school's mission statement of being a 'happy, caring, Christian environment' is being realised. Parents used words such as 'warm', 'inclusive', 'nurturing', and 'big family' to describe the 'community' school where their children are 'genuinely cared for'. The words of one parent encapsulate the strong inclusivity of the school when she said, 'I don't go to church, but the values are exactly what I want them (my children) to have'. Christian values are visibly displayed in classrooms and corridors and particularly in the interactive 'reflective areas' around the school. The strength of the school is that values are 'lived out' in all aspects of the school life. Younger pupils see the values lived out by the older children. Staff embody the values in all of their roles and apply them in situations, such as special educational needs provision. Christian values are important and real to the pupils. A Year 4 pupil expressed this in talking about a recent residential experience, 'At Carroty Wood, we showed love and compassion as we encouraged each other.'

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

Great value is placed on collective worship and pupils appreciate the opportunities offered for deeper reflection. Worship is distinctively Christian and Anglican in nature. It expresses the richness of the school's spirituality and deepens it. Pupils value it in their daily lives and, as one year 6 pupil put it, 'Worship helps you relax and be ready for the day'. Worship has a strong biblical base and uses examples of how Jesus lived the values that are now the school's values. The school has renamed its houses after patron saints to further make explicit and exemplify its Christian character and house captains have led the worship celebrating their patron saint's days. Worship is an expression of the faith of the school community and of the individuals within it, including the youngest. Pupils and adults are engaged in worship. Worship is interactive and music is used excellently to enrich the experience for all. Pupils are comfortable and happy humming along to Christian music as classes enter the hall for morning worship. In observed worship, parents, teachers and pupils joined together to say the prayers, liturgical responses and sing the hymns in unison. A Year 4 pupil said, 'It is quite powerful when we sing together'. Worship deepens pupils' understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. A wide variety of Trinitarian blessings and prayers are said in worship to develop this. Symbolic actions are explained so that pupils can have a clear understanding of their relevance. In the observed worship, whilst lighting the candle, a pupil said, 'At Easter, Jesus came back to life and kept shining light in our lives, just like this candle.' Worship plays a pivotal role in exploring the theological meaning of the school's Christian values. These are explained using the teachings of Jesus and illustrated using bible stories in a variety of ways. Biblical quotes are used frequently in worship to explore the daily themes. The central messages from daily worship flow out into the classrooms and playground and are reflected upon. Pupils value the role that the incumbent plays in their lives, for example saying that 'he makes us look at things in a new way'. A number of pupils spoke of the impact of 'when Father Matthew rode into worship on his scooter, and reminded us to put our brakes on when having an argument'. Worship leaders utilise detailed diocesan plans and ensure that worship is very well prepared and resourced. Regular school services at the local church provide a further source of spiritual expression and nourishment and further solidify the school's identity as a church school. Pupils participate fully in these services and appreciate the opportunities to serve in the church in roles such as readers and acolytes. Worship is monitored and reviewed both formally and informally in ways that enable worship leaders to replicate best practice. However, pupils are not fully involved in the formal review of worship so their ideas for improvements are not having an impact on the daily worship of the school.

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

Pupils enjoy RE lessons and are inspired by high quality teaching. Teachers masterfully use questioning to enable pupils to think critically and to deepen their understanding of religious ideas. This was skilfully demonstrated with the youngest pupils and in various other classes throughout the school during the inspection. Pupils' verbal expression of their understanding of Christianity is excellent and paired discussions and group work is highly effective. In general, the religious literacy of pupils is very good. They articulate their ideas well both verbally and in writing. More able pupils demonstrate high level answers verbally. This shows their evaluative skills and keen insights into religions. However, this level of religious and theological literacy is not consistently seen in these pupils' written RE work. As a result, more able pupils do not demonstrate that they are 'exceeding' expected levels of progress. As pupils are taught in a nurturing environment and care for each other, discussions and activities enable pupils to support and challenge each other in their learning. The school follows diocesan plans for RE and the school's 'RE scrapbooks' are a testimony to the solid curriculum provision and quality of RE lessons in the school. In addition, meaningful lesson activities, homework and trips contribute to the prominence and success of RE in the school. Pupils appreciate the value of RE, as a Year 5 pupil said, 'It makes you think'. Another pupil commented, 'Maths is straightforward and has one answer, whereas RE has many answers'. A variety of trips to religious places of worship further supports pupils' SMSC development. One pupil wrote of her amazement at seeing a Sikh gurdwara for the first time. A Year 4 pupil reflected of foot washing, 'It was like Jesus was washing my feet' and another said, 'I felt served and honoured'. Through skilful questioning by the teacher, this activity led to deeper discussion and reflection on the impact of Jesus' actions and the Christian understanding of service. As a result of quality teaching across all classes, the teaching of Christianity is highly effective. Pupils have a sound knowledge of biblical stories to exemplify key Christian teaching and practices.

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

Governance and leadership are significant strengths of the school. Christian values and a Christian vision underpin the strategic development of the school and these serve as a primary motivation in the decision making processes of school. The headteacher and the acting headteacher clearly articulate how the Christian character of the school is the central driving force underpinning all aspects of school life. These include strategy and policies, provision for disadvantaged pupils and parental meetings. RE has been well led and has a high profile within the school and the newly appointed RE co-ordinator has a clear vision and an excellent understanding of the nature and purpose of RE. There is a clear plan for the introduction of a set of new resources for the teaching of Christianity from September. The school prepares its own teachers for future leadership roles, through diocesan training and nationally accredited courses. Staff feel valued and supported by senior leaders. Together they make a team that embodies Christian values, there is 'no them and us' as one teacher put it. The school's Christian character and vision was at the forefront of planning when the school was exploring options for its future. Governors and leaders are confident that they made a good decision when they became an academy and joined the Tenax multi-academy trust (MAT). They feel supported by the MAT, confident that they will flourish as an outstanding school without having to sacrifice their identity as a local church school. Governors and leaders feel the MAT's vision of providing 'outstanding education with a strong Christian ethos' resonates with their own Christian vision. Governors say that, because of this support, they are now more able to focus on the 'things they signed up for' like standards, ethos and community involvement. There are very strong and positive relationships between the local church and the school community that serve to strengthen the school's Christian identity. The incumbent expresses this well when he says, 'we are a church school for the community, not just for the church community'. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and for collective worship.

SIAMS report March 2017 Leybourne Ss Peter & Paul Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School ME19 5HD