

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Holy Trinity Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

Chatsworth Road, Dartford, Kent DA1 5AF

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Diocese

Rochester

Previous SIAS inspection grade

Outstanding

Local authority

Kent

Date of inspection

13 July 2017

Date of last inspection

July 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Aided - 118859

Headteacher

Vikki Wall

Inspector's name and number

Pamela Draycott (161)

School context

This large primary school has a high percentage of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language. The percentage for whom extra funding is received due to social or economic disadvantage is above average. Those with a special educational need or disability (SEND) is around average. A high percentage enter or leave outside of usual transfer times. The school serves pupils from a range of religious and non-religious backgrounds. Almost half of families identify as Christian with about a quarter identifying as having no religion. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Buddhist backgrounds are also represented.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Holy Trinity Dartford Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Under the focused leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by governors and her senior leadership team, the school's Christian vision and values have been refreshed and embedded. They are well shared by teachers and pupils.
- As key expressions of the school's Christian foundation, its vision and values result in high aspirations and expectations. In turn, this clearly impacts on the rapid improvement evidenced in academic attainment and progress over the past two academic years.
- The school's Christian care and support for the individual leads to pupils who are keen to learn and behave very well. It also impacts positively on the strong quality of relationships evident across the school community.
- Religious education (RE) and the worship programme make valuable contributions to the school's Christian ethos and to the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils.

Areas to improve

- Refine the provision of opportunities for SMSC development, so that links are expressly made

between SMSC, the school's Christian values and the overall planning of the curriculum.

- In order to sustain the rapid progress made in RE, embed the recently trialled approaches to exploring key Christian concepts and adapt assessment procedures accordingly.

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

The school's Christian values of friendship, koinonia (community), wisdom, service and trust are well in evidence across its life and work. Staff and pupils are familiar with them and can explain their significance and impact within the school community. 'Our Christian values are important for life. For example, wisdom is not just being clever, it's having the strength and knowledge to do the right thing,' as a Year 6 pupil commented. Many stakeholders are able to make links between these values and the biblical teaching that underpins them, as well as relating them to life outside of school. 'Trust is important in friendship because without it friendship is difficult. The parable of the Good Samaritan shows friendship in action,' as a Year 4 pupil reflected. School policies and practice are deeply underpinned by these values. This includes the behaviour policy. Consequently, the values impact positively on the very good behaviour of pupils displayed in classrooms and around the site. They are plainly seen in the caring and mutually respectful relationships in evidence. An example of their importance is the way in which pupils are appropriately praised for displaying one or more of the values. A termly award for this is celebrated within the worship programme. Strategies to monitor pupils' progress are reinforced by the school's Christian ethos which clearly recognises that, 'every child is a child of God and should achieve the best they possibly can'. Over the previous two academic years, the attainment of pupils has increased so that it is now in line with or above national averages. This shows at least good and, in some cases, accelerated progress from their various starting points. There are no significant gaps between different groups. Pupils from more disadvantaged backgrounds are making better progress than their peers nationally in Key Stage 2. The school's Christian ethos impacts positively in relation to pupils' personal development and wellbeing. This has a high priority and is well supported by strong pastoral structures. These are caring and reflect the school's Christian foundation very well.

Most pupils are happy in school which contributes to attendance improving to slightly above the national average, from a below average starting point. The school supports well pupils who join it at times other than usual transfer times. The majority settle in quickly and their learning is closely monitored to ensure progress. The school's provision of opportunities for SMSC development is good and pupils respond well. RE makes a significant contribution to pupils' SMSC development through its strong practice of helping pupils to reflect on their learning and apply it to their own lives. They address a range of religious, spiritual and ethical issues not only in RE but in other areas of the curriculum such as through literacy, music and art. Planning for SMSC development and how this links expressly with the school's Christian vision and values is underdeveloped. Pupils take responsibility for themselves and others through, for example, the school council and planning charitable events. The school celebrates its religious and ethnic diversity very well. This contributes to pupils having a high degree of understanding and appreciation of ethnic and religious difference and diversity. Likewise, RE enhances their understanding further by appropriately addressing the beliefs and practices of Christianity and other world faiths.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Daily collective worship is very well planned and delivered. It plays a central role in the school's life and is enhanced by periodic worship in the parish church. Worship happens in different groupings which allows for targeted input, depending on the age group of those involved. It is led by a range of people, including staff, the parish priest and representatives of other Christian denominations. This leads to a 'varied diet' which helps to maintain interest and relevance. It is explicitly Christian, and Anglican in nature, whilst including the other religious and non-religious perspectives represented. Thus, it clearly supports the school's inclusive ethos of Christian love through service to its diverse community. As a result, worship contributes effectively to the school's community feel and sense of belonging. The programme draws well on biblical stories, through which pupils develop an appropriate understanding of the significance of Jesus for Christians. It enhances pupils' appreciation of the Christian concept of 'one God in three Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit'. As a Year 3 pupil said, 'God is one but there are different ways God acts and different ways we can understand God'. Through worship, the school community has the opportunity to

reflect on current news items and 'give them to God in prayer'. Thus, worship links with daily life well. Pupils know the Lord's Prayer and can express something of its significance for Christians. Pupils are happy to offer their own prayers, either written or spontaneously, during worship. They know that prayer is, 'speaking to God and praising him'. Pupils and staff have positive attitudes towards worship expressing its importance as a community event. Many respond to, 'the space it provides to pause, take stock and offer things to God as part of the day'. The termly Eucharist and annual voluntary confirmation class enable pupils to explore significant elements of Anglican belief and practice. As part of the worship and evaluation process, three pupils make a comment at the end of each act of worship. They each take a role of either head (meaning), heart (feeling) or feet (implications for living). This exemplary practice enhances the significance and relevance of worship for pupils significantly. Senior leaders and governors evaluate the impact of worship regularly and also take into account comments from pupils and staff. There is evidence that this leads to continued refinement of the programme.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE is a core subject alongside literacy and numeracy. An expression of this is how RE is taught on a Monday morning so that it 'starts the week', following on from the act of worship. The RE curriculum has an appropriate balance between teaching focusing on Christianity and that addressing other world faiths. This includes Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and, from September 2017, Buddhism. The curriculum has recently been enhanced by trialling a new resource and approach called, 'Understanding Christianity'. This focuses on key Christian concepts and its impact on the quality of teaching and learning is already evident. There are firm plans in place to continue to embed this approach from September 2017. In the Early Years Foundation Stage and moving into Year 1, RE is very well linked into the varied learning and personal development programme provided. Across the school, it is organised as a discrete subject with good links made to other curriculum areas as appropriate. Each class has an RE display reflecting its engagement with and enjoyment of their work. Pupils say that they do different tasks including discussion, drama and drawing in RE. This helps them to respond to their learning in different ways. Whole staff training on using open-ended questioning to prompt deeper learning is impacting positively in RE. Pupils are becoming increasingly confident in sharing their own ideas and listening respectfully to others. Pupils are working at or above national expectations and making at least good progress. This is broadly in line with their attainment and progress in literacy. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and in line with whole school policy. Pupils are given opportunities to respond which support them in considering an extra question to think about or in taking the next steps to improve their written work. The subject leader has rightly identified that assessment practice, linked to using Understanding Christianity to deepen learning, is in need of development as the programme is rolled out. Firm plans are in place for this. The subject leader, senior leaders and governors are well informed of the strengths and areas for development across RE through careful and regular monitoring. This leads to them providing effective support for the subject area.

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

Under the effective leadership of the headteacher, the school is supporting very well the pupils' academic and personal development and wellbeing. This is based explicitly on the school's Christian values. These were introduced in 2015, alongside a refreshed vision and motto, to drive forward improvements. This is successfully impacting on the school community through a sense of shared commitment to being, 'the best we can be'. In this endeavour, the headteacher is well supported by an effective governing body and leadership team. Teachers and support staff share this vision so that pupils are supported consistently. Rapid improvement has followed. There is a robust cycle for monitoring and giving feedback. Appraisal is rigorous and, as a result of this, teaching is at least good and in some cases better. Governors engage in regular learning walks and talk with pupils to gain an overall picture of the school. They ask searching questions of senior leaders. The quadrant meetings (sub-committees) of the governing body each have a standing item on how their particular focus impacts on, and is impacted by, the school's Christian ethos. This leads to a well-informed and engaged governing body which can evaluate the school's performance

accurately. Consequently, challenging but realistic targets for continued improvement are set. Issues for improvement from the previous denominational inspection have been well addressed. RE is excellently led by a committed and skilled higher level teaching assistant (HLTA). She provides relevant support and guidance to class teachers in improving their delivery of RE. In turn, she is well supported by the school through, for example, releasing her to attend courses and meetings held in the diocese. The professional development of staff is taken seriously with a range of opportunities for them to explore what it means to work within the church school sector. Parents are increasingly involved with school life and are well informed of their children's academic progress. Parents are supportive of the school's Christian ethos which they recognise impacts positively on their children's behaviour, both inside and outside of school. A helpful partnership exists between school and church. The vicar is closely involved in school life and there is a music director who works jointly in the school and the church. This has significantly impacted on the quality and range of singing during acts of worship in school. It has led to greater involvement of pupils in worship within the church. Displays of pupils' work in the church and an annual confirmation class are established practice. These are clear expressions of their shared mission of service to their community.

SIAMS report (July 2017) Holy Trinity CE (VA) Primary School, Dartford, Kent, DA1 5AF