

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Lawrence Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Church Road, Stone Street, Sevenoaks, Kent TN3 0LN

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Rochester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of inspection	22 June 2017
Date of last inspection	18 June 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 118704
Headteacher	Alison Saunders
Inspector's name and number	Niki Paterson 883

School context

St Lawrence is a small school which serves a rural area on the outskirts of Sevenoaks in Kent. There are 88 pupils on roll, the vast majority of whom are White British. The number of pupils on the special educational needs register is variable from year to year. The number of those in receipt of pupil premium funding due to social disadvantage is below the national average. There has been stable leadership since the previous denominational inspection and a low changeover in staff. The local parish is currently without a priest although links with the local church and the priest from a neighbouring parish are in place.

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

- A clear Christian vision, underpinned by explicit and by implicit Christian values, is deeply embedded in the life of the school.
- Behaviour is excellent with warm, respectful and trustful relationships evident at all levels amongst staff and pupils.
- Pupils are being well developed as leaders of worship and undertake their role with enthusiasm and passion.
- Clear Christian leadership, which is lived out by example, is driving forth the vision of every child achieving their God-given potential.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that all governors engage with professional development regarding Christian distinctiveness in order to improve formal monitoring of religious education (RE) and collective worship.
- Create focussed reflective spaces within and outside the building so that spirituality can be further developed.

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

St Lawrence primary embodies its deeply embedded Christian ethos through its values of trust, compassion forgiveness and creation. It has developed a core offer which ensures that every child is loved, nurtured and encouraged to realise their unique gifts and inherent worth. Parents are highly supportive of the school's distinctive vision, describing it as both aspirational and inclusive. Both parents and pupils value the caring and hospitable ethos which has been responsible for families staying with the school for many years. Pupils and school leaders can clearly articulate how the school's values, in particular the value of creation, have secured better outcomes for pupils and drive forward school improvement. One pupil said, 'God is a creative God who created us to be creative in our learning'. This approach results in academic progress which is good and attainment which is above the national average.

Character development is a significant part of the school's vision for its pupils. They are encouraged to be ambassadors for change. Pupils described this by saying, 'even though we are a little school, we can make a big difference'. Extensive opportunities for musicianship and sport exemplify a clear sense of how the school values the spirit of the whole child. They also demonstrate how social, moral, spiritual, and cultural (SMSC) education is embedded within the school's ethos. One pupil expressed how playing a musical instrument 'helps us to keep in tune with God'. Prayer and reflection areas are only present in some classrooms. Whilst the outdoor area environment is recognized by the pupils as spiritual, there is limited opportunity for it to be used as a focus for prayer. School leaders have high aspirations for pupils and use the school's values as a vehicle for nurturing the whole child. Pupils are encouraged to 'look after each other like family'. They describe how their values of trust and compassion encourage them to be responsible, respect each other and to live well together. As a result, the behaviour and attitudes of pupils are exemplary. Warm and caring relationships exist at all levels between staff, who feel highly valued by the school leadership team, including by governors. Religious education (RE) has a high profile and pupils are challenged by the subject. Lessons are creative and allow pupils to express their own philosophies and to debate difficult issues. As a consequence, pupils' knowledge of Christianity as a worldwide living faith is very good. Pupils can express the importance of embracing and respecting diversity and those of other faiths.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

Distinctively Christian collective worship has a strong focus on the teaching and inspiration of Jesus. This worship is made bespoke to the needs of the school and is highly valued by the community. Pupils take part enthusiastically, and are enthused by creative and interactive approaches to worship. Sung praise is a spiritual and uplifting experience. Pupils are being well developed as leaders of worship and receive similar training to the adults. Consequently, a highly articulate worship committee supports daily worship on a regular basis and church members value the pupils leading worship in church. Christian values are integral to the content of worship, which is well planned and made bespoke to the needs of the school. Worship is firmly rooted in biblical teaching. Pupils are able to express an understanding of the Trinity as 'God in three forms' and can talk about how this is symbolised. They are familiar with Anglican tradition, being well versed in the Lord's prayer and in liturgical responses. Themes are made meaningful to the children by being relevant and user friendly. For example, in the collective worship observed pupils were encouraged to think about the petition, 'forgive us our sins' as 'helping us to know when we are wrong and clean us up on the inside'. A variety of Christian festivals is attended by the whole school community, both at church and in school, which means that pupils have a secure knowledge of the Christian calendar. Regular monitoring of worship is carried out by staff and children. It is particularly effective in improving practice. Pupils talk about how valued they feel when their ideas and suggestions become part of the worshipping community practice. There is less evidence of the impact of governor monitoring, however. Opportunities for open, impromptu prayer are encouraged, which enables pupils to engage on a personal level.

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

School leaders and governors clearly express a shared vision of the school's Christian distinctiveness which is rooted in the life of the community which they serve. Their vision statement 'let every light shine' has supported a continuous upward trend in academic standards and has ensured that children flourish as unique children of God. For example, each child completes a booklet called '50 days things before you leave St Lawrence' which encourages them to express the Christian values and be aspirational in all areas of learning and of SMSC. Both staff and pupils readily articulate the school's particular values as a driver for improving learning, underpinned by the importance of

putting their trust in God. A strong relationship with the parish church has been maintained in the absence of a substantive priest. The church and school together are very much viewed as the being at the heart of the local community. The church values its role in supporting the school and the school orchestra regularly plays in church. Good communication with parents about the school's values means that they are highly supportive of the school's distinctive ethos. The school embodies its value of compassion to its local and to the wider global community by child-led projects. These have included supporting the local foodbank and by the headteacher maintaining a link with a Christian school in Ghana. This, in turn, supports pupils' understanding of the links between Christian values and SMSC learning. The headteacher and the RE leader have developed significantly in their capacity and effectiveness through the embedding of the values as drivers for school improvement. Their roles are well supported by professional development at diocesan and national level. Areas for development from the previous denominational inspection have been well addressed. A continuous cycle of reflective and insightful self-evaluation incorporates a range of stakeholder views, including those of pupils and of parents. Focused and robust monitoring by staff leaders has brought about rapid school improvement and is clearly linked to the school's vision. Governors are highly supportive of the school's Christian ethos. They have embedded monitoring of the school's Christian character to ensure that every child 'has a blessed start in life'. Monitoring of RE and collective worship by governors is informal and less rigorous. Statutory requirements for the provision of RE and collective worship are met.

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