

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

West Ashton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School	Bratton Road, West Ashton, Trowbridge, Wilts BA14 6AZ
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Diocese	Salisbury
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Good
Local authority	Wiltshire
Date of inspection	5 October 2016
Date of last inspection	15 September 2011
School's unique reference number	126417
Headteacher	Nina Jeffries
Inspector's name and number	Penny Burnside 772

School context

West Ashton is smaller than the average size primary school, situated in a rural setting on the outskirts of Trowbridge. The seventy-nine children are taught in three mixed-age classes. There are some very small year-groups. The proportion of children with special educational needs is much higher than average. The proportion of disadvantaged children supported by the pupil premium funding is below average. The majority of children are white British heritage. An Ofsted inspection in March 2016 judged the school to be inadequate. An acting headteacher, seconded from a local community school, has been in post for five weeks. Two of the three full-time teachers also joined the school at the start of term.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of West Ashton as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- The established Christian ethos of inclusion, nurture and support, which has sustained the school community during a very challenging time, has yet to make a significant difference to the quality of learning.
- Since her arrival five weeks ago, the acting headteacher's commitment to developing the Christian ethos, at the same time as improving academic standards, is refreshing the culture of the school.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that school leaders, including governors, develop the skills to monitor effectively all aspects of Christian ethos so that self-evaluation is accurate and leaders at all levels understand what they need to do to help improve as a church school.
- Improve the quality of teaching of religious education (RE) by ensuring that high quality support for teachers enables all groups of children to make more rapid progress.
- Ensure that all acts of worship are explicitly Christian and have greater impact on children's spirituality by involving children, clergy and other visitors more in planning and leading.
- Involve the school community in reviewing and developing the school's values so that children in particular understand and explain how these are explicitly Christian and make a significant difference to their developing spirituality and everyday lives.

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

West Ashton's vision statement of '*Discovering, achieving and praying together*' has been questioned since the school was judged by Ofsted in March 2016 to require special measures. In response, members of staff, led sensitively by the acting headteacher, are confidently addressing the actions needed to improve in ways which exemplify, at least implicitly, a number of Christian values including trust, kindness, perseverance and hope. The school is known for its ethos of welcome, safety, nurture and mutual support. Provision of 'the Nest', a special room with dedicated support for children's emotional well-being, is a powerful example. Some members of the school community can identify links between Christian values and the school's provision, but this is not consistent, and values discussed are not always distinctively Christian. Strong relationships are evident, and staff and parents acknowledge the role of the school's values and Christian character in sustaining the school as a 'family'. As one adult said, 'Families fall out – but we're quite good at putting it back together again.' Parents and staff speak of children experiencing the Christian ethos, seeing it lived-out by their peers and by adults. One example of this in action is the school's support for Irish heritage Traveller families: the sensitive, respectful approach of staff, and of the administrative officer in particular, is helping to improve attendance. The school's Christian ethos and its teaching of RE encourages empathy for the visitor, the vulnerable and those who need support. Children are good at this on an immediate or local level but their understanding of more distant diverse communities is still developing. The whole-school RE-themed art projects displayed in the hall provide a visual reminder of the importance of RE. Parents are aware of spirituality underpinning lessons and teachers speak of providing for children's emotional and spiritual needs. The acting headteacher has already begun to put into action her plans for developing spirituality, such as creating a welcoming 'spiritual space' inside the entrance to the school. However the school community has yet to develop a shared understanding of spirituality that is understood by all adults.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

West Ashton is a school where 'doing things together' matters. Consequently gathering for worship is important. A teaching assistant explained that children enjoy being part of worship for 'the family vibe'. Older children talk happily of their memories of going to the church. Younger children associate church with 'celebrations'. During recent months, children visited the church less frequently. Current leaders are beginning to re-establish a pattern of regular worship in church. Pupils join in enthusiastically with worship. They sing well and their behaviour is good. They know the Lord's Prayer and say it confidently. There are opportunities in an act of worship both for collective prayer and for personal reflection, and pupils respond seriously and with respect. The school enables pupils to pray in the school day and it is clear that certain prayers have special significance for some children outside of school. For example one parent talked about her child saying the 'end of the day' prayer at home. With its opening line, 'Lord keep us safe this night,' it echoes an important theme for this school community, as children talk a lot about feeling safe here. Children's experience of worship both in school and in the church has resulted in their understanding a few Anglican traditions, such as festivals and some simple symbolism such as the cross and the use of candles. Their understanding of the significance of the Trinity is limited. Some older children help practically with setting-up the hall and with accompaniment and slides for the songs but they do not yet take responsibility for planning or leading worship. A new system has recently been introduced to find out what children think about worship, but this has not yet begun to have an impact. Since her appointment, the acting headteacher has taken responsibility for the co-ordination of worship. Planning for worship is still developing and it does not yet systematically include Christian beliefs and festivals in a coherent way. A number of staff, some of whom are new to church schools, lead worship. The number of visitors invited to lead worship is very small. Governors attend worship but there is little formal recording and evaluation is limited. As a result leaders do not have sufficient support to help them know what to do next to help the school improve its collective worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

Children say they enjoy RE, with one child describing it as 'fantastic.' However there is little evidence of regular assessment in RE and, as a result, the school does not have a clear picture of children's attainment and the progress they make. Children are curious when learning about other world faiths and interested and respectful in lessons. This is because there is some lively and creative teaching. For example, in a lesson about harvest for the youngest children, the teacher ensured they were busy and engaged when making bread and then, whilst waiting for the dough to rise, the lesson continued outside in the grounds, giving children opportunities to move about whilst enjoying and reflecting on God's created world. Children like the breadth of the school's provision, saying, 'There is a lot to focus on!' However leaders do not have current information on the effectiveness of the RE curriculum, nor of the new RE scheme which was introduced earlier in the year, as little evaluation has taken place. Work in children's books reflects some low expectations and there is little evidence of differentiated tasks for the different groups of learners. The acting headteacher has very recently changed the pattern of teaching so that RE is now taught by each class-teacher. This is beginning to make a positive difference because teachers are able to make use of existing classroom systems, such as 'Steps to Success,' to strengthen children's enquiry skills in RE. Teachers show sensitivity to children's responses, for example in a lesson on Buddhism, where the teacher's approach was consistently encouraging and affirming as children's prior knowledge was assessed. Teachers make good use of opportunities in RE lessons for developing spirituality: in one lesson, the teacher helped children to reflect on their own understanding and experience of prayer as they learned about Buddhist prayer. In another lesson, the teacher gave the children time to enjoy 'rainbows' of light which appeared in the classroom. Teachers also referred to the school's values, such as kindness and forgiveness, as they explained some of Jesus' parables.

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

Until very recently, procedures for monitoring the school's Christian character, RE and collective worship had lapsed. As a result, governors do not have a current view of the school's strengths and weaknesses as a church school and there has been little strategic planning for improvement. In the short time since her arrival, the acting headteacher has implemented a number of changes, which are already beginning to make a positive difference, such as the new policy for behaviour. Together with the staff team, several of whom are also new to the school, the headteacher puts into practice her vision of 'practical Christianity', which is understood by the school to include respect, valuing everyone, service of others and for all children to know they are loved. This modelling by adults of values which are implicitly rather than explicitly Christian is helping to establish a greater sense of hopefulness in the school and an increased expectation of what children can achieve. Alongside teaching and learning priorities, the acting headteacher has included a number of specific initiatives to develop the school's Christian character, such as planning more opportunities in the school environment for spiritual development. These are beginning to make a positive difference for children. Until recently, there has been little strategic or sustained planning for involving different groups of people within and beyond the school in helping to improve the school. The headteacher's initiative to strengthen the relationship with the church is an indication that this is changing. The involvement of children in helping to develop the school as a church school is also at an early stage. An example of this is the board entitled, 'How can we add a WOW to WA?' where they can record their ideas. A current policy for RE was not available during the inspection, although the acting headteacher has this in hand. Arrangements for collective worship meet statutory requirements.

SIAMS report October 2016 West Ashton VA Primary School, Trowbridge BA14 6AZ