

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Motcombe Church of England Primary School

Motcombe, Shaftesbury, Dorset, SP7 9HT

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Salisbury
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Good
Date of academy conversion	1 March 2015
Name of multi-academy trust	Southern Academy Trust
Date of inspection	12 December 2016
Date of last inspection	2 November 2011
School's unique reference number	141798
Headteacher	Rhiannon Tidby
Inspector's name and number	Marcia Headon 761

School context

Motcombe Primary is a small school of 146 pupils serving the local villages south of Shaftesbury. In 2015 it joined the Southern Academy Trust, which consists of three church schools. The majority of pupils at Motcombe are of White British heritage. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for additional funding is below the national average, as is the percentage of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. A new team vicar, with responsibility for Motcombe, took up her post in February 2016. The headteacher is currently acting headteacher at another local school for three days a week.

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

- The exceptionally strong focus on the school's Christian values has a highly positive impact on the personal well-being and development of pupils.
- The assessment processes and moderation of the pupils' work in religious education (RE) ensures that teaching and learning in this subject are highly effective.
- The highly effective Faith Committee of the local governing body ensures a continuing emphasis is placed on developing the Christian character and distinctiveness of the school.

Areas to improve

- Develop the evaluation of collective worship by pupils and other members of the school community in order to ensure it has maximum impact on pupils' spiritual development.
- Develop pupils' understanding of the use of prayer so that they extend their prayers for those in the wider community and world.

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

The Christian character of the school is very strong; its motto of 'faith, friendship, learning and laughter' and its values influence all its work. At Motcombe, the pupils live out the values. One pupil commented, 'God gave us our values to show us how we should live'. For example, they know the importance of forgiveness and when they have squabbles usually resolve their differences for themselves. Christian love and care are evident throughout the school and the value of fellowship is seen by the pupils as something they actively seek through membership of clubs both in school and outside. Kindness and compassion are evident, whether it is by pupils helping others less fortunate than themselves through extensive charity work, or the simple act of helping another pupil to put their coat on. Pupils know stories from the Christian teachings upon which the values are based. As a result of the pupils following the school values, behaviour is outstanding. The school is highly inclusive and the staff and headteacher model Christian values. They 'go the extra mile' in giving academic support and ensuring the personal well-being of the pupils. For example, when in 2015 Key Stage 2 results in mathematics were weaker, the following year all staff and teaching assistants helped to tutor the pupils after school to ensure any gaps were covered. At Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment overall was above national averages, as was their progress. Relationships between all within the school are very strong. When new teachers join the school they remark on the support staff give one another, which in their words, 'goes far beyond being just a good colleague'. Because of the fun which they have at school, the trust they have in their teachers, the knowledge that perseverance is rewarded, pupils love coming to school and attendance is very high. They nominate other pupils for displaying and using the school's values and motto and vote termly for the recipient of a cup for the pupil demonstrating the values most clearly. The staff have a very clear understanding of what pupils' spiritual development should look like. It is mapped across the curriculum so that time is planned for asking questions, looking with wonder at art or listening to music or reflecting. Pupils' spirituality is developing well. They take pride in their spiritual garden, which is very well used when a pupil needs a quiet moment to think. The emphasis on the Christian values underpins pupils' moral, social and cultural development across the curriculum although the values themselves are not prominently displayed in the classrooms or on the school website. Pupils respect other cultures and religions and through their work in RE are developing a good understanding of different faiths.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is an important part of the school day. Its centrality is indicated by the fact that pupils asked for it to be moved to just before they went home so they could 'get together, reflect on the day, think about God and be left with a warm feeling on going home'. Staff feel affirmed by worship and consider it most important that they worship with the pupils and that pupils worship with adults in the school community. The themes of collective worship are thoughtfully planned by the headteacher around the values of the school and Christian festivals. Whole school worship, led by the headteacher or other senior leaders, follows a set pattern including the lighting of a candle with a simple Christian greeting and response, a song, a Bible story or other Christian reading involving the pupils, a period of quiet thought, a prayer and a closing sentence said by all. Pupils' opinions and views on worship are gathered through a Faith Council. The composition of this group is changed frequently so that different pupils have the opportunity to express their opinions and to lead worship. Fortnightly the school goes to the church for a service led by the local vicar and pupils appreciate this opportunity to go to 'our church'. Pupils enjoy immensely participating in the 'open the book sessions' which also take place fortnightly, led by a group from the church. Celebration worship, to which parents are invited, takes place weekly and reinforces the school's Christian values. One parent described it as, 'giving moral guidance within a strong sense of community'. Older pupils are developing their understanding of the Trinity and Year 6 pupils were able to consider the actions of the Holy Spirit with some confidence when considering a story in RE. Prayer is used in collective worship, at lunchtimes and at the end of the day before collective worship. Its importance is emphasised by each child being given a prayer pebble on entry to the school and each classroom having a prayer tree or prayer book. Pupils write prayers for use in worship or in class but many of these are about personal issues or 'thank you' prayers. A prayer tree in the school hall to encourage pupils to pray for wider national or international issues is not as well used. A different pupil evaluates the worship daily but many of these evaluations are not about the impact but the process of the collective worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Pupils clearly enjoy RE. They achieve well in RE and standards are at national expectations for the majority, with around a quarter of pupils achieving above expectations. Pupils make good progress. Lessons are thoroughly planned with a wide range of activities which allow pupils to develop their skills and knowledge. Most lessons are centred round enquiry-based key questions which foster excellent depth and breadth of thinking. In a Year 5/6 lesson, pupils were totally absorbed in a detailed analysis of the biblical story of the significance of Mary as the mother of Jesus. They were considering the attitude of Joseph when he was given the news of Jesus' conception. The task was challenging but well-matched to the ability of the pupils. A teaching assistant provided very good support for those who needed more help. In a Year 1/2 class, the teacher used skilled questioning to help pupils consider which values Jesus would place most highly. The list included not only the school's values, but actions such as saving water and the rainforest. Pupils discussed these and through this activity were deepening their understanding of the importance of the school's values. In both of these classes pupils were applying their knowledge and skills in religious education to their own personal reflections on questions of meaning and faith. Work in pupils' individual books and in the class reflective books, which record pupils' questions, shows that they not only cover Christianity but also other religions. Some impressive comparisons were made between religious practices, for example, the importance of prayer to different faiths such as Islam and Christianity. Visitors from different religions bring added interest to the RE curriculum. Through the quality of pupils' discussions and the work covered, RE makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are given full feedback on their work in RE and the same marking policy is applied to RE as other subjects. Pupils follow up their feedback conscientiously. Assessment is rigorous and moderation is thorough. The headteacher, who until now has acted as RE coordinator, uses this moderation in order to move the learning further forward. Plans now exist to moderate the RE work across the schools in the multi-academy trust. She monitors the teaching of RE very conscientiously. The headteacher is developing the skills of a new RE leader by working closely with her and plans exist for this new leader to introduce the 'Understanding Christianity' project from next year. She is eagerly embracing this role as leader of RE.

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

The school has a very well-defined Christian vision which recognises the uniqueness of each pupil, that they each have something wonderful to offer, that the Christian duty of the school is to nurture and support them and to equip them with the skills to be able to live their lives as good citizens. This vision is shared by the staff and local governing board who are determined that pupils at Motcombe should be given the best possible chances to succeed academically and socially. They see the values and Christian distinctiveness as the vehicle by which this is to be achieved. The school has a very good awareness of its own strengths and areas for development as a church school as a result of careful evaluation. Its strategic plans encompass the further development of the church school distinctiveness and these plans have been drawn together after consultation with parents and pupils. The school is very committed to developing future leaders of church schools. Currently three members of staff are working with the headteacher to support another school. When considering joining the multi-academy trust, the governing body, while seeing strength in partnership, were determined to preserve the voluntary-aided ethos of the school. This is written into the new terms of governance in order to ensure its preservation. The governors have retained a governors' Faith Committee at a local level to ensure the church school distinctiveness. The local governing body is totally committed to the school and the link governor meets regularly with the headteacher and new RE leader. They attend regular training updates. Relationships with the local church are very strong. The school uses the church extensively within the curriculum and its use is welcomed by the church, who built a path to allow easier and safer access to the church from the school. The vicar is a very regular visitor to the school and despite the relatively short time she has been in post, the pupils speak warmly of her presence. The school has benefitted from support from the Salisbury Diocesan adviser, who has helped with curriculum projects. Parents report that the school is welcoming and caring with a strong sense of its pastoral responsibilities, especially in cases of family bereavement or personal difficulty. They comment that their children bring home the values which the school teaches. The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship and religious education.