

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St. Gregory's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School	
New Street, Marnhull, Sturminster Newton, Dorset. DT10 1PZ	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Salisbury
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Dorset
Date of inspection	27 September 2017
Date of last inspection	10 September 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 113805
Headteacher	Debbie Field
Inspector's name and number	Revd David Hatrey 844

School context

Saint Gregory's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary is a smaller than average school. Most children come from a White British heritage. The number of children entitled to pupil premium funding is below national averages, whilst the number of children who have special educational needs is in line with national averages.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. Gregory's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

- Children have a developing understanding of Christian values which they articulate with growing confidence, beginning to recognise the contribution these make to their lives and achievements.
- Children now make better progress in religious education due to the improvements in teaching and learning and the enthusiasm of staff.
- The new leadership team have brought stability to the school and a strong focus on developing the work of a church school which is making significant improvements.

Areas to improve

- Establish an agreed understanding of spirituality so that experiences can be identified in planning to ensure children acquire the ability to express their ideas in a variety of ways and at deeper levels.
- Develop the role of the young worship ambassadors in planning, leading and evaluating worship so children are engaged in worship and articulate the difference it makes to their lives.
- Create a rigorous programme to evaluate all aspects of a church school, particularly Christian distinctiveness, which involves children and leads to ongoing improvements.

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

The appointment of a new headteacher in September 2015 brought fresh rigour and focus to the work of the school as a church school. Action was taken to address the targets from the previous inspection. Following thoughtful evaluation, the priority was to review the school's Christian values. This was effectively undertaken through the creation of the parent's forum which gathered ideas of the wider community. Children were also involved by considering which Christian values reflected their community so they have some ownership of these. They identified: respect, friendship, thankfulness, honesty, forgiveness and courage. Children have a growing understanding of these values as each has been considered and are now being explored at a deeper level, describing what these look like in daily life. The introduction of values awards, where children are nominated either by staff or peers when they show values in their daily life, has enhanced children's understanding because reasons for the award are shared so children appreciate where values make a difference. Each term a Christian value is explored in some depth and linked to the 'growth mind set' strategy which effectively develops children's attitudes to learning. Children talk confidently about where they use values to help them become successful learners. At present children are only able to link their Christian values to a few Bible stories which reflect their distinctive meaning. However, even young children explain that these values are given by God to enable them to become 'better people.' All children are aware that values influence their thinking and actions and give examples of this. Behaviour has been transformed through the introduction of Christian values which has changed children's attitudes to one another. They understand that Jesus is a role model for how they should treat one another. There is an increasing understanding that everyone is special to God. Children work collaboratively, showing care and courtesy, with good examples in the buddy system which pairs up different year groups with the elder children taking their responsibility of being role models seriously. Staff model the quality of relationships expected in their interactions with both children and parents. Academic standards are rising although there are some areas still to address. Staff recognise that Christian values contribute to children's self-esteem with a growing sense that each can be successful. There are also some creative approaches to learning such as the use of a reading dog that inspires children in this area. Progress made by disadvantaged children is increasingly comparable with their peers. Recent developments have raised the importance of spirituality with more opportunities for reflection. Last year reflection areas were established in each class although their impact is yet to be evaluated. The recent introduction of reflection diaries are at an early stage of development. Whilst staff have an understanding of spirituality these opportunities are not identified in planning nor do they cover a breadth of areas or allow children to express these ideas in a variety of ways. Religious education (RE) makes a good contribution to children's understanding of other world faiths where a good knowledge was evident. Increasingly children are able to make links between this and their own beliefs leading to children showing tolerance and respect to those who hold different views to their own. At present, children's understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural faith is not fully developed.

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

At present the impact of collective worship is satisfactory although a number of new initiatives have been launched which are beginning to make a positive difference. A good example of this is the young worship leaders who alongside governors received training on how to lead worship. This enabled them last year to plan and lead an act of worship. A significant improvement is the quality of planning for worship which has become more detailed and focussed on a value for the term. A termly overview of worship themes is given more detail in daily plans. This enables an aspect of the value to be explored each week in greater depth. Effective use of the 'Roots and Fruits' resource gives valuable support to help staff and visitors who lead worship, bringing a variety of approaches to worship. Christian festivals are celebrated and children describe their significance for Christians in some depth. The use of biblical material has helped children to have a better understanding of Jesus and they talk about His life and the stories He told. Some children have a basic understanding of the Trinity. Different opportunities for worship are planned including key stage worship so that experiences are closely linked to the age of children. Worship in the parish church is a significant weekly occasion which is well supported by families and church members. Children make some contribution to this using simple Anglican liturgy. Prayer is understood as sharing ideas with God. Older children show some appreciation of the different elements of prayer although their use of prayers has not developed significantly from those of younger children. A small number of children use prayer in response to national events or talk about its significance in their lives. The evaluation of worship is at an early stage of development. At present there are limited contributions by children and the evaluations by the school and governors are at an informal level. Governors attend worship but, because their observations lack focus, their conclusions have not identified actions to raise the impact further. Feedback from children about worship shows that more are beginning to enjoy it and feel that it has relevance to their lives. However, they would still like more opportunities to contribute and take more responsibility.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

Religious education is good because the improving quality of teaching and learning is enabling more children to achieve age related expectations and, for some, the higher levels. Leadership ensures that religious education has a good profile in the curriculum, with new initiatives introduced through focused training, such as 'Understanding Christianity'. A scrutiny of children's work and data provided shows that standards are rising and are at least inline with the other core subjects. Disadvantaged children are making positive progress, which compares well with their peers. The quality of teaching and learning is also improving as a result of effective training. Lesson observations are now well established and this addresses a target from the previous inspection. Detailed feedback is provided to staff indicating what has gone well as well as pinpointing aspects to develop. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic in their teaching. Planning from the 'Discovery RE' resource are effectively used to ensure there is good progression and that work is well matched to children's needs. Children are developing greater ownership of RE as teachers ask them what they know about the next project and what they would like to explore. Marking gives children regular feedback on how well they have done as well as indicating where they can improve. In addition, staff are beginning to add some questions which extend children's thinking. A range of strategies are being introduced to engage children to a greater extent in the learning. These include drama, hot seating and the use of a range of artefacts and visual resources which maintains children's interest through first hand experiences. Teachers questioning is good, requiring children to think more deeply. The school is currently implementing units from the 'Understanding Christianity' resource which focuses on an enquiry based approach that involves children sharing ideas and exploring their own beliefs. This places greater emphasis on encouraging children to learn from these questions so that they see a significance of this in their daily lives. Most children talked positively about RE and are beginning to recognise the contribution it can make to their thinking. Assessment procedures are sound with the school now experimenting with new strategies in the light of 'Understanding Christianity'. Whilst Christian values are developed in RE, opportunities are missed which would deepen children's understanding of these further.

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

Leadership and management are good because the new headteacher, who has brought stability following a time of anxiety, has established a clear focus on rapidly developing the life of a church school. Her appointment came after two years of uncertainty where no permanent appointment was possible. She has made the re-establishment of relationships with all stakeholders a priority by involving them in the life of the school. She has successfully introduced a forum to listen to parental views and share ideas. Parents regard this positively saying that the school listens to them and takes appropriate action. The appointment of a vicar last year has seen the relationship with the church grow. Good contributions from the vicar support collective worship, religious education and governance. This has continued into the life of the community where the school has a prominent role. A new leadership team share the headteacher's vision for the school and her work. A range of initiatives have been put in place following astute evaluations of the school's current position. Whilst much of this focus has been on raising standards and the quality of teaching and learning, the role of the school as a church school has been an essential part of this. Discrete action has been taken to re-introduce the importance of Christian values, develop RE and collective worship. These are being embedded into the life of the school and their impact is clearly discernible in a number of areas. More recently the school has formulated a vision statement with a motto setting the school as a place "where learning has no limits". Children have a growing understanding of this and how it influences their attitudes to learning. However, the distinctive Christian vision to live 'life in all its fullness,' has yet to be fully explored with children so they develop their understanding of how it underpins their learning and personal development. The leadership confidently explains how initiatives they have put in place reflect their growing appreciation of the Christian vision. They recognise everyone as being important to God and treat one another as Jesus would. This is increasingly reflected through a Christian distinctiveness seen in the growing quality of relationships and the way Christian values are becoming embedded into the life of the school. The diocese supports the school well, notably through advisory support and continuing professional training opportunities, which have focused on identified needs. The school has developed a rigorous approach to the tracking of pupil progress and evaluating the impact of teaching. A new governing body is becoming established who are more involved in school life and in the monitoring of core subjects. As yet this has not extended to the work of a church school where their monitoring is more informal and where they have not fully considered the school's Christian distinctiveness. The school fully meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.