

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Kennet Valley Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Lockeridge, Marlborough, Wiltshire, SN8 4EL

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Salisbury
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Date of inspection	6 March 2018
Date of last inspection	28 January 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 126446
Acting headteacher	Emma Russell
Inspector's name and number	Anna Willcox 915

School context

Kennet Valley Church of England Primary School is a smaller than average rural primary school with 98 children on roll who are taught in 4 mixed age classes. The number on roll has increased considerably since the previous SIAS inspection and this has resulted in an additional class being opened. The majority of children are from White British heritage and come from a range of backgrounds. The proportion of children in receipt of pupil premium funding and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are both lower than the national average. The school has had two changes of headteacher since the previous inspection. An acting headteacher in post pending a permanent appointment being made. She was promoted to this role in September 2017 from her substantive post of assistant headteacher. The substantive religious education (RE) subject leader is currently on maternity leave. The acting headteacher is fulfilling this role on a temporary basis.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Kennet Valley CE Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- The Christian character of the school is clearly evident through the positive relationships, rooted in love, care and empathy, which exist between all members of the school community.
- The seamless partnership between the school, church and wider local community is highly valued by all connected with the school. The church provides an impressive level of spiritual support and guidance to children, staff and parents at the school.
- A sharpened focus on the development of spirituality has resulted in increased opportunities for children to explore their sense of self.
- Improved systems for assessing standards in RE have recently been put in place and are not yet established. As a result assessment does not yet inform future teaching and learning in the subject.

Areas to improve

- Refine explicit core values for the school to enable children to develop a deep understanding of all of them and recognise how they are distinctively Christian.
- Embed newly introduced materials for assessment in RE and use these to track children's progress and identify key areas for improvement to further enhance provision in the subject.
- Establish a cohesive system for routinely monitoring and evaluating the Christian character of the school, including the impact of collective worship, in order to bring about measurable improvements which improve outcomes for children.

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

The school's Christian character is central to school life at Kennet Valley. Children, staff, governors and parents all describe the school as a caring place where children and adults put others before themselves. Children describe feeling valued and loved regardless of their background and the staff echo this sentiment. The Christian values of the school are modelled consistently by staff and governors and, as a result, the children follow their lead. They show great empathy when learning and playing together and have a genuine care for one another. The children are not yet able to articulate how the school values support them in this. A set of Christian values, which underpin all aspects of school life, are implicitly evident throughout Kennet Valley. As there are a large number of identified values the children are not able to remember or have a deep understanding of them. They are able to explain what they have learnt about the current and some recent focus values. A child from the youngest class explained that 'justice means doing the right thing'. An older child stated that it meant 'making sure everyone is treated fairly and has an equal chance'. Some are able to explain their understanding of the distinctively Christian nature of justice through linking it to stories from the Bible. For example, one child talked about what we learn about justice from the Easter story. Another linked the value to the story of Zacchaeus. The school's unswerving focus on the development of the whole child results in a personalised and nurturing approach to teaching children and supporting their families. Parents described the 'warm and welcoming' feel of the school which they consider to be a result of all staff making time to get to know parents and supporting them with challenges they may be facing at home. One parent described the school as being 'a small school with a big heart'. Behaviour is good and this is attributed to the school's Christian character. Personalised approaches, tailored to the needs of individuals, are consistently used to ensure that all children are able to achieve success regardless of their ability or needs. Relationships, entrenched in love, care and compassion, are a key strength at Kennet Valley. The staff know all the children and children feel happy to talk to any member of staff if they need to. This view is shared by parents. The school staff have a shared view of spirituality and the focus on this has recently sharpened. Training for staff was led by the rector on using reflection to develop children's spirituality. This has resulted in reflection areas being prioritised in each classroom. Children talk confidently about how these are used to 'be still' and 'for thinking time'. Children have varying degrees of understanding of Christianity as a world faith. They have a clear recognition that people are all different and that everyone deserves to be treated with respect regardless of their background. Religious education contributes to the Christian character of the school through this.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is valued by members of the school community. Children talk positively about experiences in worship. For example, one child described it as a 'peaceful, filling and happy time that makes me think'. Another said they appreciate it as the time 'they all come together as a family'. Some children are able to talk about how worship helps them in everyday life. Staff appreciate the time in worship to reflect and be still. Sharing the peace and lighting the candle at the beginning of worship marks it as a special time in the school day. Children participate willingly in worship and sing with exuberance. Children of other faiths or of none appreciate and enjoy worship and feel comfortable sitting quietly when they do not wish to take part in certain aspects. One child said, 'no one stops me believing what I want to even though I am in a church school. I feel valued.' Most children are aware of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and older children demonstrate a developing understanding of this. Children are being given increasing opportunities to explore their own spirituality and some older children are beginning to be able to explain how this helps them. Children experience regular opportunities for prayer in school during worship, before lunch and at the end of the day. The rector has worked with the school council to develop a school prayer which the children are currently learning alongside the Lord's Prayer. Children's understanding of the value of prayer and the contribution it can make to their spiritual development is currently underdeveloped. The school has clear plans in place to further develop all aspects of spiritual development. The school uses 'Roots and Fruits' as the basis for planning worship. Worship is led by the acting headteacher, rector and class teachers. The school has made good progress since the last inspection with regards to children's involvement in leading worship. All children have the opportunity to plan and lead collective worship, based on the school's focus value, throughout the year. Children talked about their experiences of leading worship with excitement and enthusiasm. Governors have begun to monitor the impact collective worship has on children. It is too soon to see any improvements as a result of this monitoring. Although work on monitoring has started, there is no system in place for routinely monitoring the effectiveness and impact of collective worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

Children have a level of pride in their religious education (RE) work which is consistent with that in other subject areas. School leaders identified the need to reinvigorate the RE curriculum at the beginning of this academic year. The school now uses 'Discovery RE' together with the 'Understanding Christianity' resource with the aim of deepening the children's understanding of the Christian faith. These curriculum materials are not yet well established. As a result, the children's depth of understanding of Christianity is not consistently deep. Their understanding of other world faiths and their beliefs and practices is also limited. Staff have identified the need for more training in the use of these resources and have been proactive in arranging this. Plans are already in place to further embed the use of 'Discovery RE' and 'Understanding Christianity' to ensure their effectiveness. Teaching in RE has been identified by the temporary RE subject leader as good and this was confirmed during the inspection. In particular, in a Year 6 lesson, the teacher had planned a high quality lesson which excited the children about exploring feelings generated during Holy Week. Children were actively engaged in creating 'freeze-frames' to depict Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. They were challenged to use higher order 'feelings words' when considering how Jesus and Mary would be feeling in each scene. The school's values are evident in RE teaching. Children make links between the current focus value of justice and the learning they were engaged in. School leaders have recently spoken with children to establish their attitudes and views towards RE and these are generally positive. Most children describe RE as being 'fun' and 'interesting' and the majority enjoy it. Developing the use of assessment in RE was a focus area for development at the last inspection and this was only actioned very recently by the new acting headteacher. Currently standards and progress in RE are difficult to evaluate as the assessment and record keeping systems are new and there is no historic data for RE attainment. The school had already recognised the need to embed the new system in order to effectively track progress and ensure that assessment is informing teaching and learning in RE. The temporary subject leader, working closely with the substantive leader, has an accurate understanding of what needs to improve in RE. She has put measures in place to address areas for development although it is too soon to see the impact that these have on standards and progress in the subject. She and the rector have started monitoring the quality of provision in RE through book scrutiny. There are clear plans in place to develop this further.

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

The school is led by a highly effective acting headteacher who has a clear Christian vision for the school which is clearly articulated. She very quickly, after taking on the role of acting headteacher, identified key areas for development regarding the school's Christian character. She has taken swift action to put measures into place to address these. Plans for the development of the school's Christian character form part of the school's development plan confirming the high priority this area is now given. The acting headteacher has a clear understanding of how the Christian character impacts on all areas of school life, particularly relationships which are held in high regard. Parents and staff appreciate her 'open door' and willingness to spend time listening and supporting them whenever it is needed. There is a well-established, uncompromising partnership between the school, church and wider community which is treasured by all members of the community. One parent described this as the church and school being 'a continuous circle'. The acting headteacher and governing body work extremely closely with the rector who is well-loved and respected by children, staff and parents alike. The rector has a clear understanding of what it means to be a distinctively Christian school. She, together with the chair of governors, has been influential in shaping plans to bring about improvements, particularly during this academic year. This partnership has a positive impact on the children's understanding of their local community and wider church family. There are new plans in place to hold confirmation classes in school which many children and staff have expressed interest in. The rector and the rest of the governing body are a committed group who provide a good level of support to the acting headteacher and other school staff. They are beginning to formally monitor and evaluate the school's distinctive Christian character through class links and monitoring visits. It is difficult to see the impact this has had yet. The school engages actively with the Diocese and makes the most of training opportunities available. Arrangements for RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements.

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