

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Chilmark and Fonthill Bishop Voluntary Aided Primary School

The Street
Chilmark
Salisbury
SP3 5AR

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Salisbury
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Wiltshire
Date of inspection	February 20 2018
Date of last inspection	March 5 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 126438
Headteacher	Adam Smith
Inspector's name and number	Susan Bowen 916

School context

Chilmark and Fonthill Bishop is a smaller than average primary school with 63 pupils on roll. Pupils are mainly of White British heritage and the number known to be eligible for free school meals are below national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs/disabilities is also below the national average. Pupils are taught in mixed age year groups in three classes, including a class of Reception and Year 1 pupils. There are currently no Year 6 pupils on roll. The school has undergone very significant changes in staffing and to its governing body in the last two years following a major restructuring. The headteacher has been in post since February 2016.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Chilmark and Fonthill Bishop CE VA School as a Church of England school are good

- The headteacher's commitment and passion to the Christian ethos of the school ensures that it is continually improving.
- A collaborative approach to leadership ensures a consistent approach to the strategic direction of Chilmark and Fonthill Bishop as a church school.
- Pupils are happy, confident and at ease when talking about matters of faith.
- Opportunities to live out their Christian values in the wider community help pupils to appreciate and serve the need of others.

Areas to improve

- To enhance children's understanding of the teaching of Jesus by developing the 'Words of Power' as more distinctively Christian.
- To develop children's independence by providing opportunities for them to plan and deliver acts of worship.
- To ensure that accurate assessment in religious education (RE) effectively tracks pupil progress and identifies improvements in planning.
- To create a formalised process for the monitoring and evaluation of Christian ethos and worship that leads to continued and focussed school improvement.

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

Leaders and staff at Chilmark and Fonthill Bishop School work hard to fulfil a shared vision that ensures the individual needs of pupils are met. The vision was reviewed in 2017 when a range of values, referred to as 'Christian Words of Power', were introduced to underpin the work of the school. Pupils view these as universal values that are present in many different faiths and therefore have not yet fully developed an appreciation of their roots in Christian teaching. The school has worked hard to give these values purpose and ensure that they become central to the Christian vision. One child said that the 'Words of Power' were 'not really about God' but were there 'to help you to get through your life and be happy'. Pupils speak clearly about the expectations of their behaviour and they can link this to the 'Words of Power'. They have a very good sense of the school as a place that develops them as thoughtful people, regardless of their personal faith.

Governors talk about recent improvements in behaviour across the school and link this to the development of the values, thought-provoking acts of worship and the relationships between adults at the school that provide a model to the children. Older pupils have some responsibility for younger pupils at playtimes and during lunch, developing their social skills and building strong and supportive relationships.

Pupils talk animatedly of their successful fundraising activities, organised by the School Council and the School Pupil Events Committee. Pupils have a clear understanding of the needs of others and are encouraged to research organisations for which they raise money. One example of this was a representative from the Julia's House hospice being invited by pupils to the school to explain what their money would be spent on. Pupils say fundraising activities are good because 'we don't just do things for ourselves'.

There is a developing system for improving assessment in RE and governors appreciate that this is work in progress. The headteacher is currently tracking attainment and progress in 'book looks' and provides training to staff when required. There is no current moderation of RE work with other schools. Most pupils make good progress and know that their recorded work, and ideas, are encouraged and valued. In a religious education (RE) lesson where pupils' responses involved discussion of challenging topics, they listened carefully to each other and responded with sensitivity.

Parents feel that their views are listened to and acted upon and that any issues are dealt with quickly and effectively. There is a developing sense of community in the school and leaders are proud that the school is increasingly seen as a valuable part of village life. A large wooden cross in the school has been thoughtfully painted by the children to reflect their values and has become known in the village as 'the Chilmark cross'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is an important part of the life of the school and pupils readily relate their understanding of the school's ethos to it. Pupils experience a variety of worship styles delivered by school staff, clergy and an 'Open the Book' team. Acts of worship are well-planned to reflect the life of the school as well as the Christian calendar. The clergy team see the school as their 'largest congregation' and work hard to ensure that opportunities are taken to link Bible stories with the school's 'Words of Power.'

Worship reflects the school's aims to encourage pupils to become independent thinkers. Pupils have opportunities to reflect and think throughout worship and to make up their own minds on the issues raised. There are regular occasions for pupils to become involved in charity or community work following what has been learnt in worship. Parents appreciate the way that worship 'captivates' their children and encourages them to think of the needs of others. They are kept well informed of worship themes through a weekly newsletter and appreciate opportunities to join the children for worship. Pupils visit the local church for services as well as using it as a resource to support teaching in RE. There are plans to reintroduce a Eucharist service at the school. There has been some recent monitoring of collective worship but the evaluation of this is not yet regularly informing school improvement.

Pupils have some opportunities to take part in worship by reading prayers, organising music and lighting a candle. They enjoy 'acting out' and feel that this 'makes the stories easier to remember'. Silent moments of reflection are appreciated by the pupils, as well as the 'exciting songs' they sing with enthusiasm. Children are keen to take a greater role in the planning and leading of worship. They feel well-equipped to do this because of their regular chances to present to the class in lessons. There are regular opportunities for children to pray throughout the school day, including in 'mini acts of worship' before lunchtimes and again during lunch when children and staff pause to offer prayers for individual pupils in the school. Pupils have a very respectful attitude towards prayer. One pupil explained how, although he chose not to pray in worship, he was very mindful to be quiet and not touch the person next to him who was praying. Although the school's definition of spirituality is not explicitly shared, pupils have an understanding that sometimes people enjoy quiet reflective contemplation. They appreciate the school's peace garden as a place where 'you can just daydream and be quiet without praying and without being embarrassed.' The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

The school has adopted 'Discovery RE' as the scheme of work to support the delivery of the religious education syllabus and is also in the process of introducing the 'Understanding Christianity' resource. Teachers appreciate that the emphasis on enquiry and the acquisition of skills in the scheme of work create greater opportunities for pupils to be more involved in their learning. Religious Education lessons are therefore planned to encourage pupils to ask questions, rather than concentrating on finding a 'right answer' to matters of faith. When pupils are given the opportunity to ask questions they become proactive, engaged and enthusiastic. During an RE lessons observed, motivated pupils were discussing their ideas, thinking deeply and reflecting on others' views on difficult subjects including death and funerals. The formal monitoring and evaluation of RE has only recently started and is not yet firmly embedded. A tracking system is being established and teachers are changing planning according to assessment, but it is too early to ascertain the impact on standards at this stage. Not all books evidence sufficient differentiation or extended learning for able pupils.

The RE leader is the headteacher and he is committed to the subject. Pupils enjoy learning about other religions, show respect to those of different beliefs and are open to having their own views questioned. Pupils demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith but their knowledge of other faiths is sometimes less secure. Pupils draw comparisons between different religions, for example pupils discuss the differences in prayer within Christianity and Islam. Pupils enjoy the practical activities in RE lessons, particularly when they work with the school's artist in residence to develop RE concepts. The school is mindful not to rely solely on written outcomes in assessing RE knowledge and understanding but to use a wider range of evidence.

Some visitors have been invited to the school to enhance the learning in RE. At this stage pupils do not have opportunities to visit alternative places of worship to enrich their learning. One pupil commented that visiting a variety of religious buildings would greatly improve children's understanding of other faiths.

The school meets the statutory requirements for RE.

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

With a number of new staff and a new governing body, the headteacher led the school in revisiting the vision and values of the school in Autumn 2017. The outcome was a set of values, termed Christian 'Words of Power', identified to support the school's vision. The headteacher is committed to the school's Christian ethos and the need for it to be constantly revisited so that it remains fresh and meaningful to all members of the school community. The headteacher, staff and the governing body have clear ownership of the vision which is manifested through the caring, respectful relationships that are demonstrated by adults and pupils alike.

The drive to improve standards and to raise aspirations, shared by all, and with the development of the whole child at its centre, is seen as the main priority. For example, pupils' are encouraged to take ownership over their learning by choosing the level of difficulty they attempt in lessons. Teachers ensure that their choices are appropriate and challenging. The headteacher's collaborative approach to leadership is welcomed and appreciated by governors, staff, parents and pupils who feel that they are listened to and their views respected. One governor commented that the headteacher's personal faith meant that the school experiences 'true Christian leadership.' The distinctive Christian character of the school is being developed and strengthened but leaders have yet to put in place formal monitoring and evaluation systems to measure impact. There is some informal monitoring but this lacks the systematic approach to enable evaluation to inform future development.

Teachers are confident in the delivery of RE and how it supports the ethos of the school, encouraging reflection and debate around 'big questions'. They feel supported by the headteacher and say that they have benefitted from professional development opportunities. Systems of monitoring and evaluation of RE are in their infancy and it is too early to use this to accurately assess progress of children over time.

Links to the church are good and pupils have a varied diet of worship and prayer opportunities. Relationships with the wider community are developing and this is recognised and welcomed by parents, pupils and members of the village.

The governing body is especially committed to staff well-being. This is evident through the effective support from one governor who has responsibility for the pastoral support of the staff team. Good use is also made of diocesan support with both the headteacher and staff attending training linked to church schools. Chilmark and Fonthill Bishop has a good capacity to continue to improve as a church school.