

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### St Peter's Church of England Primary School

Potters Green Cowfold West Sussex RH13 8QZ

**Current SIAMS inspection grade**

**Outstanding**

**Diocese**

**Chichester**

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Local authority

West Sussex

Date of inspection

23 January 2018

Date of last inspection

8/9 May 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Primary Voluntary Aided 126025

Headteacher

Giles Kolter

Inspector's name and number

Hilary Ferries 276

#### School context

St Peter's serves the village of Cowfold and the majority of the families live in the village. It is a smaller than average school with 126 pupils on roll. The headteacher and all the staff have joined the school since the last inspection. The headteacher has been in post five years. The percentage of pupils entitled to the Pupil Premium is below the national average, as is the percentage of pupils for whom English is an additional language, those from minority ethnic groups and those with Special Educational Needs / Disability (SEND). The school was judged by Ofsted to be good in 2016.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Peter's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The Christian ethos of care and inclusion makes pupils feel welcomed and is founded on strong Christian values and relationships.
- Senior leaders articulate and promote the Christian vision through all aspects of school life.
- Rigorous self-evaluation means that the school knows itself well and plans for continuous improvement for the school as a church school.
- The lively worship engages pupils and is relevant to their everyday lives.
- The developing curriculum for religious education (RE) based on the enquiry approach leads to high standards and pupil and staff enthusiasm.

#### Areas to improve

- Develop the enquiry approach in RE to the learning about all world faiths.
- Formalise the involvement of the parents in self-evaluation of the school to ensure all voices are heard.
- Reinforce the context of the Christian values so pupils can readily link them to their biblical roots.
- Plan systematically the teaching about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit to aid pupils' developing familiarity with the Trinity.

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

The school's vision 'St Peter's is a caring Christian community, where we love, learn and aim for excellence', summarised into the motto, 'aim high, love, learn', is central to all the school does. One pupil said, 'The values help us to learn, they give us something to follow'. The dedicated care for their wellbeing translates into excellent progress for all pupils.

An INSET day in 2017 for staff and governors, led by the parish priest, reviewed the vision, mission and values to cement and embed the Christian ethos. Feedback from the day was very positive. One member of staff said, 'we value that everyone has something to give' and this supports the ethos. Relationships, between all members of the school community and the wider community are very strong. Everyone can articulate the Christian values and can talk about the importance of them to learning. Christian attitudes are linked to learning characters and pupils are given stickers when they demonstrate these values. To help the pupils associate the Christian values with their biblical teaching, the school has introduced attractive photos that link the values with biblical quotes that are displayed around the school. Pupils are interested and excited by their RE learning and this contributes well to the Christian character of the school.

Opportunities for spiritual, moral social and cultural development are outstanding. They appear in strands woven through the lively curriculum that enable pupils to develop deep thinking and the application of the Christian values to their learning. These include a strong theme of caring for the planet. Behaviour in the school is excellent and the behaviour policy is based on the concept of forgiveness. Play leaders ensure that everyone in the school has someone to play with and pupils enjoy the opportunities to take on responsibility. Pupils contribute to both local and global charities and the links with a school in Nepal reinforces their understanding of Christianity as a worldwide faith. This was the theme of the key stage one Christmas play, which further strengthened understanding. The school leadership team is also aware of the importance of pupils understanding the multicultural nature of modern Britain and address this through links with other schools in the UK and through the celebration of cultures represented in the school community.

The school has addressed the recommendation from the previous inspection to 'make greater use of the school's external environment so that it more fully reflects its church school status'. The development of the spiritual garden, designed by the pupils and built by the whole community, displays around the school, reflection areas in each classroom and the 'values wheel' on the school gate all reflect the Christian character of the school and support and contribute to its strong Christian distinctiveness.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Collective worship is central to the life of St Peter's. All teaching staff lead worship at some stage in the school year and the well-planned programme takes each of the Christian values and events from the church year as themes on a two-year cycle. Pupils say they enjoy the range of worship, held inside, outside and in the church and the opportunities they have to take an active part. One of the strengths is the application of the worship to everyday life, both observed in the inspection and in the planning and monitoring. Pupils and parents talk about the impact of worship in this regard. Pupils said, 'it is peaceful, and we listen to readings,' 'it makes me feel happier and calmer and respect people more', 'I learnt about courage in worship and it helped me when I was on the top of a giant swing on residential'.

Year 6 pupils plan and lead the services held in church each term, which increases their engagement and understanding of liturgy. The creation of a 'worship committee of pupils' is taking this further as they will lead worship in school. Reflection and prayer are important to the school. The worship committee, made up of two pupils from each class has reviewed the reflection areas in each class and devised questions that pupils can use for reflection and prayer boxes in every classroom. As well as prayers at lunchtime and home time, pupils talk of the importance of prayer, giving the example of praying before football matches. One pupil said, 'we use prayer to ask for forgiveness or hope' and another, 'when we pray, God will always be there'. The planning shows that there are frequent references made to the Trinity. Pupils have strong connection with God and Jesus, but are less confident in talking about the Trinity, which the school has identified as an area for further development.

The close relationship with the church and the positive involvement of local clergy means that pupils are able to talk confidently about Christian celebrations and festivals. The Parish Priest and the curate contribute to this by the worship they lead weekly. Collective worship is monitored by governors and senior leaders. They use the feedback

to consider how it can be further developed. Pupils are invited to complete feedback cards on most days where they can write about what the worship meant to them and these are collected also. These support the school's thorough evaluation and mean that worship is kept fresh and relevant.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

The school quickly addressed the issue of assessment in RE identified in the last inspection, but now has a different RE curriculum. This includes the introduction of 'Understanding Christianity', material that develops a more challenging question and enquiry approach. There has been support from the Diocesan Education Team, which has been welcomed by staff who are very positive about teaching and learning in RE. Pupils also commented that their RE lessons had become more demanding. This can be seen in the scrutiny of work and the feedback pupils are given in their books and has led to higher standards. One pupil said, 'harder questions make it fun and remind us of the purpose'. All pupils are positive about RE. They like the range of activities and the 'deep thinking' and high level of challenge. Some pupils also recognised the difference it can make to people's lives; 'RE is important so that we have a link to God'. 'RE makes me think about what I am doing as a person and what I am like as a person'.

The RE curriculum has an appropriate balance of Christianity and other world faiths and staff are developing the enquiry approach through all aspects of the subject. The quality of teaching observed in the inspection and from the frequent monitoring of the subject is at least good. The use of artefacts in reception and year one brings the curriculum alive and contributions from families of other faiths are welcomed and make children feel valued. The school has not yet adapted all the units from world faiths to reflect the enquiry approach, which limits the learning opportunities.

RE is seen as important to the school and leadership gives support, through INSET days and time in staff meetings. Pupils are making good progress in RE and standards are high. There has been a focus on the quality of teaching and the comprehensive monitoring and evaluation which includes lesson observation, work scrutiny and assessment of the learning contributes to this. Governors also monitor on a regular basis and offer challenge and support to the leadership team to ensure that the subject is well taught.

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

The headteacher, governors and staff are clear about their vision of St Peter's as a Church of England School. It is clearly articulated and shared with the whole community and seen as integral to the school's success. Christian values are embedded and celebrated and form the basis of decision making by leadership. As a result, the school is inclusive and welcoming to all. One parent said, 'I like the Christian values and that everyone is welcome. We see that the values lead to happy, confident and well cared for children'. Governors say 'the headteacher has made a positive difference. He has developed and grown the Christian nature of the school even further; everything links together and is inclusive'.

There is rigorous and thorough self-evaluation of the school as church school carried out by the SIAMS working group, which is part of the Curriculum and Ethos group. This means the school knows itself well and is continually striving to improve. The priority areas from the evaluation are transferred into school priorities in the school development plan. The challenge provided by the governing body ensures the school constantly reviews its effectiveness as a church school. Parents are well informed, very positive and support the Christian values of the school. They think the school is well led and feel that leadership is always ready to listen. However, there has not been a recent formal collection of their views.

There are excellent relationships with the local church and the local community and shared events bring the whole community together. These include the History Society and poppy planting for Remembrance Day, which bring the generations together and lead to strong bonds. There are also very good links with the local church. The 'short and sweet' service on the second Sunday of each month has growing numbers and has been developed to meet the needs of family worship and this provides a further link. The parish priest is a regular visitor to school, both leading worship and providing pastoral support.

RE subject leadership has recently passed from the headteacher to a senior leader and there has been an effective handover, which has meant RE has continued to improve. There has been significant change in staff since the last inspection. In addition to a change of headteacher, other senior leaders have moved to headships in local schools and the school is now developing staff from within the school with the creation of two senior leaders. This provides strong succession planning for church schools and reflects the Christian vision and values of the school. The school meets the statutory requirements for religious education and collective worship.