

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

### Lewknor Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

High Street, Lewknor, Watlington, Oxfordshire OX49 5TH

**Current SIAMS inspection grade**

**Outstanding**

**Diocese**

**Oxford**

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

Oxfordshire

Name of multi-academy trust / federation

N/A

Date/s of inspection

16 June 2017

Date of last inspection

13 July 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Controlled Primary 123128

Headteacher

Deborah Cole

Inspector's name and number

Jenny Earp 288

#### School context

Lewknor Church of England Primary is a small village school with 80 pupils on roll, serving the village of Lewknor, as well as several surrounding villages. There are four classes from the Reception Class up to Year 6, with an average class size of 16. Pupils come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, with 97% being White British. The percentage of pupils with a special educational need is relatively high. Since the last SIAMS inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed and the school works in a collaborative partnership with six other Watlington schools.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Lewknor Primary as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Christian values are embedded in every aspect of school life meaning that they have a significant impact on the lives of the whole school community.
- Pupils' academic and personal gifts and talents are very well celebrated and each child is recognised as a Child of God.
- Links with the local church are outstanding, resulting in a highly developed sense of community, which enriches the worshipping life of the school.
- Acts of worship make an important contribution to the pupils' understanding of Christian values and how they make a difference to their everyday lives.

#### Areas to improve

- Foster more strategies, which will allow pupils to encounter different faiths and diverse traditions in order to deepen pupils' understanding of a multi-faith and multi-cultural world.
- Enhance spirituality throughout the school community by developing the strategic role the children have in planning and evaluating worship, so that they can contribute further to the embedding of the Christian values of the school.

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

Lewknor Primary School is a caring and happy place. The school's core values of 'friendship, integrity and wisdom' are firmly embedded and lived out in the life of the school. They make a significant contribution to the high quality of relationships throughout the school community and have a positive impact on the pupils' learning. Pupils are able to explain how the values can be seen in action every day in the way everyone is kind and respects each other. One pupil commented, 'Our values make us a church school and our teachers are the best role models because they are so kind'. The school's distinctive Christian character has a significant impact on the children's high academic achievement and attendance. This can be seen in the strong commitment to ensure that all pupils achieve well and flourish within this Christian and nurturing community. As a result, pupils thrive both academically and personally, making good progress from their various starting points. The school's ethos also means that a range of talents and gifts exhibited inside and outside of school are well celebrated. The children say they particularly enjoy receiving the 'Smart' certificates, as well as opportunities to be 'values ambassadors'. This is a system where badges can be won and collected by children whose behaviour demonstrates good friendship, wisdom and integrity. Strategies to promote personal awareness are highly effective. A Reflection Room gives pupils an opportunity to reflect on their behaviour and how they can improve. Pupils fill out reflection forms, which make their actions personal to them and this approach helps to ensure behaviour at the school is excellent. Pupils talk about the beneficial effects of reflection and how this allows them to focus on their work and gives them time to think. The school's Christian character supports the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils very well. This can be seen in the broad, rich curriculum, as well as the many opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities such as cooking, singing and sports clubs. A number of Christian displays are on show throughout the school, such as a wooden cross at the back of the schoolhouse. This is close to a peaceful area, where members of the school community may sit quietly and reflect on events or pray. Artwork by the children and photographs are also displayed in the church, highlighting the school's values and demonstrating how they are put into practice. For instance, showing the older children helping the younger ones, how the buddy system works and examples of how the children share. Relationships throughout the school are outstanding. They are built on key Christian values of trust and friendship linked to stories about the life of Jesus. This results in a strong sense of belonging to the school community and as one child said, 'we are just like a family'. Although pupils are aware that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith, there are fewer examples of how the Christian character promotes an understanding of diverse communities, an area senior management are aware of and are currently addressing. The school promotes good attendance and tackles issues relating to attendance and exclusion effectively, using strategies that reflect its Christian character. Pupils fundraise to support several national and international charities, as well as helping a child in Ghana to attend school. This is another example of values in action. Religious education (RE) has a high profile and makes a significant contribution to the Christian character of the school. The energetic RE subject leader is committed to and effective in leading the subject. As a result, she contributes deeply and positively to the school's overall Christian ethos. She has successfully introduced the new Oxford Agreed Syllabus and has set high expectations for staff and pupils. This is now securely embedded following staff training and diocesan support. Very effective teaching in RE enables children to think deeply about their feelings and those of others. This was evident during a Year 5 lesson in a 'discussion circus' where pupils were offered excellent opportunities to reflect on deep questions, exploring their own ideas around the quote 'I have come that people might have life and have it in all its fullness'. One pupil said, 'you can say what you think, there is no right or wrong, just our opinions'. Younger children were able to retell the story of Creation and give their ideas about God as the Creator in a free and open manner.

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

Collective worship is outstanding because the school promotes an explicit Christian vision and provides opportunities for pupils to encounter God. Daily acts of worship are inclusive, inspirational and engaging, offering all pupils and staff an outstanding rich spiritual experience of the Christian faith. Worship is planned thoroughly around the core values and closely linked to Bible stories, with a weekly focus that allows each value to be explored in greater depth. The school is situated adjacent to St. Margaret's Church, an exceptionally beautiful medieval church housing an Anglo-Saxon window and original William Morris stained glass windows, which is visited daily by the pupils. Because of this, pupils are very comfortable worshipping in the church environment and see it as an extension of their school environment. They are given time to appreciate the historical church furniture, the windows and can name most objects, symbols and artefacts found there. This helps pupils to foster a sense of awe and wonder and appreciate the beauty of this special place of worship. The love and pride exuded in the church during a special Father's Day service observed on the day of the inspection was tangible. The children participated enthusiastically, while their exuberant and heartfelt singing was a joy to experience. All parents, but especially fathers and grandfathers, were moved and felt privileged to be a part of this special service. Excellent links exist between the clergy and the school and the vicar is a welcome and regular visitor to the school, known by all pupils and parents.

Plans are in place to renovate the church and these are firmly linked with the needs of the children, who will benefit greatly from the planned extensive overhaul. Themes for collective worship focus on Christian values and the seasons of the church year. Celebrations of the major Christian festivals take place in the church and this enhances the pupils' experience of worship further. Collective worship regularly includes Bible stories and Christian teaching, which pupils are able to relate to the school's core values and their own lives. Key aspects of Anglican practice are embedded in school worship. For instance, this includes offering the sign of peace and the receiving of a blessing. This, together with the regular saying of the Lord's Prayer ensures pupils have an understanding of Church of England traditions. Pupils have an excellent grasp of the relationship between the Bible messages they hear and how values, based on the teachings of Jesus, have meaning for them today. When asked about collective worship, both pupils and parents say that it is a distinct time in the school day, important to everyone. Parents report that their children often relate what they have experienced in collective worship and feel they are fortunate to be part of a very unique school. The school provides very good opportunities for children to develop their understanding of the Trinity and pupils are articulate in explaining their understanding of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. One child described the Holy Trinity as 'like a braid; they both have three parts'. Children have a mature understanding of prayer and have good opportunities to pray throughout the school day. On the day of the inspection, the children were eager to recite the school prayer, 'This is our school, let peace live here' and did so with great enthusiasm and in a way that showed this prayer has real meaning to them. The Reflection Book enables pupils to share their thoughts about collective worship, expressing what they have learned and what they have reflected upon. Children undertake key roles in worship such as participating in the call to worship, read prayers and plan and lead some assemblies. Although the school has successfully addressed the development points from the previous inspection, the school is currently exploring ways in which pupils can be involved more in the strategic planning and evaluation of worship.

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

The appointment of the new headteacher has refreshed the established and ongoing effective work of the school, based on its Christian foundation. She provides dynamic, collaborative leadership that has impacted positively on school life and shows trust and confidence in the whole school team. In developing and enhancing the school's Christian ethos, she is ably supported by the subject leader for RE, who is also the collective worship coordinator. The RE leader ensures that developments in church school distinctiveness are shared with all staff through regular meetings and training events. The leadership of worship and religious education is therefore given a high priority and as a result there is highly effective practice in both areas. The headteacher is also empowering and developing other leaders in the school so that the staff are growing in confidence and knowledge and are thus very well prepared for future leadership across church schools. Christian values underpin the distinctive Christian character of the school and leaders have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. All members of the school community are aware of and can articulate the Christian values of the school, showing their high profile. As a result, there is a shared vision to deliver the very best provision for academic and personal development. This is demonstrated in the accurate self-evaluation and strategic improvement planning. Governors are supportive and are involved in the life of the school, visiting the school regularly to carry out monitoring activities to ensure that church school issues are given a high priority. For instance, they take part in and report on religious education lessons and acts of collective worship. They are provided with detailed information about attainment and progress and about key areas for further development. Governors are equally committed to the wellbeing of all pupils and staff, recognising that this is also an important aspect of the school's distinctive Christian character. Foundation governors when interviewed, identify the school's Christian ethos within the community as it's 'simply woven into the fabric of the school and the church and school work together'. The school is outward looking and enjoys well-established relationships with the Oxford Diocese, the local authority and partner schools. The exceptional partnership of the school with the church is a beacon of faith, hope and love in the local community. Relationships with parents are strong and they are very supportive of the school, particularly of the Christian values and ethos, especially appreciating the open approach of the school. In their opinion, the school is nurturing and very welcoming with 'a great sense of friendship'. This was demonstrated in the way two parents with serious illnesses, were supported with love and kindness by the whole school community. The parents spoken to on the day of the inspection agree that the school's Christian ethos is a prominent aspect of school life and is approached in a way that allows children to explore the meaning of faith and belief openly. The friends of Lewknor School (FoLS) support the school extremely well through active participation in school, church and community events. One Year 2 child expressed his love of the school in a very unique way by saying, 'I love this school; it's like a paradise resort'. The arrangements for religious education and collective worship meet statutory requirements.