

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Cookham Dean C of E Voluntary Aided Primary school

Bigfrith Lane Cookham Dean Berkshire SL6 9PH	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Oxford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Date/s of inspection	20 June 2017
Date of last inspection	22 June 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 109960
Headteacher	Fenella Reekie
Inspector's name and number	Lynne Thorogood 799

School context

Cookham Dean C of E Primary School (VA) is set in a village location and serves its local community on the outskirts of the town of Maidenhead. It is a smaller than average school of 186 pupils from largely White British families, with below average numbers of pupils with special educational needs and fewer pupils entitled to the Pupil Premium grant than in most schools. It is very popular with local families and is oversubscribed most years. A new head teacher was appointed in 2016. The school enjoys close links with St John the Baptist Church in the village.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Cookham Dean Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The head teacher, supported by leaders and governors, has established, and sustained, a deeply embedded and widely acknowledged Christian ethos that means the school's values have a clear impact on behaviour, attitudes to learning and pupils' enjoyment of school.
- The Christian values, clearly based on biblical teachings, are understood and embraced by all members of the school community and produce an outstanding sense of community and identity.
- A Christian belief in the value of each person results in a careful analysis of individual needs and achievements and the development of effective strategies to support the academic progress of all pupils.
- The inclusive and personalised approach to learning and care expresses the school's Christian foundation and determination to support the development of the whole child through a wide range of opportunities.
- Strong, mutually beneficial links with the church and the local community develop a sense of reciprocal service.

Areas to improve

- As part of the planned professional development in support of religious education (RE), leaders should ensure that the teaching of reflective work is as demanding as the challenge pupils enjoy in developing their understanding of religions and religious concepts.
- Ensure the school's Christian foundation and values are clearly reflected on the website and in relevant policies and documentation so that these match the school's good practice and Christian focus.
- Building on existing good practice, provide opportunities for pupils to evaluate and contribute to the planning of collective worship to further enhance Christian distinctiveness.

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

Pupils and parents are clear that the Christian character, vision and values of Cookham Dean school are at the heart of all its endeavours and that they are a positive driving motivation. Pupils speak powerfully of the impact of the school's core Christian values on attitudes, behaviours, beliefs and a commitment to learning. They say the values teach them to look after one another. Almost everyone describes the school as being 'one big family' where all care for and help each other. This is understood to be the living out of Christian values and teachings which underpin excellent behaviour and relationships. Parents recognise in teachers and governors a commitment to serve which for many is an aspect of their Christian faith. This prompts them to strive to provide the best and most supportive opportunities for all pupils, matched to individual needs and in some cases, the needs of their families. The result of this detailed analysis is high quality academic and pastoral support which enables pupils to make good progress, attain high standards and develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally (SMSC). The school's environment offers areas and spaces for pupils to use for personal prayer, including the prayer space in the hall. Pupils also say they use the garden and outside areas for quiet reflection. This enhances spiritual development. The school's Christian commitment to all round development and challenge is exemplified by the very wide range of extra-curricular activities, including lunchtime and after school clubs, day visits and residential journeys, which are offered to all pupils. The range includes sports, music, gardening, crafts and outdoor pursuits. Disadvantaged pupils and those receiving the pupil premium funding are supported financially by the school to ensure all have equal access to this enriched curriculum. This builds their confidence, sets high aspirations and encourages them to try out new things. Pupils enjoy and speak with pride about their own and one another's successes through all the opportunities they have to 'shine'. Year 6 pupils enjoy their additional roles of responsibility, including as mentors and buddies in support of the youngest children and they realise how this develops their sense of responsibility. Pupils say that there is no bullying and parents confirm that those children who might be singled out for attention because of race, faith or other difference are accepted. Through their learning in RE pupils develop a good understanding of and respect for religious diversity. They readily explain how this helps them understand and be respectful of people who are different and they know this is important. They learn something of the different ways Christianity is lived in other countries. In response to the recommendation in the last report, global awareness is further promoted through links with a Sierra Leone charity. RE is also a forum in which pupils learn and use religious language accurately while exploring questions which interest them. Members of the local clergy team are frequent and welcome visitors to the school and are well known and liked by pupils, many of whom are members of local church groups such as brownies or the church holiday club. Clergy fill several roles within the school community including as a governor, contributing to RE teaching, pastoral care and leading worship. This reinforces the already strong links between the school and church, which together, in the words of one parent, 'form the heart of the community'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils and adults alike speak positively about worship in the variety of contexts in which it takes place. It is through worship that the Christian significance of the school's values is most fully explored. Pupils explain that through the 'God's Storyteller' and clergy assemblies they learn how values are linked with biblical teachings, and can give appropriate examples. Planning is shared by the head teacher and clergy, and helps pupils understand the continuing relevance of the Bible and the values that arise from its teachings. Pupils also explain that what they learn during worship influences relationships and behaviour throughout the school, for instance in reminding them of the need for forgiveness in the case of a disagreement. For these reasons, worship is seen as an important aspect of the day to day life of the school. In response to the recommendation in the last report, there are many opportunities for pupils to participate in worship services, including role play and reading prayers. They enjoy this active participation and responsibility. Pupils discuss aspects of worship willingly and enthusiastically, and offer many ideas for further development. However, there are few opportunities for them to plan worship and the school does not currently have a systematic approach to gathering pupils' evaluation of its impact. This potentially limits opportunities for the best possible future developments. Pupils comment positively about the worship songs they sing and how clergy visitors make worship fun and easy to understand. They understand the significance of major Christian festivals because clergy services follow the liturgical year. Several Anglican prayers and elements of the liturgy are regularly used, and pupils respond confidently to prompts. This is successfully developing their familiarity with and understanding of traditions of Anglican worship and the importance of Jesus for Christians. Opportunities for prayer and reflection are frequent and valued by pupils. This effectively promotes spiritual development. Several events each year are celebrated in church, including harvest and Christmas and pupils participate in and even lead worship on these occasions. Parents are invited to services in church, and these are very well supported including by parents of other faiths. Pupils are familiar with the language of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit used by worship leaders. Older pupils who have also learned about the Christian concept of the Trinity in RE are able to

speak about it with impressive maturity, saying, 'they are all God but in different aspects'. They describe the Holy Spirit as being around them and inside them, bringing both comfort and inspiration.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious education (RE) is recognised as an important subject within the wider curriculum. The subject leader is enthusiastic and energetic in her commitment to the continuing development of the subject across the school. She took on this responsibility during the current academic year and is using a system of assessment and record keeping which has enabled the school to track pupils' progress and attainment. This information suggests that most pupils are attaining high standards which compare with their achievement in core subjects. Their detailed understanding of each pupil, team approach to the monitoring of teaching and learning and work scrutiny all help teachers understand the progress pupils are making. The school uses the Oxford Diocesan RE syllabus 'Living Faith' which ensures well-balanced coverage of a broad range of topics. Pupils value the subject for what they learn about Christianity and other faiths. Clergy support teaching at various points in the year. Pupils learn effectively because teaching is consistently good or outstanding, drawing on a range of sources and activities that engage their interest and support their SMSC development. They enjoy the subject and talk with good recollection, age appropriate understanding and reflective insight on topics they have studied. They readily link the school's Christian values with issues arising from discussion in RE lessons and with biblical sources. In books, the best marking by teachers identifies what has been done well and poses questions to extend pupils' thinking, such as, 'So why was the Holy Spirit important in this story?' Pupils are then given the opportunity to respond. However, sometimes the tasks set do not allow pupils to demonstrate the high quality of their learning evidenced in some discussion and interactive activities. There is also evidence to suggest that on occasions the challenge of reflective work is not equal to that of pupils' engagement with new religious knowledge and concepts. In the short time she has been in post, the subject leader has completed an audit of the subject area and put an action plan in place. She has identified staff training needs and colleagues are appreciative of the well-targeted support offered. Leaders and managers have prioritised the development of staff expertise in the teaching of RE in a church school context in the coming year. Against the background of commitment to being 'the best we can be' it is easy to see that there is capacity for rapid improvement.

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

Since the headteacher has been in post, she has reinvigorated the school's understanding of itself as a Church school. She ensures that all members of the community are clear that Cookham Dean is a Christian school and are aware of its distinctively Anglican character. A parent commented that the Christian faith is a normal part of school life 'woven through everything'. The headteacher's own faith shines through. She is held in very high esteem and her clarity of purpose and the standards she expects are explicitly articulated, well-known and supported by her colleagues, governors and parents. However, the richness of the school's distinctiveness is not always clearly reflected in its self-evaluation, documentation, or the website. All stakeholders understand the impact the values have on learning and well-being. Governors have a thorough and accurate understanding of all aspects of the school which ensures high standards of achievement and well-being are maintained. They use data efficiently to identify needs enabling early intervention strategies to be established so that pupils are sometimes unaware of the additional support they receive. The school's commitment to its Christian values drives decision making and strategic planning. For instance, governors have prioritised providing accommodation for a nurture group in order to support the most disadvantaged pupils. Motivated by Christian principles, they also agreed to spending beyond the available pupil premium grant to pay for a taxi to ensure that children from a vulnerable family are able to attend school more regularly. Governors are fully involved in all aspects of the life and work of the school, and following recommendations in the previous SIAMS report, monitor and evaluate all provision as well as distinctiveness. Reports are also prepared for the Parochial Church Council and parents have regular opportunities to give views and feedback. This is an excellent response to the development point. Parents confirm they feel 'listened to' and that communication with the school is very good. Many are enormously appreciative of the impact the school has on their children and respond by volunteering their time and skills because they 'want to give something back' and feel part of the school community. Staff professional development has a focus on the school's priorities, and all teachers and support staff are given opportunities to develop skills. Leaders have allocated responsibility for RE to a teacher who is highly committed to its development, which is a focus for the coming year. The school's capacity to develop leaders for church schools is demonstrated by the promotion of the current head teacher from within the staff. Excellent links with the diocese, other local schools, St John the Baptist church and its ministry team, and local organisations such as the local care home, all enhance the profile of the school in the community and bring reciprocal benefits. The school meets all statutory requirements for the provision of RE and collective worship.