

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

All Saints Church of England Primary School and Nursery

Parsonage Lane, Bishop's Stortford, CM23 5BE

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Local authority: Hertfordshire

Dates of inspection: 24 April 2015

Date of last inspection: 20 October 2009

School's unique reference number: 117472

Headteacher: Heidi Otranen

Inspector's name and number: Lilian Weatherley 42

School context

All Saints Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School and Nursery is an averaged size primary school with one nursery class. The school is situated in the Parish of All Saints Bishop's Stortford and there are 230 pupils currently on roll with 24 pupils in the nursery. The majority of the pupils are of white British origin. The proportion of pupils who are disabled, have special educational needs or are supported through school action plus or pupil premium is below average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of All Saints Church of England Primary School and Nursery is 'outstanding'

- Standards of attainment and progress are high and based on sound Christian teachings and values
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent and underpinned by a clear understanding of Christian teaching and values
- The outstanding leadership and enthusiasm of the headteacher, strongly supported by the staff, clergy and governing body, make this school an outstanding example of a church school
- Religious education (RE), prayer and worship have a high profile across the school
- The rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the school's Christian character is having a significant impact on standards in RE and the quality of the collective worship
- The effective links with the parish church and the diocese are having a significant impact on the school's distinctive Christian character

Areas to improve

- Raise standards in RE from good to outstanding by ensuring that all teachers are confident and fully equipped with the subject knowledge to challenge pupils' thinking and their understanding of a religious vocabulary
- Ensure that pupils have confidence to use a religious vocabulary for Christianity and the other faiths studied
- To ensure consistency across all classes continue to develop a more consistent approach to marking and pupil feedback.

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

All Saints Primary School and Nursery is a school where learning is fun and teachers aim to inspire. Standards of attainment are significantly above average and expectations and aspirations are high. This is an inclusive school, where from the nursery to Year 6 each pupil is viewed as an individual in the sight of God. All pupils make good or better progress. There is an infectious atmosphere of love for learning and teaching throughout the school. Relationships are outstanding and underpinned by a clear set of Christian values and beliefs. Detailed planning and staff training ensure that all staff, including teaching assistants, know and understand the theological background for these values. As a result, the values have had a significant impact on the pupils, their attitudes and behaviour, all of which are exceptional. Pupils are confident to talk about values and how they have an impact on their individual lives. Interactive displays also help pupils to reflect on the ways in which these values affect their lives. One pupil explained, 'Studying the value of perseverance has helped me to get through when I am stuck and I try my hardest to try now'. Pupils say how much they enjoy learning, and attendance is high. They feel safe and secure and know that their voices are heard. They are polite and well mannered and exemplify the values taught. When asked about bullying, pupils responded that since they had been exploring the values of respect, forgiveness and compassion, bullying had stopped. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) is a strength of the school. Pupils are offered a rich curriculum in an inspirational learning environment. Displays reflect the high quality of work expected and provide opportunities for thinking, reflection and enquiry. The headteacher's file has many examples of how these creative and inspirational displays enable the pupils to reflect and add their own thoughtful, personal and poignant responses. Although Christian belief and values lie at the heart of this school, other faiths are recognised and valued. RE and worship offer a significant contribution to pupils' SMSC development and ensure that they have a good understanding of different cultures and beliefs. There is a detailed policy for British values and pupils learn about British culture. Black History Month has increased pupils' knowledge and understanding of how Britain comprises many ethnic groups. Pupils benefit from a wide range of activities. There is a popular breakfast club, the Owls after-school club and a range of extra-curricular activities including performing arts and French. Pupils explain how Christian values such as service and compassion encourage them to look beyond the school gates to the wider world and to support charitable giving. Pupils and parents regularly contribute to school fund raising events such as the Great Welly Walk for Farm Africa. Pupils also organise their own events such as cake sales. For a celebration Mass, pupils wrote, 'Dear God, on this day of celebration we thank you for the gift of learning. It is a pleasure to have our education in this school'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship at All Saints underpins all aspects of the school. Based on Christian values, it is central to the day and at the heart of the school. Worship is carefully planned with a liturgical format and meets statutory requirements. Pupils benefit from a variety of opportunities for prayer and worship throughout the day and each week. They have positive attitudes and an excellent knowledge and understanding of aspects of the Anglican tradition, the church year, the Trinity and key Christian prayers and greetings. School Eucharists take place five times a year for key festivals. Pupils explained how they went to the church and created Christian symbols in petals down the aisle for the festival of Corpus Christi. The new vicar said he was surprised to see over 64 children attend the Good Friday activity and that most were from the school. During a discussion about their work on Easter a Year I pupil was keen to point out, 'We remember the Last Supper and how Jesus broke the bread and drank the wine when we have Holy Communion'. Relevant Bible passages and explanations help to support Christian values such as honesty, respect and reverence, and give pupils a foundation on which to base their lives. The new worship garden has a huge impact on the pupils and all were eager to talk about its shape and how it is a place to sit quietly and reflect. 'I like the fact that we now have the worship area to relax, pray and think.' The worship observed on creation was an excellent example of the high quality of worship. Pupils showed 'respect and reverence' for the occasion. Music, singing and technology helped create an atmosphere in which a high level of SMSC development could take place. Pupils were engaged throughout and knew Christian greetings, prayers and dismissal. Parents and governors regularly attend worship and praise its quality. They appreciate being able to join in services both at school and in church. Pupils have opportunities to lead worship and they understand the importance of prayer. The prayer boxes and reflection areas in each classroom help pupils to cope with everyday situations and are having a significant impact. Pupils say how much they enjoy writing these prayers, and are keen to talk about the interactive displays linked into Christian values.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

RE has a high profile in the school. There is a detailed policy and statutory requirements are met. Assessment records and lesson observations show that standards and progress are good. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of Christianity and the other faiths studied. All pupils interviewed said how much they like learning about the various faith traditions. Pupils enjoy RE and have positive attitudes to the subject. They are eager to share their learning. 'RE is really fun. We planned pictures of the Easter story. I did the bit where Jesus rose from the dead. We learn a lot about Christianity and other religions.' By Year 6 pupils know key Bible stories, the life and teachings of Jesus, and can relate them to the gospel values studied. They know about the church and Christian symbols, and the life of some Christian saints and martyrs. Being 'All Saints' school the pupils are divided into four houses; St Alban, St Hilda, St Nicholas and St Francis. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the role these saints played in Christian history. 'I like the story of St Alban and how he risked his life for his beliefs.' From the nursery through to Year 6 RE is carefully planned to ensure pupils receive a balanced curriculum with continuity and progression. Other faiths are taught in each year group and pupils gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of the faiths represented in Great Britain. They were enthusiastic about their visit to the Hindu Temple, their knowledge of the Buddhist eightfold path, and Year 2 pupils were keen to explain some of the 99 beautiful names for Allah. The quality of teaching is good or better with examples of outstanding practice. Teachers have high expectations, engage pupils with exciting activities and challenge pupils' thinking. Lack of confidence with subject knowledge and religious language is unfortunately preventing teaching from being 'outstanding'. Since the recent Ofsted report (May 2014), presentation and marking has been a focus for the school. Marking in RE is improving and pupils are responding more to teachers' feedback. They take pride in their books and are keen to talk about their work. It was evident from the scrutiny of work that the work on Christian values has also had an impact on RE. The headteacher has taken over the role of subject leader and RE now lies at the heart of school improvement. RE days support the teaching of RE and the recent day on the Lord's Prayer has ensured that all pupils not only know the prayer but understand its meaning. From Year 1 the pupils were all excited to recite it and explain what they understood by each line. Regular training for teaching staff and teaching assistants has been effective in raising standards. The headteacher has ensured the availability of good resources and artefacts to support this.

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

Much has been achieved since the last SIAS inspection. The vision and enthusiasm of the headteacher has had a significant impact on all aspects of the school. Driven by the commitment of the headteacher, senior leadership, the foundation governors and clergy all are able to articulate this vision. Issues from the previous inspection have been met in full and links with the parish church are stronger. The chair of governors said, 'There is now a seamless link between the church and the school. The Christian distinctiveness is not an add-on but an integral part of the education'. The SIAMS action group plays a key role and 'SIAMS' is a standing item on the agenda for governing body meetings. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation of all areas of the school and its distinctive Christian character ensure that staff and governors have an accurate picture of the school, pupil standards and performance. Parents' and pupils' views are sought and all know that their views will be listened to and acted upon. Year 6 pupils, for example, question younger pupils about worship and Christian values. When asked what he learned from the worship, one pupil wrote, 'God will always forgive you. Forgiveness is a precious thing'. Parents feel part of the school and are very positive about the education pupils receive. Those interviewed praised the impact of the Christian values programme as key to the children's behaviour at home as well as at school. 'I like the values that are instilled in the life of the school.' There are strong and effective links with the parish church of All Saints and the Diocese of St Albans. Regular training on the school's distinctive character takes place for all staff and teaching assistants. This ensures that the Christian character maintains a high profile, underpins the whole curriculum and that all staff are developed as future leaders of church schools. In the words of a parent, 'The Christian faith is positively and actively used within the school day to encourage, guide and teach the children. Other faiths are positively recognised too. Every child is accepted for who they are, regardless of ability, and is encouraged to develop personally as well as academically as an individual and not as a statistic. The school has a highly caring and nurturing environment, shown through teachers, staff and the children. All Saints is so very fortunate to have Miss Otranen leading a dedicated and positive team.'