

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Portesham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Winters Close, Portesham, Weymouth, Dorset. DT3 4HP

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Diocese	Salisbury
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Dorset
Date of inspection	7 December 2017
Date of last inspection	22 November 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary Voluntary Aided 113833
Headteacher	Vicky Prior
Inspector's name and number	Rev David Hatrey 844

School context

Portesham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary is a smaller than average school. The majority of the children come from a White British heritage. The number of children who are entitled to pupil premium funding is below national averages and those who have special educational needs and/or a disability (SEND) is in-line with national averages.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Portesham as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- Children behave well, they show care and respect for one another as part of the family although they do not generally attribute this to the school's Christian ethos.
- Children make good academic progress and their achievements are at least in-line with national expectations although they are not secure to link to this to their Christian values.
- The church makes a valuable contribution to the life of the school, supporting new initiatives and leading worship.

Areas to improve

- Develop an agreed understanding of spirituality to ensure that opportunities to explore a personal spirituality are identified in planning that enables children to express their deepening ideas in a variety of ways.
- Develop assessment in religious education (RE) so that it tracks pupil progress and identifies actions to raise standards.
- Create a systematic approach for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of being a church school which lead to on-going improvements.

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

In 2016 the school agreed five key values; reflection, risk-taking, resilience, resourcefulness and relationship. These were already known as good learning attitudes. Children confidently talk about these in relation to their learning, recognising where they use them and the difference they make to their attainment. However, children's understanding of these as distinctively Christian values that underpin the school's vision is at an early stage of development. A recent internal review indicated that children had a limited understanding of this and did not use them in their daily lives. Action has been taken to address this with explicitly Christian values becoming a focus in collective worship. Children are developing an appreciation of a Christian interpretation of these values with some older children making links between these and Bible stories. Some children are beginning to recognise where these values influence their choices. At present children are not secure in recognising the links between Christian values and the life of Jesus. Children nominate others for a values certificate when they see peers using values in daily life. These are celebrated weekly at the Friday Celebration Collective Worship. The certificates that celebrate recognition of 'The Five Rs' are only given at the end of a term, their impact lacks significance. The quality of behaviour across the school is good. Children show respect and care for one another and make good relationships. Children of all ages play well together and continue this beyond the school day. Staff develop strong relationships with children and know them as individuals. Children respond to this and are eager to work with staff. Children are not aware of the links between relationships and how the school's Christian ethos promotes them but rather talk about the structures the school has put in place to develop this. There is a strong focus upon children's learning and attainment. This is clearly reflected in standards achieved over the last three years. By the time children leave their attainment is frequently above national expectations with significant numbers achieving the higher levels. Children develop good attitudes to learning, responding thoughtfully to challenges while collaborating together. Although there are relatively few disadvantaged children, their individual needs are addressed through effective support programmes which enable them to make similar progress to their peers. The provision for spirituality is at an early stage of development. There is no agreed understanding from which staff work nor are opportunities identified in planning. There is insufficient evidence that developing a personal spirituality enables children to consider 'big' ideas or make any impact on their lives or thinking. The school's own evaluation identified that children's understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural faith was an area that needed to be developed. Religious education provides opportunities to learn about other world faiths and children talk about key aspects of these and what they mean for believers. This enables children to show tolerance and respect for those who hold different views to their own. There was limited evidence of children making comparisons between these and the Christian faith to develop a deeper understanding of their own ideas.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Recent developments in collective worship have raised the impact of worship messages for children who more readily recognise the significance it has for them. One of these improvements has been the quality of planning for worship. The school and local clergy plan together to develop children's understanding of Christian values by exploring aspects of them in increasing depth. Worship themes are now more explicitly linked to Christian values and this addresses one of the targets from the previous inspection to provide greater cohesion to collective worship by developing a weekly pattern that allows themes to be explored at greater depth. Children are aware of the structure for worship and have a greater appreciation of how values are central to themes. Children appreciate the wide variety of worship leaders and the range of approaches they take to deliver worship themes. There is a greater emphasis on biblical material which enables children to talk about Jesus' life. Children's knowledge and understanding of the Trinity is at an early stage of development. A group of children contribute to worship by preparing the hall and reading. This is a positive development and involves them more fully in worship. There are further opportunities for children to participate through singing and responding to questions. Children do not regularly plan and lead worship. Collective worship develops children's understanding of the main Christian festivals and they appreciate the significance of these for Christians. Children talk about seasons in the church's year and the meaning of related symbols with understanding. Prayer is generally well taught and children understand that it is a way to share their thoughts with God. They talk about the different types of prayer and confidently use their own prayers on the 'pin a prayer' board knowing these will be valued and used in worship. Prayers of the older children show signs of greater depth and maturity with some children feeling that prayer is helpful in their daily lives. Most children agree that worship is valuable and makes a contribution to their lives and are beginning to articulate this with greater confidence. Several children explain the importance of learning Christian values and coming together as a family and sharing celebrations. Others talk about being calm and peaceful with time to reflect. Whilst there have been some monitoring and evaluation there is little evidence of the impact or change this has had. Recently, local clergy have been involved in talking with children to hear their views and this is providing valuable evidence of the

impact of the innovations in planning.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory.

The overall quality of teaching and learning in RE is satisfactory. In some lessons there is a lack of pace and insufficient challenge for all learners. There are examples of good practice, particularly in the use of questioning and time to reflect upon ideas, but this is not consistent across the school. The teaching of RE is in a period of transition. Religious education was previously taught across the school by one member of staff, bringing continuity and progression. Class teachers now teach RE and are developing their own knowledge and skills and increasingly making links with other subject areas. This is developing well. A significant recent development has been the introduction of 'Understanding Christianity,' a new RE resource. This has placed greater emphasis on the teaching of Christianity and is helping children to develop a deeper understanding of Jesus. Their answers show a good insight and use of religious vocabulary across a range of areas. Teaching also makes a contribution to extending children's understanding of seasons and festivals in the Christian year. These developments are beginning to make a positive difference to the quality of RE by involving children in more meaningful discussions that extends their thinking. Members of staff create a good learning environment where children feel safe to share their ideas and thinking. There are some good examples of marking in the work of older children with feedback that is beginning to challenge them further. Children's responses to RE are variable because not all children recognise the contribution it makes to their thinking as there is insufficient focus on questions of meaning and purpose for children to relate to their everyday lives. The grade is not higher because a target from the previous inspection has not been fully addressed. This was to develop assessment in RE which tracks children's progress and identifies future actions for development. At present, staff evaluate what children have learned from each module of study. However, there are no procedures to determine whether children achieve at an expected level for their age in RE and there is a lack of data to show whether this achievement is comparable with other core subjects. There was no evidence of pupil progress being tracked or additional support being put in place for those who require it. Another of the previous targets was to develop the RE curriculum so that a consistent approach to in-depth enquiry ensures quality learning across the school. There was evidence of this approach being developed following a book scrutiny, although this is not yet fully established.

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

A new Christian vision was agreed by the school in September of this year. A working party of governors determined that the previous vision did not have a distinctive Christian basis that underpinned the school's work. The new vision draws upon a biblical understanding of the importance of each individual whilst focusing upon the example of Jesus. At present this has yet to be shared with parents and the community. Children have been introduced to the new vision through collective worship but as yet there is a limited understanding of it and where it is evident in daily life. Leaders are beginning to articulate this vision with greater clarity and are increasingly promoting links to the Christian values. Staff work closely with parents and families and have established a mutual trust to provide support and care as appropriate. In recent years the school's strategic focus has been to create a multi-academy trust to help secure its long term future. The head has been out of school for over two years preparing for this. The school's priorities have been to maintain high standards for children and financial security. As a result, the development of being a church school has not been a focus. Leadership, including governors, have been active in monitoring pupil progress and challenging the school on the effectiveness of teaching and learning and interventions for children. There has been limited evaluation of the impact of its Christian vision, Christian distinctiveness, spirituality or RE and these have lacked the rigour to lead to improvements. In the last year this has begun to be addressed with a review of the Christian vision, establishing a higher profile for Christian values and the importance of collective worship. New initiatives have been introduced but they are yet to realise their potential and have yet to be fully embedded. Use of diocesan expertise is now being drawn upon for further professional development. A good example of this is training to deliver the 'Understanding Christianity' course. Equally the school has good links with other church schools which are mutually beneficial. The church makes a valuable contribution to the life of the school. Clergy play an active role in developing collective worship and supporting new developments, such as children's worship leaders. Christian festivals are celebrated in church and members of the church community make good contributions to governance. An 'All things bright and beautiful' extra-curricular club, run by the church, extends opportunities to explore Christian values. Parents are supportive particularly valuing close links with staff and the involvement of the school in the community. A good example of this is the work with local care homes where children's visits are eagerly anticipated. The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship and religious education.