

<b>SOUTH MALLING CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL</b> <b>GOVERNOR WORKING GROUP REPORT</b>	
Working Group:	<b>Wellbeing Christian Distinctiveness</b>
Date of meeting:	22 February 2017
Present:	Sarah Brydon, Ian Rothery
Documents / data considered:	SIAMS TOOLKIT (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools prepared in advance by Head, C.Harris and Vivienne Burch.)  SIAMS Health Check Feedback Sheet January 2016 and  Pupil Voice February 10 2017

**Discussion of documents / data: The Health Check** asks us to consider the following questions: 1 What is the story of the school as a Church School? 2 What makes South Malling a distinctive Church School? What difference does the Christian Ethos make on the lives of the children and the lives of the school community? 3 What is the impact of Collective Worship in Assemblies? 4 What other signs are there of the impact of Christian Distinctiveness in the School. Its conclusion was that there is evidence of good provision but few signs of impact.

**The Toolkit** encourages us to take an overview by asking us to identify which of a series of inclusive statements is the closest to a description of our own provision. The Church of England Education Officer's own vision document speaks about four key elements - "educating for wisdom, hope, community and dignity - each in interplay with the others." They are looking for a whole picture rather than bits of evidence,

**Our SDP** calls for children to "know how being a church school is a special and positive experience because our Christian Values underpin all that we do." This too asks for a whole picture.

We think that the judgements made about the school are fair and thoughtful and in many ways are borne out by what the cross key-stage group of children said to us about their experience of a range of school activity. "**The School context**, evidences the real quality of the school, its ambition for its children and its approach to teaching and its outward - looking approach. It could however, be written in such a way that the Christian distinctiveness shines out a little less tentatively. Further, the School Vision is worth a mention in this "context statement." Its particular value is that it calls for a recognisable (and memorable) impact. This is key in taking us away from single values to what children feel and think about their school experience."

"**Improvement from last time**" is full and thorough. It could begin with something of a story such as the governors have heard about the strengthening of Christian distinctiveness between the last inspection and this - including a general statement about the church and school working together, so that it is read as a whole, principled development rather than a series of helpful initiatives.

**Core Question 1 How well does the school meet the needs of learners** (via its Christian Distinctiveness). We agree with the assessment. In the write-up, "ethos and values," might help the sense of an interplay of values rather than a handful of separate ones.

**Core Question 2 Impact of Collective Worship.** We agree with the assessment. Children speak highly of assemblies, they especially like the interactive ones, and are ready to participate more in e.g the prayers. They especially welcome the sense of togetherness with others, including the whole school.

**Impact of RE.** Although this is not required for Controlled Schools, it is such a popular subject, and has contributed quite strongly to the improvement of the school as a church school that it would be worth including something on this. We acknowledge that the provision is still developing and improving due mainly to direction from the Senior Leadership and the RE and PSHE Leads.

**Leadership and management:** It is good that the report acknowledges that the provision is still developing and improving due mainly to direction from the Senior Leadership and the RE and PSHE Leads, but the change in governor attitudes and the leadership given by RE, following the Head's understanding of how this could be implemented, together with staffing changes to underpin it.

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### **Summary for the FGB:**

We think that the commitment of the school governors and senior management of the school to achieving a good level of christian distinctiveness is genuine - especially given its development from a situation where governors wondered whether parents knew that it was a church school at all to one where RE and assemblies are aspects of which children clearly enjoy and understand and church and school work together to the benefits of each organisation. There is work to do, including achieving "buy-in" from the staff. We agree that this is a good church school especially because of the continuous improvement that is obvious from year to year.

Our review of this report was undertaken in tandem with hearing pupil voice. We should say that the experience was one of meeting lively, bright young people who really enjoyed assemblies and RE and were keen for children to be still more involved in assemblies, including writing and reading their own prayers at the assembly. They were committed to the School values, but seemed unsure why they were seen as specifically "Christian values," but were not quite sure of the meaning of the school prayer – which was why they would like to swap it for children devised prayers.

**Recommendation:** The toolkit free writing elements have a final review and basically tidied up with an edge that emphasises "Impact" takes account of other recommendations in the Health Check - probably by one reader. Also, we recommend that "Christian Values" be presented as part of a whole ethos rather than separate items.

Notes written up cooperatively by: Sarah Brydon and ian Rothery