

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

South Malling Church of England Primary and Nursery School	
Church Lane, Lewes, East Sussex. BN7 2HS	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Chichester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Local authority	East Sussex
Date of inspection	18 May 2017
Date of last inspection	10 January 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 114509
Headteacher	Jo O'Donoghue
Inspector's name and number	Connie Hughes 765

School context

South Malling school is situated on the outskirts of the town of Lewes. It is a primary and nursery school with 308 pupils aged 3 to 11 years old. The majority of pupils are of a White British heritage from a range of social and economic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. The headteacher is acting as a joint executive headteacher of a neighbouring Church of England school until August 2017. The school has a strong partnership with St Michael's in South Malling, St John sub Castro and Southover churches which are the Lewes TRINITY Church benefice.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of South Malling Primary and Nursery School as a Church of England school are good

- The high quality inclusive learning provision, pastoral support and established parental partnerships nurtures pupils' feelings of happiness, care and well-being.
- Religious education and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are given a high priority and explicitly contribute to pupils' exploration and understanding of the school's Christian faith foundation and other world faith beliefs and practices.
- Collective worship, led by senior leaders and fully supported by the TRINITY church clergy, which includes Christian and moral values, biblical teaching and outstanding singing impacts strongly on pupils' spiritual development.
- The commitment and effectiveness of the senior leadership team, in conjunction with the foundation governors and the church, enables all pupils to understand, respect and participate in the school's Christian foundation.

Areas to improve

- Make explicit reference to the school's Christian ethos and values in all communications with parents and the wider community to raise the profile of its church foundation in the daily life of the school.
- Extend the use of classroom 'reflection corners' through planned interactive learning experiences to enable pupils to engage more fully in religious education, prayer, worship themes and class assemblies.
- Through religious education and collective worship provide more opportunities for pupils to experience Anglican tradition, beliefs and practices.
- Through the foundation governors, fully supported by the governing body, continue to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of religious education, collective worship, pupil and parent voice to secure further evidence of the school's church school distinctiveness.

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

The school's church school distinctiveness is becoming more explicit in the daily life of the school. Within its vision of 'reach for the stars', pupils are developing their understanding of a core school aim, 'how being at a Church School is a special and positive experience because our Christian values underpin all that we do'. Nursery children are encouraged to develop an awareness of the needs of others, have multi-cultural activities integrated into play experiences and participate in Christian action songs. Teachers explained, 'in the past few years Christian values as a way to conduct your life have been promoted... the Christian ethos is the backdrop to everything that happens here'. In a calm and purposeful atmosphere, pupils and staff treat each other with kindness, respect and understanding. High expectations and aspirations set by all staff impact on pupils' positive attitudes to learning, good standards of attainment, improved attendance and exemplary behaviour. Discrimination is not tolerated. Well-embedded inclusive provision, including a learning mentor and play therapist, secures pupils' academic progress, personal development, safety and well-being. All pupils, including the most vulnerable, achieve high levels of success. Parents and carers unanimously agree, 'values are in place throughout... the school is warm and nurturing... children want to come to school'.

The stimulating Christian symbols and displays in and around the school reflect its church school foundation. For example, an image of the archangel St Michael at the school entrance, a crucifix in the foyer, the Faith Club's exploration of 'The Creation' story, traditional artists' impressions of Holy Week and wooden crosses created by Year 5 in the school hall worship area. Although well-resourced, including Bibles, prayer bears and books, the use of the classroom reflection areas to enrich pupils' spiritual development is underdeveloped; pupils explained 'we haven't always the time'. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is a strength of the school. The school community's chosen core values of friendship, perseverance, respect, responsibility, creativity, compassion and equality prepare pupils to become responsible citizens. They are pro-active and caring, finding practical ways to respond to the needs of their local and global community in relation to the Christian call for compassion and responsibility, including harvest gifts for the local food bank and Children in Need. Following the local authority agreed syllabus, religious education (RE), within a broad Christian framework, is taught imaginatively and creatively by a specialist teacher and is thoroughly enjoyed by the pupils. 'Our RE teacher makes sure we all know about Christianity explained pupils. For example, 'each class took different events in Jesus' life in Holy Week and we shared our learning in assembly and our Easter church service'. A breadth of learning experiences is reflected in pupils' books entitled 'A Journey of discovery - My faith journey at South Malling' and an inspiring RE and SMSC portfolio. Applying enquiry, discussion, questioning and reflection skills, pupils are deepening their knowledge and understanding of Christian values, the teachings of Jesus, the Bible, Anglican beliefs and practices, personal values and respect for the school's faith foundation the beliefs of other world faiths.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The school's daily collective worship (CW) is distinctly Christian in character. Through a variety of activities and full pupil involvement, biblical stories, The Lord's Prayer, school prayer, music, drama and song are central to key stage and whole school worship experiences. A clear focal point for worship, incorporating the visual symbolism of 'mirrors', 'windows' and 'doors' captures pupils' sense of wonder, awe, and curiosity. Observing worship, pupils were attentive, reflective, engaged and responsive through an interactive experience of applying the gospel values of 'equality', 'responsibility' and 'compassion' to the story of the good Samaritan. Pupils showed understanding as they shared their personal experiences, including a pupil helping her mum by contributing her own money to a charity envelope collection. Music to develop pupils' skills, enhance enjoyment and spiritual reflection has a high profile in the school. Pupils' full participation in singing with appropriate actions, heard both in the Year 4 classroom and in worship, was inspiring, emotive and of the highest standard. The school choir, supported by a specialist and enthusiastic music teacher, has attended Sunday church services and Year 5 pupils performed with the Lewes Sings Gospel choir in the Brighton Dome theatre.

Collective worship is planned and led by the headteacher, senior staff and the TRINITY church benefice clergy team. Major Christmas and Easter festivals, with pupils enthusiastically sharing their RE learning experiences, are held in St Michael's Church, South Malling. A quartely Sunday family service held at the school, in response to the restrictions of space at St Michael's, enables increasing participation in worship from families and the local community. Regular involvement of the TRINITY benefice enables the school to explore and develop the school's Christian values and worship themes, purposely 'contributing to pupils' spiritual development. Recent collaboration has provided the school and pupils with experience of Godly Play and Bible Explorers to further augment pupils' understanding of Christian values. The 'Prayer Spaces', led by the children's and families missionary and supported by lay members, taking place during the inspection was extremely well-received by pupils and staff. They explained, 'it is helping us to learn how to pray...it was peaceful... drew an awareness of the needs of the homeless... the importance of equality and compassion'. The planned acts of worship, monitoring and evaluations very effectively encourage pupils to become aware of how biblical teaching reflects their core values, spiritual, social and moral

development. Although pupils are developing an understanding of the importance of Jesus' teaching through Christian worship, there is a lack of structured learning experiences of prayer, Anglican practices and beliefs.

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

The headteacher is held in 'the highest esteem' by pupils, staff, governors, parents and carers. Together they agree she is 'strong, gentle, kind and caring... with a door that is always open'. Together with senior leaders and foundation governors, she is committed to ensuring a caring, moral and inclusive environment which nurtures every child to succeed and where 'Christian values shape what they do'. Following the last church inspection school leaders introduced a range of strategies to develop, monitor and evaluate RE, CW and SMSC provision. The appointment of a specialist RE teacher, an accomplished music teacher and strong links with the TRINITY churches has purposefully enhanced all Christian provision for all pupils and the wider school community. The wellbeing working group and foundation governors are increasingly 'active and understand their church school responsibilities', following the loss of momentum due to unforeseen circumstances in the previous academic year. Having recently evaluated religious education, worship and the Christian life of the school through pupil voice interviews, what happens next lacks sufficient clarification. The school leaders and foundation governors recognise 'they are on a journey' as plans are being put in place for ensuring consistent monitoring, evaluation and communication of its Christian ethos. A survey in July 2016 identifies that parents clearly understand and support the Christian character of the school. However, there is limited evidence of the school's Church of England foundation consistently shared on the website and in newsletters to parents. For the school to be judged as outstanding in its Christian distinctiveness, the sharing of its Anglican faith foundation and Christian values must be fully communicated, celebrated and embedded in the wider school community.

The highly skilled headteacher is significantly and successfully involved in a range of leadership and partnership activities within the locality of schools. Supportive partnerships with the local authority, the diocese, church and community schools secures a range of curriculum development and staff professional expertise which enriches provision for all pupils. Specific professional development for all staff and governors in relation to all aspects of 'church school distinctiveness' are being addressed through the school's recent diocesan Service Level Agreement, funded by the TRINITY Church partnership. A strong and supportive partnership with the TRINITY benefice strongly enhances the school's Christian faith foundation and the spiritual life of the school community. The children and families missionary has no doubt he is 'always welcome in the school'. Through regular involvement in acts of worship, family services and craft mornings the church family is consolidating the school and church partnership. This is reiterated by parents who reflect, 'our church visitors know our children... support their RE and worship experiences'. School pupils and church members created together an engaging and inspiring 3D church installation representing 'Jesus's feeding of the five thousand' which hangs in St Michael' church, South Malling. The pupils have proudly submitted photographs of their artistic interpretation of the five loaves and two fishes in the annual diocesan art exhibition. The school has a strong sense of community feeling and home-school partnerships are strong. Parents and carers from world faith and non-faith backgrounds are unanimous in stating, 'our views are respected... our children share knowledge, beliefs and experiences... children are non-judgemental... the staff live the values of the school... pupils enjoy their learning... they are coming from one family to another'. Statutory requirements for religious education and collective worship are met.

SIAMS report May 2017 South Malling Church of England Primary and Nursery School, Church Lane, Lewes. BN7 2HS