

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Hunton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Bishop's Lane, Hunton, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 0SJ

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Diocese

Rochester

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Local authority

Kent

Date/s of inspection

25 November 2016

Date of last inspection

5 October 2011

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Aided Primary 118726

Headteacher

Denise Gibbs-Naguar

Inspector's name and number

Pamela Draycott (161)

School context

The school has a long history of Christian service to Hunton and the surrounding areas. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Around 15 per cent come from families who attend church regularly outside of their involvement through school. The percentage of pupils for whom the school receives extra funding, due to social disadvantage, is well below the national average. The headteacher is currently the subject leader for religious education (RE) and leads the school's worship programme. There are established links with the parish church. The school is part of the Maidstone Rural Collaboration of Anglican Schools (MRCS).

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Hunton Church of England Primary school as a Church of England school are good

- Pupils' very positive behaviour is an expression of the school's Christian ethos. Pupils are polite, confident, caring and helpful which reflects the school's Christian values well.
- Based on the school's ambition that pupils will flourish as 'children of God', overall pupils make at least good progress from their various starting points. Pupils are keen to learn.
- The school clearly celebrates the diversity of God's world through its ecology work and by enhancing pupils' multi-cultural understanding. This leads to responsible and respectful valuing of both themselves and others.
- The quality of religious education (RE) provision in the Reception class is a strength.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that governors are regularly and actively engaged in monitoring and evaluating the school's

Christian foundation so that its distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school is a driving force for whole school development.

- Increase the involvement of pupils in planning and evaluating worship so that they can make constructive contributions to further improvement.
- Improve the amount and depth of written work in RE by ensuring that tasks set across Key Stages 1 and 2 effectively and consistently support and challenge pupils to attain well and make at least good progress in their learning.

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

The school's Christian values of compassion, endurance, friendship and thankfulness are fittingly biblically linked and appropriately referred to often by both pupils and staff. Many pupils can make a link between these values as 'important to Christians because Jesus lived them' as expressed by one Year 5 pupil. The values can be seen in the high standards of pupil behaviour in both classrooms and around the school. Pupils are confident, polite and helpful which contributes to a good climate for learning. This is enhanced through suitable displays, which support learning and which celebrate pupils' work across the curriculum as well as the school's Christian values. Pupil academic attainment is broadly above the national average and most make good progress from their various starting points. Based on its integral Christian foundation, the wellbeing of pupils has a high priority and safeguarding practices are effective. Similarly, attendance has improved and is now around the national average. In those few instances where behaviour falls short of the high standards required, teachers and pupils, including specially trained Year 6 peer mediators, seek to resolve issues in line with the school's values. Relationships between pupils and their peers and with adults are respectful and reflect the school's underlying Christian ethos well.

Pupils respond well to the range of opportunities which support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. This includes, for example, a broad extra-curricular programme which, for two periods over the academic year, includes a Philosophy for Children group. This group encourages thinking and problem solving skills for those involved. Charitable giving is seen as a clear expression of the school's Christian foundation. 'Giving to charity is good because it's what Jesus would do' as a Year 4 pupil commented. RE and worship make good contributions to the school's provision for SMSC as well as to the school's overall Christian ethos and values. Reflection spaces in classrooms are used well and support spiritual development by providing opportunities for prayer throughout the school day. In addition, a 'spiritual garden' in the grounds is used for teaching and worship and by individuals during break times. This enhances the school's provision for prayer and reflection well and thus contributes to pupils' spiritual development and wellbeing. The school works effectively to promote a good multi-cultural understanding and to help pupils recognise, respect and value themselves and others. This is enhanced, for example, through art work and through the link with a school in Malawi. RE makes a good contribution to helping pupils to recognise and celebrate difference and diversity through the content taught and through the approaches taken to learning. In RE, the school's work around ecology is appropriately linked with religious responses to caring for God's world.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The worship programme plays a central role in school life. Pupils and staff rightly recognise its importance and many celebrate its relevance to their own lives. 'It helps you be quiet, think and pray which is talking to God' and 'It makes me feel calm and peaceful' as two pupils reflected. Worship is well planned and is firmly based on the diocesan guidelines which provides its framework. This is supplemented by appropriate links with the school's values, the church calendar and biblical teaching. The worship programme in school is enhanced through opportunities to worship in church for major festivals. Pupils take part in worship respectfully and enjoy 'singing, listening to stories and prayer' which engages them well. Individuals and groups of pupils take an active role in leading worship which they do

with confidence and pride. However, pupils' role in evaluating worship is under-developed which means that they do not make a sufficient contribution to its development and improvement.

Through worship, pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of the importance for Christians of the belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They recognise the central place of Jesus for Christians and understand that the Bible is 'God's word that teaches us what's important'. Pupils know and use traditional Anglican responses and prayers, including the Lord's Prayer. Lighting a candle to represent Jesus and the use of different coloured cloths, signifying different times of the church's year, are also relevant practices which enhance worship. Pupils write their own prayers which helps them to understand the value of prayer and reflection for the school community and, for some, in their own lives. Although monitoring and evaluation of the worship programme is undertaken periodically by staff and governors, it is not rigorous or regular enough to impact positively on practice. Teachers take regular turns in leading worship based on the planning provided for them. This indicates their active involvement in the worship programme and helps to provide interest and variety. In addition, the vicar and a Christian group also periodically lead worship which extends provision well.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

The RE curriculum is based on the diocesan scheme of work and well linked to supporting the school's Christian ethos and values. There is an appropriate balance between teaching which focuses on Christianity and that which addresses on other world faiths including Judaism, Islam Hinduism and Sikhism. Visits to the parish church and a recent visit by the whole school to the large Sikh place of worship in Gravesend enhance the RE programme.

Across Key Stages 1 and 2, RE is taught regularly as a discrete subject. It is also well linked to work in other curriculum areas. RE displays in classrooms are relevant and enrich the learning environment. Discussion, questioning and debate is appropriately encouraged through RE which pupils respond to with interest and enthusiasm. However, the quality and quantity of written work is limited. Written activities are not closely enough matched to the standards required in RE. This means that pupils are not consistently supported and challenged to achieve their best or to make sufficient progress. As a result, attainment and progress in RE across Key Stages 1 and 2 are not as high as in other core areas, such as literacy. However, this is not the case in the Reception class where RE is very well integrated into the varied learning and personal development programme provided. Pupils in this class make at least good progress.

Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but assessment is not rigorous enough to consistently inform future teaching and learning. Changes in the leadership of RE since the time of the previous denominational inspection has led to a lack of focus in developing key areas of the subject.

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

Senior leadership, including governors, ensure that structures are in place which clearly focus on pupils' attainment, progress and wellbeing. This is plainly an expression of the Christian ethos and values which underpin the school's life and work. There is a longstanding church-school liaison group, a subcommittee of the governing body. Recently, its focus has not been effective in driving forward the Christian distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school which means that developments have slowed. Since the previous denominational inspection, the headteacher is new to the school starting in September 2013. There have been three different subject leaders for RE, including most recently the headteacher from September 2016. In terms of the leadership in RE, the recent period of staffing instability has impacted negatively on the development and delivery of the subject across Key Stages 1 and 2. Governors ensure that both RE and the worship programme meet statutory requirements. They are engaged in school life appropriately.

Improving communication and links with parents was a focus for improvement in the recent OfSTED report in July 2016. There are clear signs that senior leaders have acted on this so that parents are now well informed about school events and there are planned opportunities to meet regularly with the headteacher. A recent survey shows that parents regard the Christian ethos of the school as being important and that it impacts positively on their children's personal development. Links with the parish church of St Mary, Hunton are longstanding and supportive. The school draws well on support offered by being part of a group of rural Anglican schools in the area. Some limited use has been made of advice and support provided by the education department of the Diocese.

The school had three issues for development to address from the previous denominational report. Developing interactive classroom prayer areas and helping pupils to value religious diversity in Britain are areas that have been very well addressed. Developing further the school's Christian values is an area that has been satisfactorily addressed.

SIAMS report [November 2016] Hunton CE (VA) primary school, Hunton, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 0SJ