

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Faith's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

St Faith's Road
Winchester
Hampshire
SO23 9QB

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Winchester
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Hampshire
Date of inspection	8 December 2016
Date of last inspection	14 December 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary VA 116374
Headteacher	Dawn James
Inspector's name and number	Andrew Rickett 201

School context

St Faith's is smaller than the average size primary school with 149 children in roll. It is situated on the outskirts of the city. The majority of children are of White British heritage and come from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. The number of children with learning needs and/or disabilities is below the national average as is the number entitled to receive the pupil premium. Attendance is above the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Faith's CE VA Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Children have a wonderful sense of enjoyment and confidence to share their views on belief and faith that reflects the school's inclusive approach to its Christian distinctiveness.
- Acts of worship make a significant impact on the children's understanding of Bible teaching and how values help them to become better people.
- Religious education (RE) provides valuable opportunities for children to explore major world faiths and appreciate the global nature of Christianity.
- The commitment of leaders and managers ensures that the school's Christian ethos is continually growing so that it meets the academic and personal needs of all children.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that there are effective procedures to capture and record the children's comments in RE so that a clear evidence base is gathered to show the quality of their work
- Develop links between the school's Christian vision and values and its approach to spirituality so that children make clearer connections between them to deepen their understanding.
- Develop the children's ability to ask their own challenging questions so that they can explore concepts in RE and across the whole curriculum in greater depth.

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

Courage, love, trust and hope make a significant contribution to the children's understanding of relationships and the importance of 'following a path' where making wise choices is guided by teaching from the Bible. The Christian character is outstanding because relationships are excellent and children possess a deep understanding of the need to do what is right even when this can be testing. Their grasp of the underlying nature of these values, and the reality of them, is often profound. Children know, for example, that hope is not always easy and that there are different kinds of courage. They use their understanding of other values, such as forgiveness or compassion, to make sense of moral dilemmas that challenge their thinking. Children are confident to explore these problems and easily relate them to their own lives. The school has a clear definition of spirituality which is currently being developed across the school. Older children in particular explain how moments to reflect on themselves and their actions and moments to try to understand others are times when they are discovering what it means to be an individual in relation to others. Children reflect deeply on their own actions and how they have consequences for other people. This makes an impact on the way that children treat each other with kindness and consideration because they are encouraged to appreciate how others feel. Religious education makes a highly valued contribution to the children's developing spiritual awareness and is being increasingly integrated into other subject areas. Children enjoy the opportunities to ask questions and debate them with their peers. The links with values and vision to support their spiritual thinking is not yet fully developed and children do not have regular time to explore their own questions of meaning and purpose. The recent opening of the spiritual garden and the use of the extensive grounds give children good opportunities to be still during the day and have time to explore the natural world. Attitudes towards learning are very positive and children engage in lessons with enthusiasm and vigour. They make good progress to attain standards that, for most children, are at least in line with national expectations and often higher. The school works hard to ensure that children develop their awareness of the diversity in modern British society and the wider global community. Strong links through charitable work with Rwanda and a growing support for Uganda are helping children develop an affinity with others.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Children take inspiration from acts of worship to apply the messages they hear from Bible stories to their own lives. They recognise how Bible stories help them understand how to treat other people and themselves and that values contribute to this. Children appreciate that values such as love and peace link together and see that Bible stories have different meanings and are open to personal interpretation. For example, in discussion with younger children they wondered whether the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand was about courage, love or both of them. The impact of collective worship is outstanding because of the children's ability to learn from and apply the values to their everyday lives in school and beyond. Acts of worship therefore transform the way that children act especially in how they treat others. For example, children spoke eloquently about following the example of Jesus to look after others whether they were your friends or not. There are many opportunities to pray in the life of the school and children have an excellent grasp of the meaning and purpose of prayer. They know that prayers can ask God for help for others and themselves, to say thank you or sorry. Older children have the maturity to explore whether prayers will always be answered but are adamant that God listens to everyone's prayers whether they have a faith or not because 'He created us all as equals'. Children have a very mature appreciation of the nature of the trinity and its complexity. They confidently talk about God as Father and Jesus as the Son. Younger children say that the Holy Spirit 'spreads good messages'. The very youngest share their thoughts that sometimes 'angels might carry God's message to us; although that is quite rare'. The commitment of the vicar and other members of the church community in leading acts of worship ensure that children have a variety of worship styles. The regular involvement of an 'Open the Book' team from the local church, who lead worship based on Bible stories, is a good example of the commitment from the local church to the school. Children are very positive about these times because they have opportunities to participate through drama. Likewise, the contribution of a group from another church shows the many links the school has with local church communities. Collective worship is thoroughly planned around an annual programme based on explicit Christian teaching and the school's core values. Children have opportunities to engage in worship, and lead it. Through the weekly class based worship children explore the weekly themes in more detail at an age appropriate level. The views of children have been sought and these have led to improvements such as greater involvement.

The effectiveness of religious education is outstanding

Religious education (RE) at St Faith's is outstanding because children are excited by the subject and have a thirst to learn about the major world religions and their cultures. They relish the opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions and listen with respect to the views of others. In particular, they have a deep appreciation that all faiths should be respected and are adamant that people should have the right to practise their belief without fear or recrimination. Children show a keen interest in social issues that surround religious belief and have a high sense of a moral duty to treat others fairly regardless of their background. Religious education makes a significant contribution to this outlook as it promotes the school's inclusive ethos and vision through its core values. Children do well in their learning in RE and attain standards that, for the majority, are at least in line with national expectations. A high number of them exceed this and achieve beyond the expectations of the syllabus for their age. Teaching is delivered in exciting ways that challenge all children through a wide variety of strategies that engage them in their learning. The quality of discussion that this generates is very high although the school has yet to find an effective way to capture and celebrate the thoughts that reflect the children's abilities. The most effective examples seen of this were those that used good Early Years' practice. Children are able to respond at this level because they possess a secure knowledge of RE and apply this to their learning, often referring to units they have already covered and using this to make links with their current study. At its best, this gives high quality opportunities for children to explore a spiritual dimension to what they are learning but they do not always given the opportunity or time to explore their own questions in depth. Teachers too have a good level of knowledge and the confidence to ask challenging questions. Children have positive attitudes towards RE and the work in their books is of a good standard. Marking is regularly undertaken although most comments from teachers does not include language specific to RE or relate to the learning task or skills being developed. Religious education is thoroughly planned and has recently been adapted to deliver it over a three year cycle. The school is developing its assessment of RE so that it is more in line with subjects on the National Curriculum. This is still being fine-tuned so that there is a consistent approach across the school and data has yet to be used by the RE subject leader to track progress across the school. The RE leader has recently been appointed and is rapidly becoming familiar with the subject and aware of its many strengths and what it needs to do to continue to improve. The school has supported the training she has undertaken to develop subject leadership skills and attendance at courses to ensure that she is up to date with latest developments in the subject.

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

The headteacher's commitment to the church school ethos has ensured that it has developed significantly and has become firmly established at the heart of the school. The introduction three years ago of a set of values has enhanced the impact of the vision by giving it greater meaning and purpose for all members of the school community. The core values have given them a shared language to articulate how love and hope, trust and courage support children to learn in a caring environment with prayer as an integral aspect of the life of the school. The headteacher has an excellent understanding of how the vision relates to the Christian story and is inclusive of all. Parents also describe the vision's impact on their children, saying that the values 'underpin the way the school manages behaviour' and that their children 'engage in faith' as a natural part of the school day. Governors likewise appreciate that the values have become embedded in the high quality of relationships between adults and children and that the Christian root of the vision has become more overt. This is evident in the children's comments about the links between Bible teaching and the values. Because of the clarity with which leaders articulate the vision, the school's self-evaluation is accurate because high quality evidence has been gathered through monitoring and evaluation that identifies strengths and areas to improve. For example, governors and staff have carried out observations of worship and have met with groups of children to hear their views on how core values help them in school life. The role of a parent group in this evaluation has been important, particularly in helping to bring different aspects of the vision and ethos together so that there is greater cohesion. The creation of the 'values book' is a good example of the parents' innovative contribution to raising awareness of how the values are lived out in school and at home. Links with the local church are very strong. Children and their parents regard the church as part of the school and highly value the times when the school celebrates major Christian festivals in the church. The vicar is a well-known member of school life through leading regular acts of worship and contributing to RE and monitoring. Through regular staff training and attendance at relevant courses, members of staff have a good awareness of the latest developments in RE and collective worship. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

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