

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Penshurst Church of England Primary School	High Street Penshurst Kent TN11 8BX
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Rochester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Satisfactory
Local authority	Kent
Date of inspection	13 September 2016
Date of last inspection	8 July 2013
School's unique reference number	118720
Headteacher	Julia Armstrong
Inspector's name and number QA officer:	Patrick Boughton-Reynolds Lyn Field 151

School context

Penshurst Church of England Primary is a small voluntary aided rural school in the village of Penshurst in Kent. The school was established in 1846 to serve its community. The school is in the process of appointing a new headteacher, due to the retirement of the current long-serving headteacher. The school building has been developed four times to accommodate pupil population growth from 40 to 102 pupils. Pupils are mainly White British and there are no pupils with English as a second language. The proportions of disadvantaged pupils or those with special educational needs are lower than national averages.

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

- Progress has been made since the last inspection meaning that the school's Christian ethos is clearly lived out in practice throughout the school.
- Collective worship is a central part of school life and is instrumental in growing the Christian character of the school.
- The quality of teaching in RE is good resulting in most pupils progressing well.
- The quality of governance is a strength that has ensured the success of development plans.

Areas to improve

- Extend the understanding and ownership of Christian values to all stakeholders so that the whole school community has a richer understanding of Christian spirituality.
- Develop the role of pupils in planning, delivering and evaluating worship, in particular so that collective worship is more interactive and engaging.
- Ensure that all pupils are stretched and challenged, particularly more able pupils, in RE so that they exceed expected progress from their starting points.

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

Pupils understand that their school is distinctively Christian as a result of its core values. Since the previous SIAMS the school has worked hard to build upon its values of friendship, respect, equality and determination (FRED values) by securing a solid Christian base to them. Through thoughtful evaluation Christian values of forgiveness, thankfulness, humility, justice and hope were added to the FRED values. These Christian values provide a common language that serves to unite the school in its articulation of its strong Christian character. One pupil exemplified it as 'our values make us a community, makes us one', another added it 'binds us together'. These values, therefore, play a vital role in the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils whether they are Christian, or of other faiths or none. A good culture of learning has developed from pupils being openly reflective about their values, such as 'determination', which has enabled good progress across the school. The majority of pupils achieve in line with national averages, however disadvantaged pupils or those with special educational needs do not make the same progress as their peers. Key stakeholders have embraced improvement plans that have meant that the Christian ethos is clearly lived out in practice throughout the school. One classroom has a 'values tree' where pupils can award their peers for embodying the school values. In the main hall there is also a 'values book' where teachers write accounts of pupils who have epitomised the school values. Strategies such as these are just some of the ways that school values are embedded explicitly in the daily life of the school. New Reception pupils explore the values of friendship and thankfulness through parables such as 'the rich farmer'. This ensures that from the beginning pupils reflect upon the importance of Christian values in the life of the school. Although the Christian values are clearly lived out in practice in the school, they are not understood by all stakeholders as rooted in Christian teaching and being integral to the school's vision. Parental surveys show an appreciation of the school's ethos and parent governors have a strong role in school development. Increased ownership and understanding of the school's Christian character, particularly by these key stakeholders, is key to make this area outstanding. In RE lessons, values are clearly reflected upon by teachers and pupils alike and applied to topics well. RE therefore plays an important role in furthering pupils' understanding of the Christian character of the school. Pupils spoke of how the Christian values of respect and forgiveness build stronger relationships between pupils. Also, one pupil came to the realisation that 'everyone is equal' and 'no one is superior to the other' after a teacher washed his feet in collective worship. These views demonstrate that pupils have a solid understanding of their values and the positive impact they have in school life and the wider world. This means that pupil attitudes to diversity are positive because they approach things from their core values.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils and adults value collective worship and, as a result, it is seen as an essential part of the daily life of the school. Most pupils are engaged in collective worship, with a good number taking an active role in daily worship. Due to successful monitoring and evaluation processes, new developments have been put in place. A 'Leading Lights' programme has been developed since the last SIAMS inspection which has had a significant impact in raising pupil involvement and engagement in collective worship. This programme is successfully growing and the school has shared this good practice with other diocesan schools. Collective worship follows Anglican liturgical structure through 'gathering' and 'sending' prayers that the community responds to and all pupils and adults join in singing and signing the hymn together. As a result, a strong sense of community is felt in collective worship. This is further solidified by pupil ownership of key aspects of worship such as role play of biblical stories and shared reflection upon them. However, collective worship is not outstanding because the number of pupils involved directly in the monitoring, planning and leading of collective worship is relatively small. The vicar has an integral and active role in nurturing the spiritual life of the school. The school has termly services in the local church and the vicar regularly leads consecutive collective worships. Pupils appreciate this and one pupil remarked 'he tells us a lot more about the (Bible) stories we know' and are clearly developing their theological understanding as a result. Pupils learn in collective worship, and reflection upon worship themes and topics extend and are complimented by what goes on in the classroom. This holistic approach has been a success in enabling pupils to grow in faith and in their understanding of Christian spirituality. Prayer spaces are used to good effect by the children and they explain the benefit they get from having opportunities to reflect and pray. The school's Christian values are a pivotal theme that runs through collective worship. Biblical stories are told, through drama particularly, and articulated as a basis for the school values. Through worship pupils have a good understanding of Christian values and their importance in all aspects of school life. An older pupil exemplified this wonderfully when she said: 'worship builds our school on firm foundations.'

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Pupils are actively engaged in RE due to good quality teaching and therefore pupils enjoy the lessons. The school uses the diocesan scheme of work to good effect, and assessment is frequent and robust for the majority of pupils. As a result pupils make good progress. Pupil achievement is in line with national expectations and other core subjects in the school. However, pupil progress is not tracked rigorously enough to enable all pupils, particularly higher ability, to be stretched effectively in RE. Strategies to promote higher order thinking are having an impact on learning. The use of questioning observed in RE lessons was good and the quality of pupil paired discussion was excellent. Most pupils are therefore encouraged to think deeply, as one pupil put it, 'RE takes your understanding to another level'. In a Year 5 and 6 RE lesson, pupils discussed the importance of the Bible to Christians with some thoughtful and detailed high level answers showing that they have built up good skills and understanding in RE. Lesson activities enable the majority of pupils to engage well and most pupils feel challenged in RE, although some pupils' tasks do not match their ability accurately. Further differentiated activities are needed to enable the most able and the least able to exceed expected progress from their starting points. Teachers use and adapt diocesan resources creatively and they keep up to date with strategies to promote learning in RE. Pupils' knowledge of Christianity is secure, particularly due to the effective teaching of biblical stories; for example pupils are able to apply a sound understanding of 'The Good Samaritan' parable to the contemporary world.

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

Governors have ensured the Christian vision of the school has impact through rigorous self-evaluation and strategic development plans. The governing body is well organised, and sub-committees, particularly SMSC have been thorough in driving improvements that have wide impact upon the whole school community. It has worked closely with senior managers to ensure that the distinctive Christian character positively impacts upon the pupils' personal and academic development, and the well-being of the whole school community. Issues from the previous SIAMS inspection have been addressed. Through strategic planning leaders effectively introduced the values that are now clearly embedded into the life of the school. Governors articulate a clear vision for the school based on its core Christian character and have been successful in ensuring that their plans have come to fruition. The headteacher is currently acting RE leader and her monitoring and assessment of the quality of teaching is robust. She has served the school well in delivering on strategic planning. Not all leaders articulate how the Christian vision impacts upon achievement of all groups of students particularly disadvantaged pupils or those with special educational needs.

The vicar said that 'children see the local church as their Church'. This is due to strong and effective partnership with the local Church, and this view resonates with other stakeholders. Little things have a big impact to strengthen community relationships, for example the yearly gifts of a book of bible stories to new Reception pupils from the Church. The school utilises diocesan support tailored to the school; from training and monitoring to recruitment advice, which contributes to the development of staff and leaders at the school. This in turn has helped leaders to bring about whole school improvements more effectively. The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship and religious education.

SIAMS report September 2016 Penshurst Church of England Primary School Tonbridge TN11 8BX