

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Lawrence Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	
Shrewsbury Road Church Stretton Shropshire SY6 6EX	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Diocese	Hereford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Shropshire
Date of inspection	29 June 2018
Date of last inspection	29 April 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 123468
Headteacher	Alan Brannen
Inspector's name and number	Bridget Knight 876

School context

St Lawrence Church of England (VC) Primary School is an average-sized primary school of 268 pupils. The school has this year taken over the on-site nursery provision. The headteacher has been in post for two years. There has been a high proportion of staff changes in both leaders and teachers over the past few years but staffing is now stable. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and those assessed as having special educational needs is broadly average. There is a low percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Lawrence as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- The school's Christian spirit is borne out in its nurturing and inclusive ethos, which seeks to give all its pupils the best opportunity to flourish and grow.
- St Lawrence's Christian mission is being realised in the academic progress and attainment of its pupils.
- The impact of the Christian vision is seen especially in the development of pupils' wellbeing.
- The improvement in standards of behaviour is recognised by the school community as being a result of its Christian ethos.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that the school's chosen Christian values are part of the essential structure of the 'St Lawrence Way.' They need to be clearly seen by the school community as the guiding principles for its policies and decision-making.
- Reconsider and evaluate collective worship and religious education (RE) to better balance the teaching of Christianity and other religions.
- Review and monitor opportunities for greater pupil engagement in collective worship and more regular opportunities for longer reflection.

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

St Lawrence school emanates a subtle Christian character. This is borne out most particularly in its provision for the welfare and wellbeing of all pupils, especially the most vulnerable. The good behaviour of pupils and the calm and purposeful atmosphere for learning in the school are attributable to the school's Christian foundation. As one member described it, 'The children have a deep sense of care and they are quick to say sorry.' The resulting good relationships are valued by everybody, and older pupils particularly clearly welcome this positive change in their school's ethos. The school's wonderful commitment to nurture and care is also appreciated by many. Many members of the school community realise that while the school's values and principles support its work, their Christian distinctiveness is understated. Accordingly, the Christian character of the school has a limited impact on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. School documentation, including its policies, does not clearly signal its Christian purpose. To ensure they are clearly seen by the school community as the guiding principles for its policies and decision-making is an area for development. The headteacher has effective strategies in place to check on the school's overall effectiveness. A rich curriculum, including an annual whole school production provides pupils with a breadth of experiences. As a result, progress and standards of attainment for the majority of pupils are broadly in line with the national averages. Attendance is currently good because pupils are keen to come to this church school. Exclusions are rare and this is attributable to the care and nurture provided. The school has begun to explore an understanding of spirituality and pupils are beginning to be able to respond to opportunities presented in the curriculum. The teaching of RE has very recently been reviewed to ensure learning is deeper and more meaningful for pupils through consideration of 'big questions'. This is beginning to enable pupils to develop their own thoughts and responses. As a result, RE is starting to make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In a lesson to consider what makes a space special, pupils were encouraged to draw on their own experiences. This opening enabled them to better understand the place of sacred spaces in different faiths. Pupils speak with understanding about other faiths and this is a strength. A very recent multi-faith week gave children first-hand experiences of other faiths and this deepened their understanding and appreciation. Pupils show an awareness of Christianity as a multicultural world faith and of some different denominations within the church. The teaching of Christianity overall does not have a high enough priority.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

School leaders have recently reviewed the provision for worship in order to increase its impact. It is recognised in the school that this has dramatically improved the experience for pupils. The impact on the wider lives of members of the school community is limited but is growing. The school is well supported by its local clergy and team who play an active part in worship. Pupils relish the Friday Open the Book collective worship time but do not recognise that other days have a worship opportunity also. Parents also say this experience has the greatest impact on their children. Older pupils talk lucidly about the meaning they have derived from Bible stories. Therefore, the school has addressed a previous focus for development to promote biblical study through acts of worship. Pupils have some knowledge of the life of Jesus Christ though his significance in worship is not fully understood. As a result of pupils' understanding of Bible stories, they are sometimes able to take action in the service of others. One child explained how, after hearing a story of forgiveness, she used it in her own life. She described how she forgave her friend when she broke something precious. Pupils are attentive and behave well in worship. They respond to the different elements and most sing the hymns with evident enjoyment. However, they do not yet take responsibility for aspects of worship. Pupils express the wish to have longer and more regular opportunities for personal reflection. Worship is planned to reflect the Anglican calendar as well as other faith festivals. Planning provides insufficient opportunity over the course of the week for focus on Christianity and this is a focus for development. Classes take it in turns to present – in a variety of forms - The Lord's Prayer each week. The impact of this on pupil understanding is minimal as they have not had chance to explore its meaning more deeply. Whilst school leaders are reflective about the provision and impact of collective worship, there are no formal systems for monitoring. The focus for development from the previous inspection, to formalise opportunities to evaluate acts of worship has not been fully addressed. Pupils can talk about the Trinity with some measure of understanding but do not appreciate fully its significance. The development of pupils' personal spirituality through the 'Hymns on the Hill' – whereby the school sings hymns from the nearby hills and which are heard right down in the town of Church Stretton - is widely celebrated in the school community. The school has a tradition of attending worship at its local church to celebrate festivals such as Harvest, Christmas and Easter, which pupils love and to which they look forward. Parents attend worship at these events but do not regularly join worship in school.

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

Leaders are making strenuous efforts to endorse the Christian foundation of this school. The headteacher has galvanised the trust of pupils and parents. There is now a dedicated staff team who are whole-hearted in their commitment to the pupils. As a result of good self-evaluation, learning and achievement across the school is good, and pupils are well supported in their personal development. The mission of this church school, based on the biblical tenet to 'Build each other up' is borne out in the care and nurture of its pupils. The 'St Lawrence Way' provides a pathway for a considered and holistic approach to the school's provision for learning. The rector and foundation governors are committed to the life and work of the school and have an active involvement. There are close and mutually supportive links between the school and the church. There is a good take-up at the after-school 'Jesus and Me' and 'Guardians of Ancora' clubs. Parents and children appreciate their great relationship with pastoral church staff who are 'always smiling'. These links ensure that the Christian values of the school are shared widely. Preparation for future Christian leadership is encouraged through teamwork and participation in in-service training provided by the diocesan advisor. This has resulted in improvements in the teaching of RE since the last inspection. The new leader for RE has inspired the commitment of staff who appreciate the opportunities to develop their skills. One staff member said the school's fresh thinking in RE has really 'fostered my enthusiasm'. Recent developments such as team teaching RE and a new focus on having a holistic theme for learning are viewed with excitement by staff. They speak of their joy at the way in which pupils are now 'allowed to believe'. The school is developing a discussion-based approach to teaching and learning and early signs show pupils are better engaged as a result. It is too early in the school's journey to be able to ascertain the quality of progression in RE. Assessment practice is also in the process of development. The school welcomes the involvement of members of the community to the school family. Pupils have opportunities to develop understanding of their local community and respond with outflowing of care. The fact that the recent 'Reverse Advent Calendar' was overwhelmed with collected food is testament to this. Parents appreciate the way the headteacher is 'opening the school up to new ideas' and would welcome more engagement with the school's Christian principles and RE curriculum. That the underpinning Christian ethos has a marked impact on pupil and staff wellbeing is evident in the cohesive atmosphere of the school. The curriculum promotes positive attitudes to learning and self-esteem, nurturing personal development. A moral outlook is encouraged through helping pupils to make connections between Christian teachings and their own experiences. Self-expression is fostered. Pupils are encouraged to be aware of the news and to discuss events and matters about which they are curious. The school meets the statutory requirements for religious education and collective worship.

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