

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### **Pevensey and Westham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

86 High Street, Westham, Pevensey  
East Sussex BN24 5LP

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Chichester</b>
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	East Sussex
Date of inspection	01 March 2017
Date of last inspection	06 July 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	VC Primary 114519
Headteacher	Richard Thomas
Inspector's name and number	Susan Costa 902

#### **School context**

Pevensey and Westham CE School is a two-form entry, semi-rural primary school. In February 2015 the school was judged to be requiring improvement by Ofsted. A recent Ofsted inspection in February 2017 judged the school to be good. There have been significant changes in school leadership and teaching staff over the last two years. Most pupils are of White British heritage, and the proportion of pupils with SEND support is the same as national. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is less than the national average. The school has links with two local churches including a close link with neighbouring St Mary's, Westham.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Pevensey and Westham VC School as a Church of England school are good**

- The commitment of the headteacher and staff has created a strong community which nurtures the well-being of the whole child, enabling them to be personally valued, happy and secure.
- Explicit Christian values such as compassion, truthfulness and forgiveness underpin the beliefs, behaviours and attitudes of staff and pupils.
- The rich curriculum and range of outdoor learning opportunities encourage and enhance pupils' personal reflection and spiritual development
- The Christian character positively influences relationships at all levels, creating a warm and welcoming school

#### **Areas to improve**

- Ensure that all members of the school community understand and express how the Christian values are rooted in biblical teaching.
- Improve the process of self-evaluation of the school as a church school so that there are regular formal reviews in which all aspects of the school's church school distinctiveness are considered, and leaders, including the governors, provide greater challenge to the school.
- Provide more planned opportunities within worship for pupils to develop a deeper appreciation of the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Increase pupil leadership of collective worship so that pupils feel responsibility for and have ownership of this aspect of the life of the school.

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

The school confidently expresses the Christian vision and values at its heart. There is a clear belief in education of the whole child to provide fullness of opportunity for all so that pupils become 'More amazing every day'. A range of values such as compassion, forgiveness, and truthfulness are known and understood by all in the school community and they impact positively on pupils' behaviour and attitudes. Relationships between pupils are strong and mutually respectful. They enjoy school and say that the staff support them to behave well. Pupils explain how they are guided 'to reflect and change their attitudes during turn-around time'. Currently the values are not always linked explicitly to biblical teaching so that pupils and staff are less confident how they are 'guided by God'. A high percentage of new teachers have joined the school over the last two years, however there is a consistency of expectations with regard to behaviour which supports pupils' learning. This has established strong relationships. There is a calm and purposeful learning environment in evidence around the school. This is well supported by high quality displays which celebrate pupils' achievements and the school's Christian foundation. The school's values make a strong impact on its inclusion provision; the senior team ensure that vulnerable groups are nurtured with the aim that they will thrive at school. Attendance has improved and interventions are closely tracked so that the progress that pupils make has improved in recent years. A rich and diverse curriculum has been developed so that pupils enjoy their lessons and are interested in their learning. They say that teachers make lessons fun and they often go outdoors to learn. Parents value the school's creative approach to learning and praise the use of the outdoor spaces and Forest School to enrich the curriculum and develop pupils' awareness of the natural world. These opportunities make a strong contribution towards pupils' spiritual development. One pupil commented that when they are outdoors they 'feel safe, relaxed and free; like I have nothing to worry about'. Pupils speak with less understanding about the value of reflective areas which have been developed in classrooms. A recent whole school religious education project enabled pupils to express their understanding of Bible stories through art. The outcomes were stunning and provided the pupils with a rich opportunity to explain the depth of meaning behind the Bible stories, with some working collaboratively to produce a finished piece. One parent summed up the experience by saying 'What a brilliant way to bring RE to life.' Further cultural opportunities are provided through RE where diversity of faith communities is explored through study of Islam, Judaism and Hinduism. Pupils talk about similarities as well as differences between faiths. Pupils' understanding of Christianity as a world-wide faith is less well-developed. An enquiry approach is used in RE which makes a contribution to the school's Christian character. When reflecting on the question 'Is it hard to forgive?' a group of pupils said that the parable of the prodigal son shows that 'Even if people hurt you very badly you can forgive.'

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Collective worship is recognised as a central part of school life. It is planned and linked to the values, and supports pupils to understand how their actions affect others. Pupils show a secure understanding of how they can make a difference in the wider world. They talk about raising funds through activities such as the Reindeer Run for a local hospice as a way of 'showing compassion to others'. The pupils talk confidently about key aspects of Anglican worship including known responses, the significance of lighting candles, listening to Bible stories and the use of prayer including the Lord's Prayer. They say that they find worship a helpful time because 'it helps us to know how to live our lives' and they 'can talk to God'. However, they comment that these elements are not used consistently in school and in church. They are keen to be more involved in planning and leading worship as they enjoy participating in drama when the opportunity is given. Pupils know a wide range of spiritual songs and hymns, and sing enthusiastically, sometimes with accompanying actions. They recognise the importance of prayer in developing their spiritual understanding. They write their own prayers which they say help them 'to reflect and think about others'. Parents comment that worship is important and that 'within this active church school worship provides an opportunity for behaviours to be linked to the Bible'. A Lent challenge provided the opportunity for everyone in the school community to consider their role in showing compassion. Worship reflects the different seasons of the liturgical year and major Christian festivals such as harvest, Christmas and Easter. Pupils describe the significance of these but they are unable to talk about Pentecost and they have limited understanding of the Trinity. Although pupils talk about exploring Bible stories they do not show a well-developed understanding of the importance of Jesus. Opportunities have been developed for woodland reflection within the school grounds, where groups of pupils regularly participate in activities to discuss and reflect on social issues and how values influence people's behaviour. Management of collective worship is effective. Planning by staff and clergy guides a range of staff to lead collective worship. Some monitoring has been carried out but the outcomes of this monitoring have not been used fully to make changes which would improve engagement and deepen understanding for pupils.

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

Staff and governors consistently describe how the school's recent journey of improvement has been based upon the vision which is underpinned by Christian values. Staff, governors and parents contributed to the selection and introduction of these values which have acted as a springboard for improvement. Parents speak confidently of the secure direction provided by the headteacher. They appreciate the fact that the school has a church foundation and it is evident that they like the care shown to their children. Parents praise the communication of the staff team who share regular updates on pupils' learning and worship, commenting that this helps them feel involved in the daily life of the school. Strong leadership over the past two years has resulted in a staff team who have a shared commitment to support pupils to be the best they can be, nurturing them as individuals and helping them to thrive. Self-evaluation strategies have led to improvements, evident in better performance outcomes. Christian values have impacted positively on aspects such as behaviour where the number of issues has significantly reduced. Since the last inspection school leaders have made a concerted effort to improve the distinctiveness of the school as a church school, with the key Christian values and collective worship contributing towards this successfully. Leaders consider collective worship to be an essential attribute of a Christian school and its improvement over recent years can be seen through the strong sense of community. Statutory requirements regarding its provision are met.

The involvement of all staff in the evaluation of Christian distinctiveness has meant they have been involved in the improvements and feel their suggestions are taken seriously. They have had input into the changes and developments and are clear about where the school is heading. This self-evaluation has been used to inform the strategic plan, which clearly identifies the continuing development of aspects of Christian character. Governors are committed to the Christian ethos of the school and support the school effectively. They work closely with senior leaders to ensure a strong commitment to further progress aspects which are impacting on pupils' attainment and well-being. Governors make visits to support school events throughout the year enabling them to know their school well. A church distinctiveness group has started to formalise evaluation of the school's Christian distinctiveness but governors acknowledge that they must now start to ask more challenging questions about how the Christian foundation of the school informs policy and practice. Staff leaders have recently gathered both pupils' and parents' views about the impact of the school's Christian foundation. The responses are generally very positive but they have yet to be fully analysed and used for enhancing the school's Christian ethos further.

A decision to use a specialist teacher to deliver a high percentage of the RE lessons, has resulted in quality teaching which benefits all learners. It ensures that the subject plays an important role in the life of the school. The specialist teacher is further developing skills from training provided by the diocese to implement the Understanding Christianity programme. Pupils, and teachers who are new to the school, benefit from the support of a member of the Spinnaker Trust. Through teaching RE and leading worship on a regular basis, this valuable partnership contributes positively to the continuing development of staff and their understanding of Christian distinctiveness. The headteacher collaborates with other local church schools to share best practice, and as a result of these partnerships staff are increasingly well supported for working in a church school. There is a close relationship with neighbouring St Mary's Church where collective worship takes place fortnightly, and special celebrations to mark Christian festivals provide the opportunity for parents to join with pupils and staff. Members of other Christian churches contributed to the recent RE and art project exploring the Bible stories with the pupils. Reaching out more widely, established links with communities in different countries, including India, help pupils develop an awareness of cultural diversity.

SIAMS report March 2017 Pevensey and Westham VC CE Primary School, Westham, East Sussex BN24 5LP