

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Stratford sub Castle Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Stratford sub Castle Salisbury Wilts SPI 3LL	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Salisbury
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Wiltshire
Date of inspection	23 March 2017
Date of last inspection	30 April 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 126361
Headteacher	Kay Bridson
Inspector's name and number	David Hatrey 844

School context

Stratford sub Castle Voluntary Controlled Primary is a smaller than average school. Most children come from a White British background with few children who have English as an additional language. The number of children who are eligible for pupil premium funding is in line with national averages, whilst the number of children who have special educational needs is significantly above national averages.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Stratford sub Castle Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary as a Church of England school are good

- Children have a good understanding of Christian values, what these look like in daily life and how they influence their thinking.
- Creative experiences to explore prayer provide opportunities for children to develop their appreciation of the relevance of prayer in their own lives.
- The school's Christian vision is reflected in the care and support for each individual child.
- The church makes a full and significant contribution to the life of the school through governance, leading worship and pastorally.

Areas to improve

- Develop creative opportunities to explore a personal spirituality through high quality experiences that enable children to express a growing depth of understanding in innovative ways.
- Develop planning for collective worship so that Christian values are explored in greater depth through links to biblical stories.
- Establish a robust system of monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of church school life that involves all members of the school community.

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

Christian values underpin the school's distinctive ethos. They have been chosen by the whole school community

and have a high profile. They identified love, hope, joy, courage, peace, truthfulness, forgiveness and reconciliation, generosity and thankfulness, compassion and community, equality and inclusiveness. Children have a good understanding of these values and describe what they look like in daily life. For some values children make links to biblical stories which reflect their distinctive Christian meaning, although for others, such as inclusiveness, they are unsure. Children are confident that Christian values make a difference to their lives and give examples of this. For instance, they talk about the welcome when they join school, care and concern for those who are hurt and ensuring everyone is included in school life. This is reflected in the children's motto, 'Smiles will be returned'. There is a clear emphasis on making children and families feel welcome which is apparent through a creative and influential induction programme which creates strong relationships. This ensures all feel part of a Christian family. Staff know children and families well; they model Christian values in daily interactions. The behaviour of children is of a high standard. Instances of bullying are very rare and if they occur are swiftly dealt with. A restorative approach to dealing with behaviour issues, established with diocesan support, enables children to appreciate the consequences of their action by developing empathy for others. The school's Christian character is evident in support for those who have behaviour issues providing specific individual programmes. Children perceive Christian values at the centre of this community. Values are developed in imaginative religious education (RE) activities. For example, when celebrating a baptism in church children make links to forgiveness. When joining a couple renewing wedding vows, they explore love and joy. At harvest, children give their gifts to a local charity considering generosity and community. Responses by children show how these occasions deepen their understanding of Christian values in real contexts where they see their relevance and meaning. The school has developed its provision for spirituality by encouraging children to pose deeper questions. Children talk about 'swimming on the surface' questions, then consider 'deep water' questions with which they wrestle and to which there may be no immediate answer. Comments show their ideas are beginning to deepen but more planned opportunities for this and a wider range of ways to express their ideas at a deeper level, such as through art, have not been fully explored. Visitors from other faiths celebrate festivals such as Diwali which bring them to life for the children. Children pose thoughtful questions and enjoy the opportunities to discuss other faiths. Children show a high degree of tolerance and respect for those who hold different views to their own. Links with a catholic French school enable children to see other Christian denominations and how they express their faith. They also understand that they are part of a wider Christian family.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship has a high profile in the life of the school. Children appreciate that it is a time for the school community to come together and share with God. A thoughtful atmosphere is created for worship with different children using sign language for the song which enables all children to join enthusiastically in singing. Children are engaged in worship. They enjoy the chance to share ideas with partners to explore answers to deeper questions. Worship messages challenge children to consider how they might respond to them in daily life. Children make contributions to class based worship through writing prayers and preparing some elements. At present children do not plan and lead worship on a regular basis. Children talk positively about worship. They enjoy the 'smiley face' worship where awards are made and value the sense of peace these bring. There are good opportunities to reflect on worship themes and stories from the Bible. Children are encouraged to think about what they would do or say in response. These are often followed up in class so the significance of these is deepened. Prayer is taught well and children have a good understanding that it is a way of sharing with God. Each year, prayer space days give children opportunities to explore different facets of prayer through interactive workshops. In one example, a boat was used to encourage reflection on the plight of refugees and write prayers for them. In another, children explored treasure which led to an understanding that they are a treasure to God. Saying sorry or making models of what they are thankful for extends their understanding of what they might include in their prayers. Children find these helpful and there is good evidence that these influence their thinking and leads to a deepening maturity. Children have regular opportunities to write prayers for national incidents. Other creative ideas saw children make prayer flags to show concern for those involved in earthquakes in Nepal. Throughout school, posters displaying hands encourage children to touch these and pray for a friend. Children regard prayer as important to them. Biblical themes in worship develop children's knowledge of Jesus and His place in Christian worship. Children talk about Jesus and His parables and try to explain what they mean. They have a growing understanding of the nature of the Trinity. Christian festivals are celebrated in church and school with children playing a significant role in these welcoming the whole community. Children talk about these festivals in detail and understand the importance of them for Christians. The headteacher's ongoing evaluation informs planning. At present planning does not show how children's understanding of values is deepened. Monitoring and evaluation is undertaken by governors and includes discussions with children. This has led to changes such as developing children's understanding of prayer and making worship distinctively Christian. At present children are not directly involved in evaluating worship.

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

The leadership team have a strong focus on enabling all children to achieve their God given potential. This is reflected in the school's mission statement, 'Learning for life, in a positive and caring community'. This statement is not displayed in school, but nevertheless influences the school's policy and practice. Children have some understanding of the vision seeing where it is makes an impact in their lives. They talk about the importance of learning and link this to 'building learning power' strategies. The understanding that everyone is special to God is particularly evident in the school's welcome for all, including those who have particular needs. The school's reputation for its Christian distinctiveness is reflected through the care and concern they show for meeting individual needs. Children with special needs are well supported with effective individual programmes which enable them to make good progress from their starting points. Good provision is made for the well-being of the whole child. Skilled teaching assistants provide support that enables children to be successful and develop skills and attitudes to be a life-long learner. All children feel valued by the community. A purposeful and cohesive staff team work conscientiously to constantly improve teaching and learning. Evidence indicates that children make good progress in several areas with attainment in writing being particularly good. Strengths are emerging in other areas where new initiatives are taking the school forward. Monitoring and evaluation strategies to track pupil progress are regularly undertaken and swift action is taken to address any concerns. Governors play a major role in holding the school to account and do so effectively. The same rigour is not found in monitoring as a church school. The school's Christian distinctiveness is reviewed at an informal level but strengths and areas for improvement have not been identified or recorded. Continuing professional development opportunities are focused on school priorities. This is seen in RE with the introduction of 'Discovery RE'. It has led to a more enquiry based approach to the subject which has engaged children who are beginning to recognise the contribution this makes to their thinking and its relevance to daily life. The school draws upon diocesan expertise and the headteacher has contributed to the diocesan education team. The church makes a full and significant contribution to school life. Church members lead the popular after school club which creatively explores Bible stories and leads worship in church. The prayer space two-day event is also led by them. The vicar leads worship and gives strong support to governance and pastoral care which is greatly valued. A number of letters were received during the inspection where parents praise the difference school makes to the lives of children, celebrating the quality of relationships with staff. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

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