

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Sheering Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	
The Street, Sheering, Bishop's Stortford, CM22 7LU	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese / Methodist District	Chelmsford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Essex
Date of inspection	5 December 2017
Date of last inspection	September 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled: 115099
Headteacher	Lorna Brittain
Inspector's name and number	Andrew Binnell: 665

School context

The school is smaller than average size with 110 pupils on roll. Most pupils live in Sheering or Lower Sheering with a small percentage of its pupils living in Harlow. The vast majority of pupils are White British who have English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) is above average. The proportion of pupils for which the school receives extra funding due to social or economic disadvantage is below the national average. The school has four classes, three of which are mixed age.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sheering CE (VC) primary school as a Church of England school are good

- The whole school community regardless of background lives out the school's explicit and inclusive Christian values. This leads to strong relationships and supports pupils' very good attitudes, manners and behaviours.
- The strong leadership of the headteacher who, working with the team in school and governors, has significantly strengthened the Christian foundation of this church school
- The positive approach by the staff team in responding effectively to the areas for development identified at the last denominational inspection.

Areas to improve

- Increase the frequency and depth of more formalised Anglican worship practices held both in the school and in the parish church in order to add greater value to that currently available to pupils at the school.
- Enhance the school community's interpretation of spirituality so that this can be consistently applied across the school.
- Increase the involvement of all groups in the school community in the evaluation of its distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school in order to ensure that the needs of all pupils are fully met.

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

The school makes its Christian values clear and explicit. The school's Christian values were reviewed in January 2015 in line with a recommendation made at its previous denominational inspection. The school researched guidance from the Church of England and liaised with the school council, parents and members of the parish church of St Mary's. They are now in place and are 'terrific': to be trustworthy and honest, endurance, responsible, respectful, independent, forgiveness, inclusive and compassion. They are lived out by pupils and adults across the school. Values are displayed in every classroom in an age appropriate way, giving great meaning to pupils in each of the four classes through well thought out biblical linkages. Christian values contribute in a highly effectively way to the school being a calm and happy place. They also support pupils in the creation of strong relationships and this is demonstrated in their very good attitudes, manners and behaviours. Pupils can recognise and articulate how these Christian values impact on their daily lives, inside and outside of school. One pupil for example commented that 'there are no bullies in this school because we are taught to be kind and respectful.' There are many high quality displays, which reflect the school's Christian character. In the school hall, for example, there is a display of the school values and corridor displays highlighting, for example, spirituality at Sheering school. Displays are updated frequently to keep them relevant. As an example, at the time of this inspection, many displays reflect the Christian season of Advent. The school's curriculum is broad and creative, and there is a good range of extra-curricular clubs and activities for all. These are popular with pupils and uptake is good, providing pupils opportunities to work together both in and out of the classroom. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is good overall. Pupils' spiritual development is deepening and contributes to their attitudes and enjoyment of learning. At the beginning of each afternoon, all classes have a 'time to connect' session enabling pupils a time for reflection either as individuals or as a class. Sometimes this time is used to reflect on their thoughts about key messages from their collective worship that morning. On other occasions the time is used promote pupils' well-being or to strengthen pupils' readiness to learn. The school has made some big steps quickly in developing this approach and it now intends to gather its successes and to further strengthen the approach in the light of its experience. This will provide the school with an opportunity to ensure there is consistently applied whole school approach that reflects the age range of pupils. Pupils' outcomes in 2017 indicate that they are above national averages based on attainment at the expected level. From their starting points, the vast majority make good and sometimes very good progress including all groups. The leadership of the school has correctly focussed on raising ambitions of all learners. This is because they rightly recognise that the high attainment and progress of pupils is a key expression of the school's Christian mission as a church school. The living out of the school's Christian values in its daily life results in pupils feeling safe and learning effectively. This means that pupils' wellbeing is taken seriously. Any instances as less than good behaviour are quickly resolved, drawing explicitly on the school's Christian values. One pupil commented 'if you are scared teachers help and comfort you and make you feel very safe,' another stated 'everyone wants everyone to be happy at our school.' Pupils are polite and extremely courteous. They are very proud of their school and its Christian foundation. Children are fully involved in the life of the school as, for example, team leaders, as democratically elected members the school council, eco warriors, as members of the prayer committee, play leaders or as head girl or head boy. The school encourages pupils to think of others and they organise fundraising events for a wide range of charities. The most recent was 'Santa for a Senior' at Hatfield Haven retirement home. The behaviour of and respect for others, as demonstrated by both adults and pupils and reflects well on the school's Christian foundation. As a result of this, pupils want to be at school, with evident improvements in pupils' attendance over time. It is currently above the national average. RE provide a range of opportunities to learn about Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. This contributes positively to their developing understanding of difference and diversity.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Well thought out acts of collective worship form an important part of each school day. They impact positively on the school as a whole and on the lives of the individuals within the community. Worship is well planned for the school year by a range of people. This includes the headteacher, the parish priest and a lay preacher. It is delivered effectively and is expressly Christian in character. There is a good balance of biblical material and Christian teaching addressed during worship. This enables pupils to deepen their understanding of Jesus and his importance for Christians. All pupils, irrespective of faith or non-faith background, participate in the worship programme, which supports the community feel of the school effectively. Through worship, pupils develop a good understanding of principal Christian festivals. They also develop an appropriate understanding of the Christian concept of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Saying the Lord's Prayer, singing Christian hymns, songs, and the use of candles are established practice. Pupils' experience aspects of Anglican practice well and this leads to good engagement of pupils in worship. Pupils have a firm understanding of the words and content of the Lord's Prayer and appreciate something of its significance to Christians. Pupils enjoy each act of worship but particularly enjoy their team assembly each week. In this assembly, pupil's achievements are celebrated when they have demonstrated one of the

school values during the week. The assembly schedule is planned annually covering the three terms and effectively explores school values. Collective worship is enhanced by pupils' having the opportunity to visit the parish church of St Mary's at Harvest, Christmas and Easter. Further strengthening pupils' participation in school worship has been an ongoing focus for the school's leadership team. This has led to significantly improved pupil participation since the previous denominational inspection. Pupils' now have opportunities to plan, lead and evaluate worship at Sheering. There is also now an eco-committee, addressing global citizenship and a pupil prayer committee who are part of a wider faith council. Both of these groups are made up of pupils from each year group. The parish priest and the lay preacher respectively lead these groups. Both groups meet on a weekly basis and enables pupils to have the opportunity to work closely in school with key members of the parish church. As a result of these meetings, assemblies are evaluated and prayers are created that are used in acts of worship the following week. From this strengthened base, the school rightly recognises that the frequency and depth of more formalised Anglican worship practice in school and at the parish church is under-developed.

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

The headteacher has been in post since January 2014. She is well supported by an acting deputy headteacher and three other members of the staff team who are at relatively early stages of their teaching careers. The school has responded well to the identified areas for development from the previous denominational inspection. Particular impetus has been evident since the arrival of the current headteacher. School leaders work effectively with the parish priest and lay preacher, governors and the wider staff team, and have successfully built on the school's Christian mission. The school has well thought out plans for the future encapsulated in its SIAMS development plan (2017-2019). This high quality document has detailed plans to strengthen further the Christian foundation of the church school. It shows that the school knows itself well and that through its good self-evaluation it is able to ensure that the school's Christian distinctiveness drives forward further developments. Partnership with the Diocese is very strong, with regular visits to the school from its diocesan link adviser. He has led a range of training activities for the staff team and governors. This advice and training has impacted positively on school life and on future plans. All members of the staff team feel valued and respected. In turn, they inspire high expectations in pupils which impacts positively on academic attainment and progress. Governors are a stable team with a very good range of expertise. They are well led by a chair of governors who is ably supported by a highly experienced vice chair who knows the school particularly well. Governors are well involved in school life but their role in supporting the school's self-evaluation as a church school is not focused or rigorous. The parish priest is well known to the staff team and pupils alike. She provides effective pastoral support to the school leaders and the wider staff team. Parents see the school as a caring and inclusive community that puts their children at the heart of its work, based on its Christian values. They are well informed of their children's attainment and progress. They are appropriately involved in school life, for example, through opportunities to attend worship and through various fund raising activities organised by the school. Statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are met and the leadership of RE and worship is secure. The school provides effective professional, spiritual and personal development for staff and governors within the context of working in a church school.

SIAMS report [December 2017] Sheering CE (VC) Primary School, Bishop Stortford, CM22 7LU