

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Christ Church CE Primary School

Montpelier Road, Purley, Croydon CR8 2QE	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Southwark
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Croydon
Date/s of inspection	30 November 2016
Date of last inspection	November 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	101793
Headteacher	Mary Pike
Inspector's name and number	John Viner NS144

School context

Christ Church is an average size primary school located in the parish of Christ Church, Purley. A major building project is underway to support the school's expansion from one to two forms of entry. Its 360 pupils reflect the rich diversity of the local area, with high proportions from ethnic minority groups and who speak English as an additional language. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and those eligible for additional government funding are above the national average. Around a quarter of pupils attend church. Most pupils make good progress and, by the end of Key Stage Two, standards are above the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Christ Church as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Christian values of love, courage, honesty, faith and forgiveness underpin the school and are evident in every aspect of its life and work.
- They inspire the excellent, compassionate relationships between and among adults and pupils that make this a harmonious, loving, learning community.
- Worship is joyful and heartfelt. The act of collective worship is a core aspect of school life that inspires all who attend.
- Pupils of all faiths are enthusiastic about worship and their understanding of and confidence in prayer demonstrates real spiritual maturity.
- Religious education (RE) engages pupils and provides opportunities to think about deep questions.
- The school's Christian ethos informs its policies, enriches its curriculum and makes RE central to its work.
- The headteacher's strong, faithful Christian leadership leads to high expectations among all stakeholders so that the drive for pupils to achieve high academic standards is matched with their spiritual development and the nurture of faith.

Areas to improve

- Strengthen the systems for the formal evaluation of collective worship so that it is part of planned improvement.
- Develop the assessment of RE so that teachers and leaders have a clearer understanding of the standards pupils achieve and the progress they make through consistency of practice and judgement between teachers and across the school.
- Review the way in which teachers guide pupils further in developing their spiritual understanding through RE lessons so that all feedback is as effective as the best.

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

The school's Christian character is evident in every aspect of its life and work and are summed up in its vision statement that this is 'an expression of the love of God in the community'. The explicit Christian values of love, courage, honesty, faith and forgiveness are deeply embedded so that they are part of the daily rhythm of school life. Pupils, staff and parents know and articulate these core values and understand why they are important. Pupils say that they will 'help us in our lives, help us as we grow up and help us to become good people.' Parents say they value highly the way the school gives their children 'a firm spiritual foundation' for their lives.

These Christian values shape the excellent, warm trusting relationships between and among adults and pupils: they make this a place where pupils know that they are loved by God and are safe, valued and special. Because they are so securely affirmed they attend school regularly, behave impeccably and work hard. As a result, all pupils, including the most disadvantaged, make good progress from their starting points and most achieve standards that are in line with, and sometimes above, national expectations. This academic progress is more than matched by the outstanding promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils appreciate the rich diversity of their school and they say that, 'we really respect each other's faith and culture'. This mutual respect is evident in the way that they care for and find opportunities to serve each other.

A highly developed understanding of spirituality is woven into the fabric of school life so that pupils develop a spiritual personality, are confident in asking deep questions and understand the relevance of faith in a modern world. They appreciate that they are part of a diverse society in which Christianity is one of many world faiths. They are excited by RE, understand its importance in their development and the life of their community and that it plays a key role in the school's Christian character.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship lies at the heart of the school, making it a real worshipping and prayerful community. Irrespective of their personal faith or belief, all adults and learners are affirmed by worship, regard it as an important part of their lives and know what it means to be a person of faith. Singing plays an important part in worship and parents remark that, 'this is not just about singing Christian songs – it is real worship'. Worship is of high quality because it so deeply embedded in the school's Christian character. Pupils come to worship enthusiastically, they participate willingly and behave reverently. This is, for them, a key part of their day and an essential part of their developing spiritual and moral journey. They keenly learn and repeat the regular 'memory verses' that provide a biblical foundation to each core value. Parents say that it builds in their children a sense of who they are, drawing on the Christian values that the school promotes. Pupils of all faiths value worship and say that it helps them to draw close to God and care for each other.

Worship is uncompromisingly Christian and biblical, rooted in the person of Jesus and the understanding that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is carefully planned in partnership with the parish church and, because it is skilfully led by a range of leaders – including parish staff and visitors from other churches - it is kept fresh and interesting. The regular involvement of the Vicar and the Youth Pastor and the times when worship takes place in the parish church, ensure that pupils experience and understand Anglican tradition and practice. Pupils like the variety of worship; the activities, the challenges and the opportunities to take part through role play, reading and prayer. They have many opportunities to plan and lead aspects of worship. Those responsible for the choice of songs have the autonomy to change them during worship to better fit the theme. The weekly class worship, they say, is a time when 'more people get to share their thoughts' and an opportunity to practise prayer.

From the moment they enter the school, pupils quickly learn about the nature and purpose of prayer so that it becomes their daily experience. Pupils write their own prayers and pray at lunchtimes and at the end of each day. The classroom prayer areas are opportunities for personal reflection and prayer and help pupils to develop their understanding and practice. Their enthusiastic participation in extemporary prayer during worship shows their mature confidence in prayer. Parents of all faiths report that their children bring prayer and singing into their homes, ask questions about what they have learnt in worship and so enrich home life.

Worship is informally evaluated by the ethos leader through observation and discussions with staff. She also involves a pupils' 'faith group' in making suggestions about what is most successful and how worship can be improved. Although successful, this informal evaluation lacks the precision of a more structured approach that is part of planned review and improvement.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

Standards of attainment in RE for the majority of pupils are in line with national expectations and sometimes higher. The work in their books is of comparable quality to that seen in other core subjects. Because the school is so successful in developing pupils' spiritual thinking overall, they use the language of faith with confidence and this is evident in their responses to deep questions. As a result, pupils make good and sometimes rapid progress, regardless of their starting points, developing a range of skills including enquiry, analysis and interpretation and this helps them to understand the impact of religion on the lives of believers.

Teaching is consistently good. Pupils say that teachers make RE fun because they engage in a range of interesting activities. They say that the only way to improve it would be to do more of it! Teachers create good opportunities for pupils to extend their thinking so that they can ask deep questions about meaning and purpose. The work being done to link RE with other subjects is a very significant strength because this underlines the way that faith and belief are not limited to a single academic area. As a result, pupils leave the school with a good foundation of Christian understanding and a developing knowledge of and real interest in other key faiths and beliefs. As a result, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted at a high level.

While many aspects of RE are very good, it is not yet outstanding because the way that teachers assess pupils' learning is not yet consistent across the school. This variability means that leaders have an insecure picture of pupils' attainment and progress. However, teachers are developing their skills in the guidance they give to pupils in order to extend their thinking. This again is variable, but much advice is accurately pitched to individual needs and helps pupils' to develop their understanding about religions and how to apply this to their own lives.

RE is skilfully led by a knowledgeable subject leader who systematically and effectively monitors the way it is taught, providing good help and guidance to teachers. This has been especially important with the implementation of a new programme of study. She draws on the advice and support of diocesan officers and has been ably supported in school by the Youth Pastor, who provides high quality staff training that helps teachers to extend their subject knowledge. The subject leader recognises that assessment is a developing area, understands these weaknesses and plans to address them.

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

The headteacher, key leaders and governors share and articulate an ambitious Christian vision for the school that is lived it out in their commitment to make the its work 'an expression of God's love in the community'. This vision is driving the school on a road of continuous improvement where faith is at the centre and Christian values are paramount. It was a driving force in their view of the school's expansion as an opportunity for greater service to the community. Because all unite behind this vision, leaders, governors and staff work together with a shared understanding of the importance of Christian values to all that the school does. This is evident both in its curriculum and in its operational policies which underpin pupils' high standards, good progress and wellbeing. Parents recognise this, saying, for example, that when it comes to dealing with conflict, the influence of Christian values are evident and actions are rooted in reason, justice and forgiveness. They say that is a real strength of the school and underpins it. Parents respect the headteacher and trust her judgement. One parent remarked, 'I thank God for the headteacher who works tirelessly to be inclusive, which spills out into the wider community'.

Leaders and governors have excellent systems for keeping the school's Christian distinctiveness under review. Working with other stakeholders to provide a wider view, they fully understand its strengths and weaknesses and this effective self-evaluation enables them to maintain a clear direction for the school. Governors are well trained: they have undertaken the Bishop's Certificate and so have a keen awareness of their responsibilities to the wider work of the school in its Christian context. They take a strategic view of developing leaders, and the leadership of RE and Collective Worship is strong as a result. They understand the school's future leadership needs and know how to address them.

The partnerships with the parish church, and other local churches, are of mutual benefit. For example, the Youth Pastor leads a 'Christian Club' within the school that a number of pupils attend, and there is a shared link with a school in Kenya. This link helps pupils to gain an insight into life in a global community, and provides a focus for the school's outward-looking charity work. Parents run a prayer group for the school, and regularly attend worship both in school and in the church, which they enjoy. The contribution made by the parish church goes beyond worship to the whole of school life. It is a powerful partnership that makes reality of the school's vision to extend the love of God into the community it serves.