

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Charsfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Church Road, Charsfield, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP13 7QB	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	St Edmundsbury and Ipswich
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Suffolk
Name of federation	Charsfield and Dennington CEVP Partnership
Date of inspection	5 July 2018
Date of last inspection	15 October 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	VC Primary 124725
Headteacher	Ian Page
Inspector's name and number	Linda Russell 893

School context

Charsfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary is a smaller than average rural village school in a federation with another small church school. Currently, there are 41 pupils on roll with only 6 pupils from the village. Almost all pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Those with special educational needs is higher than the national average at 42%. The school is currently led by an experienced temporary headteacher who has been in place since September 2017. The school is about to become an academy and enter a multi academy trust. The school was recently visited by Ofsted (March 2018) and judged to be good.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Charsfield as a Church of England school are good

- Strong, inclusive and harmonious relationships founded on Christian values are consistently attributed by all stakeholders to the foundation status and ethos of the school. They are powerfully demonstrated in the relationships between pupils, staff and parents.
- Support from the local church has been instrumental in developing pupils' experience of Christianity.
- Leaders, with support from local clergy, have ensured that the Christian distinctiveness of the school remains central to its future development in a time of significant change.
- A clear and accurate self-evaluation show leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths as a church school. The action plan contains areas for development which are carefully focused on further enhancing the Christian character and distinctiveness of the school.

Areas to improve

- Develop pupils' understanding of the biblical roots of school values in order for them to see how these impact on their own lives and behaviour.
- Give pupils opportunities to plan, lead and evaluate worship in order to strengthen its impact on the school community through greater understanding of its purpose and relevance to their own lives.
- Ensure that formal monitoring of the school's Christian distinctiveness, especially with regard to collective worship, is sufficiently regular and robust to enable leaders to make informed decisions about improvement.

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

Charsfield is proud of its inclusive ethos which enables pupils who have often struggled in other settings to flourish and thrive. All stakeholders attribute the harmonious atmosphere within the school to Christian distinctiveness and the values of kindness, generosity, care and compassion that are promoted by all. With such small cohorts, achievement can fluctuate, but the school tracks all pupils carefully to ensure all make good progress and, where needed, targeted intervention is used effectively to support vulnerable pupils. This shows the school living out its mission based on the values of kindness, tolerance and support for all, ensuring all feel valued and are helped to achieve. Relationships between all members of the school community lead pupils and parents to say how supported they feel, 'relationships are at the heart of what makes Charsfield special'. Pupils say, 'school feels like a family'. Parents speak warmly about the way school staff leave no stone unturned in their quest for the best for each individual pupil and how they are personally supported in times of difficulty, something they attribute to the school's Christian mission to those in need. The ethos and values of the school can be seen in its approach to attendance; how it works collaboratively with the education welfare officer and in the flexible schooling options offered to those pupils who need it. Behaviour is good and there have been no exclusions. The distinctive Christian ethos is reflected in the daily acts of service pupils perform such as tying up each other shoelaces, setting up tables for lunch, reading with younger pupils and, as seen during the inspection, welcoming the new children into the school for induction day. They also demonstrate service to the community, for example undertaking a road speed watch service in the local village. Pupils demonstrate the Christian value of perseverance in sporting activities and this has led to great success in inter-school competitions. Reflection areas have recently been introduced into the classrooms and a designated quiet area has been established in the outside area to give pupils opportunities to explore their spirituality, although it is too early to judge the impact of this beyond saying that pupils have started to use them. There are displays of Christian values all around which creates an environment where the school celebrates its distinctiveness, with all stakeholders clear about the church school status. Pupils have good knowledge about other faith communities. They talk enthusiastically about respect and tolerance. The multi-faith day where many small schools came together in fellowship powerfully contributed to this knowledge as does the religious education (RE) curriculum. The curriculum ensures pupils have the opportunity to respect diversity and difference in other faith communities and has a strong element relating to British values. Pupils enjoy RE, 'We learn in so many different ways, not always sitting down', and say they like having the freedom to discuss beliefs in a supportive environment. Staff willingness to tackle issues with pupils, such as modern-day slavery and extremism, contributes powerfully to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. Pupils have some understanding of Christianity as a worldwide faith through their sponsorship of a young child in a church led orphanage in South Africa. Pupil voice can be seen in the school council which enables pupils to recognise that they are listened to and can make a difference. Pupils demonstrate the Christian value of generosity and show their compassion for those less fortunate than themselves through fund raising.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Collective worship is recognised as being important in the life of the school community and is said to be valued. Until recently, worship was referred to as 'assembly'. The headteacher quickly identified that this was diluting its Christian underpinning. Following training and advice from the diocese and other church schools, distinctive features have been introduced which has given pupils greater awareness of the part worship plays in the life of the school. Displays reinforce the biblical roots for worship. Staff now use a basic Anglican structure for worship, building on what pupils experience in regular church services. This has given staff a better understanding of the theological basis for worship, something not reinforced in the past. As a result, staff confidence in delivering worship has increased and the profile of worship has been raised. They are well supported by a planned schedule. Pupils have some understanding of traditions in worship and experience a variety of worship styles because representatives from the Anglican tradition and the local Baptist minister regularly lead worship. Pupils say how much they enjoy their visits to the local church for services and celebrations for Easter, harvest and Christmas, which are well attended and appreciated by parents. More opportunities for pupils to actively participate in church-based worship has given them an increased knowledge of biblical stories. This has not yet been replicated in school where pupils are worship facilitators rather than active participants. Although pupils plan and lead parent assemblies, this has not been carried over into regular worship, so a focus for development from the previous inspection has been only partially met. The Values for Life resource, used to plan worship by the collective worship leader and clergy, ensures that some biblical material is included. However, the relationship between what pupils hear about the values demonstrated through Bible stories, especially the model provided by Jesus Christ, and how this relates to their own lives is underdeveloped. This has begun to be addressed by awarding certificates to pupils for demonstrating the current value, impacting positively on their wellbeing. Another recent innovation is a 'Values Book' where pupils and staff record an example of the current value in action. This has increased pupils' awareness of the current value but the link with the school's values is not yet fully developed. Pupils have a good understanding of the symbolism

represented by a cross and a candle for believers. The introduction of class worship candles has deepened their understanding of the symbolism of Jesus Christ as the light of the world. Parents say worship has a positive effect on pupils' personal development because the focus on the Christian values impacts on relationships and behaviour in a positive way. Prayer has been restated as a consistent tenet of school-based worship. Prayers, written in RE, are now supporting pupils' spiritual development and, because they are now being used in worship, the relevance of prayer to their own lives is better understood. The prayer book demonstrates pupils' good understanding of the nature and uses of prayer, including what amen means. The incumbent has been instrumental in supporting understanding of liturgical colours which are used in church at different times of the year and a church year calendar is prominently displayed which parents refer to, giving them insight into Anglican traditions. Parents are well informed about the current worship themes through regular newsletters, school displays and the school website. Some feedback on worship is gathered from pupils and governors, a previous focus for development, but it is not sufficiently regular or formalised to make a significant impact on worship.

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

The role of the headteacher has been crucial in bringing the Christian vision back to the forefront of the life of the school. He quickly set about re-establishing the Christian character of the school in the minds of everyone connected with the school. The mission statement, 'learning within a Christian environment, gladly working in partnership with each other...led by the hand of God', sits proudly on the home page of the website and is regularly reviewed. As a result, members of the school community, parents and governors can articulate the importance of this to the culture of the school. It is the Christian foundation that has informed strategic decisions made by governors in the planned move to academy status and in joining a multi academy trust of small, mainly church village schools later this year. 'There was the clear priority to maintain the culture and identity of our school'. All Saints Schools Trust was selected as the favoured option because its values and ethos are shared. 'Like minds coming together.' The recent comprehensive consultation regarding academy conversion was used by leaders to reenergise local villagers in support of the school. Pupils have benefited from practical examples of service to others as well as being able to read to adults more frequently and develop their understanding of fairness through regular board game playing. All leaders have a good understanding of performance and have worked hard to secure major improvements. An accurate evaluation has led to a clear action plan to further strengthen distinctiveness and worship. The inclusion of a church school element in the development plan ensures this is regularly considered by governors. Governors are very supportive of the school and, following a recent review of governance, have demonstrated renewed vigour and focus. They receive detailed information from the headteacher. As a result, they are able to hold leaders to account. The Ethos committee has a pivotal role in further developing the school as a distinctively Christian organisation. Minutes of meetings show they regularly discuss matters pertaining to the foundation of the school, such as church school self-evaluation, but formalised monitoring is underdeveloped. A comprehensive action plan has appropriately focused targets and performance indicators. The locally agreed RE syllabus, developed by a group including the current RE leader, is used across the school. The enthusiastic and experienced higher-level teaching assistant who leads RE uses meeting time regularly to share updated information about church school matters and to deliver in-house training. As a result, staff are well-informed. Recent examples of staff training have included input from the diocese on worship, demonstrating the close link between the school and the diocese that has been cultivated by leaders at all levels. It has resulted in significant changes to school practice and an enhancement of the worship experience for pupils. Investment in future leaders has ensured that the school will have an experienced head of school in September who is aware of and committed to the Christian distinctiveness of the school. She has already been working on the curriculum for next year where Christian values have a more prominent place in the work pupils will be doing as it has been recognised that links have not always been clearly identified and signposted for other stakeholders in the past. The successful implementation of a new leadership model has ensured that leaders at all levels now have a real understanding of and regard for the Christian foundation of the school, where all have a part to play in the development of this small village church school. Arrangements for RE and CW meet statutory requirements.

SIAMS report July 2018 Charsfield Church of England VC Primary, IPI3 7QB