

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Latchingdon Church of England Primary School

The Street, Latchingdon, Chelmsford, Essex, CM3 6JS

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Chelmsford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Date of academy conversion	September 2015
Name of multi-academy trust	The Vine Trust
Date/s of inspection	6 December 2016
Date of last inspection	14 November 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy Primary 142252
Headteacher	Margaret Amery
Inspector's name and number	Mike Dean 882

School context

This smaller than average sized primary school has four classes and 105 pupils on roll. It serves a semi-rural area around the villages of Latchingdon and Althorne. The percentages of pupils for whom the school receives extra funding due to social disadvantage and those with special educational and development (SEND) needs are close to national averages. The school's intake is predominately drawn from White British families. The headteacher has been in post since 2000. Since the previous denominational inspection, the school has joined the diocesan multi-academy trust (MAT).

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Latchingdon Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- Since the previous denominational inspection the school has made focused efforts to ensure that its Christian character is more integral, explicit and valued. The impetus for this has been increased since joining the Vine Trust.
- The school's Christian character informs its work and impacts positively on pupils' attainment, progress, well-being and behaviour.
- A strong partnership with the local church underpins and enhances the school's Christian ethos and character.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that a clear and cohesive vision to drive ongoing development of the school as a church school is explicitly promoted and articulated across the whole school community.
- Embed a common understanding of spirituality across all stakeholders to inform the development of broader and deeper opportunities for spiritual development across the whole curriculum.
- Improve the effectiveness of how religious education (RE) supports spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development and the school's Christian values through full implementation of a robust action plan.

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

Pupils at Latchingdon are happy and well cared for. The school's core values of creativity, peace, thankfulness, friendship, honesty and hope are well known by pupils and they understand their importance and relevance. As a result of the approach the school has developed, pupils link Christian values, including the school's core values, to the life and teachings of Jesus. For example, they explain how a value such as compassion was shown in the parable of the Good Samaritan. They also correctly explain how Jesus showed that compassion is 'doing something rather than just feeling sorry for someone'. They readily articulate how they apply values in their own lives, giving examples such as choosing to forgive rather than hold a grudge. In this way, pupils demonstrate how the teaching and modelling of Christian values helps to secure good moral and social development. The impact of these values can be seen in the good progress made by most pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, from their different starting points. Attainment is generally around national averages. Another consequence is that children behave well and exclusions are rare. Attendance is around the national average. Staff consciously seek to apply the school's values when dealing with any issues related to attendance with positive impact. They also note how the previously poor record of attendance held by some newer pupils improves markedly after they join Latchingdon school. The focus on values also supports and facilitates good relationships between adults and pupils across the school. As a result, pupils respond well to their teachers and are clear that any issues or occasional examples of bullying are dealt with immediately. The quality of relationships also means that parents have a positive view of the support given to pupils and the approachability of staff. The school's approach to teaching values also supports spiritual development in pupils well. As a result, SMSC development is good. However the SMSC policy does not make clear how the school community understands or defines spirituality. This limits further development of an informed and focused approach to broader provision for spiritual development across the curriculum. Opportunities for SMSC within RE are beginning to expand through the piloting of an approach to teaching Christianity that is based on key beliefs and concepts. For example, pupils are given opportunities to ask and to reflect upon 'big questions', such as 'What happens when you die?' and 'What caused the big bang?' However, a lack of clarity and precision around what and how pupils should learn and reflect upon limits opportunities. There are some good opportunities provided through RE to grow understanding of difference and diversity. This includes a range of visits to places of worship of different faiths. Pupils respond positively to these and describe how they enjoy learning about faiths such as Sikhism in RE. The range of opportunities to develop understanding of Christianity as a multicultural world faith has begun to develop through such activities as those provided during the school's 'Christianity Week'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship now plays an important and significant part of the life of the school community. It is planned around key Christian values, including the core values, and Christian festivals. Worship is of a definably Anglican character, including the regular use of the Lord's Prayer. Opening and closing sentences with responses, together with the lighting of a candle during worship, reflect Anglican practices well. The local incumbent has made a significant contribution to supporting these developments. Biblical material is used effectively to link with key values, including the school's core values. This helps pupils to understand how Jesus is the central figure in Christianity. They explain how '...God was generous in sending his son down for us' and how Christians '...want to be like Jesus, not doing miracles but helping people'. However, pupils have only rudimentary understanding about what Christians believe about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Parents are now invited to church services. They value this opportunity to support their children and be part of the worshipping community. Parents rightly appreciate how worship engages their children in a lively but respectful manner. A worship committee consisting of pupils and adults contributes regularly to the planning and leading of worship. For example, pupils choose appropriate songs and prayers around the worship theme. This ensures that pupils have a key role in planning and leading acts of worship, particularly church services. As a result of their experiences, pupils see the importance of worship and are able to articulate what it means to them at a simple level. Monitoring by leaders demonstrates the positive impact on pupil attitudes and engagement. Since the previous denominational inspection, the school has developed opportunities to reflect and pray beyond formal collective worship time. As a result, reflection and prayer are more firmly embedded at the centre of school life. Pupils compose their own prayers on a range of themes. These prayers are accessible for other pupils to read, ensuring that they have a purpose. Consequently, pupils clearly gain spiritual benefit from the provision of a specific space for prayer and reflection in a central location. Some describe how they have chosen to use the space to calm down or to think about words on the prayer tree to be found there. However, apart from the display of a 'big question' or two, there is limited stimulus to encourage deep reflection or wonder. Pupils identify different forms of prayer, such as thanksgiving, saying sorry, and asking for something. Additional opportunities linked to the local church, such as 'Messy Church', are also actively supported by the school. This is an approach to worship which actively engages children and young people in worship through a range of practical and thoughtful activities. This also supports the spiritual development of the significant number of pupils who attend.

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

The previous two denominational inspections judged the school to be 'satisfactory' as a church school. School leaders have now embraced the challenges that this presented. They responded with plans that correctly addressed elements of the school's Christian character requiring improvement. In consequence, there has been a clear and identifiable journey over the past three years in establishing and developing an explicitly Christian character across the school. The decision to join the Vine Trust was an early expression of this commitment. Becoming part of this MAT has positively influenced this journey and accelerated its pace. It also has clearly had significant impact in broadening the school's sense of identity as a partner in the diocesan family. This can be seen, for example, in the way in which leaders now network more regularly with other church schools. Good practice identified and observed has consequently been incorporated into their own setting with positive impact. With appropriate support and challenge from governors, the headteacher and deputy have worked effectively as a team to develop the school's distinctive character. As a result, the school is now clearly identifiable as a church school community. The work done has had a positive impact on pupil outcomes and development. The school has actively drawn upon diocesan sources to develop and support leaders in their church school roles. This has included significant input from the diocesan adviser. The school has largely implemented the advice and guidance given. However, the school's vision is still not sufficiently defined to ensure that the school's Christian ethos and values drive forward every aspect of its life and work. Leaders have established and effectively promote school values that are based upon and express Christian teaching. Although a central focus of the worship programme, this link is not always articulated consistently or explicitly in other contexts. Under the leadership of the headteacher and deputy, the school is developing its capacity to take an enquiry-based approach to RE. There is already some evidence of the impact of this in outcomes for pupils. However, this approach is not fully utilised in providing opportunities to support pupils' SMSC development through the RE curriculum. Leaders ensure that statutory requirements for worship and RE are met. Some systems for monitoring Christian distinctiveness are now established. Through review of action planning by senior leaders to develop Christian distinctiveness across the school, governors ensure progress is made. However, evaluation of the impact of actions taken is not rigorous enough. Nonetheless, all areas for development identified in the previous denominational inspection have been satisfactorily addressed. This has had a positive impact on the drive to establish the Christian character of the school. The partnership with the church is strong, with identifiable mutual benefits for both church and school. Partnership with parents is effective. Nonetheless, parents rightly note how they would value even more opportunities to be involved in aspects of the worship life of the school.

SIAMS report (December 2016) Latchingdon CE (VC) Primary School, Latchingdon, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 6JS