

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Swimbridge Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Barnstaple Hill, Swimbridge, Barnstaple, Devon EX32 0PJ

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Exeter
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Devon
Date of inspection	13 March 2018
Date of last inspection	18 March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 113455
Headteacher	Sandra Tibbles
Inspector's name and number	Revd David Hatrey 844

School context

Swimbridge Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary is a smaller than average school. The majority of children come from a White British heritage. The number of children who are entitled to pupil premium support or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is below national averages. Since the last inspection a new leadership team have been appointed.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Swimbridge Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Children are confident to articulate the meaning of distinctive Christian values and the significant difference they make to their lives and learning.
- Leaders are passionate and dedicated to the work of a church school and have made significant improvements to the life of the school through the efficient way they have sought to establish the school's renewed Christian vision in all areas of school life.
- Prayer has become central to the life of the school. Those children that wish are enabled to respond spontaneously sharing their ideas with a high degree of maturity and understanding.
- Children's behaviour is exemplary, they show care and concern for one another attributing this to the school's Christian character.

Areas to improve

- Embed opportunities for high quality experiences for spirituality in art and drama to enable children to express their deepening ideas in a variety of ways.
- Raise the number of children achieving the higher levels of attainment in RE by continuing to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Extend the role of the governors' ethos team to monitor all aspects of the school's Christian distinctiveness and involve children in this process.

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

Christian distinctiveness is outstanding because Christian values have been intrinsically woven into all aspects of school life. Children are immersed in a community where the language of values is strongly evident and part of daily life. This is further enhanced by the way Christian values, vision and spirituality complement and enrich each other. New Christian values adopted reflect the recent Church of England vision for education. These are: wisdom, dignity, community, hope and love. Children confidently explain what these mean for them and where they use them in their own lives. They understand their importance and the profound impact they have. Staff model these values in their own relationships which are recognised by the children who often seek to emulate them. Older children perceive themselves as role models and take this seriously. This has been further enhanced by the introduction of 'Fruits of the Spirit' awards. Children are aware that when they use values in daily life, this is often seen as showing fruits of the spirit. Stickers demonstrate for which fruit the award is given and the reason clarified. Children understand how values transform school life and readily explain the difference this makes. This overflows to children taking action to raise funds for charities they choose. The school's Christian character strongly influences children's attitudes to learning by helping them understand that they are special to God and unique, enriching their self-esteem. Strong connections are made between Christian values and learning and how these shape attitudes. Children make good academic progress with standards being at least in line with national expectations and with examples of some children doing even better. The support for the vulnerable enables them to generally make comparable progress with their peers. The provision for spirituality has been enhanced with a greater emphasis upon children thinking more deeply. There is an agreed understanding of spirituality with opportunities identified in planning. Children can explain what spirituality means to them. They are beginning to express ideas through art, drama or written comments which show a growing maturity. They are increasingly using richer language which enables them to express this. Children make particular reference to responding to questions of meaning and purpose drawing upon their ideas from values. In addition, they pose their own questions many of which the school addresses in worship, so pupils see their ideas being valued. Awareness of different cultures has been enriched by sponsoring children in majority world countries. Their correspondence extends their understanding of how Christians show their faith in different ways. As a result, children show a high degree of tolerance and respect for those who hold different views to their own. Knowledge of the role of the local church has been enriched by participating in re-enactments of weddings and baptisms increasing their awareness of the importance for Christians.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is outstanding because of the rich links established between worship, values, spirituality and the Bible. Children confidently articulate that ideas from worship play a significant role in developing their understanding of values and shape their behaviour. They can give specific examples of ideas used in worship which have influenced their choices, and challenged their thinking. Collective worship raises issues for reflection which are revisited throughout the day. Themes for worship draw on Bible stories so children have a detailed knowledge of a number of these and what they mean to them. Collective worship is regarded as an important part of the day, a special time for the school family to join together and share with God. Children are well engaged by use of strong visual elements, good pace and interactive questions which challenge them. Older children have opportunities to lead worship which they are enthusiastic to do. Children plan these thoughtfully often using drama which is enjoyed by other children. A particular strength is the way children who perceive they have no faith recognise the importance of worship and how it shapes their thinking. Children are also involved in developing worship through the pupil voice and the school council. They share ideas and suggestions for improvement knowing their thoughts are valued. One example of this is the celebration of Christian festivals where children now play a leading role. Children's understanding of prayer is a strength. There are regular opportunities to respond in prayer to the themes in worship. Children of all ages have the opportunity of praying spontaneously. Different approaches to prayer are explored as children move through the school. Prayer trees and spaces enable children to express prayer in different ways which they appreciate. Prayers of the older children show a growing depth of maturity responding to local and national events. As part of worship children have the opportunity to extend their understanding of the nature of the Trinity using different images. The ethos team and head teacher plan the themes for worship. These are more detailed and progressively deepen children's understanding of Christian values. Various leaders have different styles to worship and this variety is appreciated. Family worship is a fine example where children of all ages work collaboratively together. This was particularly enjoyed with older children taking a significant lead. Governors support the monitoring and evaluation of worship. Astute evaluations by the leadership have raised the impact of worship, the best examples being the re-designing of family group worship, more detailed planning linking to values and the introduction of contemporary worship songs.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious education is good because standards are in line with local expectations and other core subjects. The school is now working to raise the number of children achieving the higher levels of attainment. The quality of teaching and learning is good and rising and there is evidence of some that is outstanding. Learning walks and observations by leadership have identified strengths and aspects to develop. Professional discussions and leaders modelling good practice have led to further improvements. A good example of this has been the development of questioning, which is effectively challenging children to think and respond at a deeper level. A book scrutiny indicated that this is developing well. Children enjoy the opportunities to record their ideas in different ways, such as art or drama, with their responses showing a good level of understanding of biblical ideas and religious language. They like to share ideas which the enquiry approach encourages. Children work well together, listen to the ideas of others and refine their thoughts in response. They draw upon Christian values and the school's vision when responding to questions and show a depth of understanding of these. Frequently, they reflect on ideas they have considered and what this means to them. Generally, children enjoy RE, although not all are able to say why. Some said that they can see the relevance of the subject to their daily lives. Religious education makes a very good contribution to developing children's understanding of Christian values, these are explored through reference to Bible stories. In addition, children make connections from the school vision to Bible references. Planning has been developed ensuring appropriate coverage of the locally agreed syllabus scheme of work. Good support from the new coordinator is enabling all class teachers to deliver RE and make valuable connections with other subjects. Assessment systems are developing with regular opportunities to determine what progress children make. This is being effectively used to inform planning. Whilst internal moderation has refined assessments the school has yet to work with other schools to establish the accuracy of their judgements. Effective use is made of training opportunities with the coordinator extending her knowledge and skills through hub meetings and further training. This is clearly informing the development plan and the impact she is making in the subject. The Ethos group have worked with the coordinator on a work scrutiny but have not extended their evaluations as they do not yet include discussions with children about the impact RE has on them.

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

Leadership and management are outstanding because at the centre of school life is a distinctive Christian vision which inspires all they do. This has been established by an ambitious leadership team who are committed to the continual improvement as a church school. They give clear direction and focus, building upon existing good practice taking the school forward. The vision has a high profile across the life of the school, 'Inspire, enable, educate for life in all its fullness.' The vision permeates all aspects of school life and enables children to appreciate the rich links between Christian values and spirituality. Children have opportunities to talk about the vision and their learning. They explain how they develop existing God given talents and explore new ones. There is a real sense that they want to be successful, looking to the future. In addition, they use the example of Jesus and His teachings to inspire children to live a full life. This makes a significant contribution to their thinking and self esteem. Exploring the vision has been thoughtfully planned, in every subject area staff have determined how they can explore each section of the vision and its relevance. This whole school approach has ensured the vision is firmly embedded. The school's Christian distinctiveness is seen in the care for vulnerable children in the diverse range of support and interventions, so all can have 'life in all its fullness.' This does not just focus on academic achievement but on the whole child as everyone is seen as being precious to Jesus. Insightful evaluations by the leadership have identified the steps for development. A cohesive staff team have been formed who share this vision. Monitoring draws upon children's ideas and opinions through a variety of means, which are used to make further improvements. Governors contribute to this through the Ethos team. Their monitoring and evaluation paperwork always consider Christian distinctiveness. Their comments however lack focus and do not cover all aspects of Christian distinctiveness. At present they do not involve children in this or seek their ideas. Relationships with the diocese have grown with the school drawing upon their expertise and knowledge. This has already had an influential impact. Further professional development is well focused on identified needs. The church makes numerous contributions to the life of the school, through governance, celebrating festivals and leading worship. The school plays a prominent role in the life of the community and beyond. Parents celebrate the work of the school and its distinctive Christian ethos. The headteacher is dedicated to promoting distinctive Christian values, through RE and collective worship ensuring these have a high profile so they fully fulfil the statutory requirements.

SIAMS report March 2018 Swimbridge CE VA Primary School, Barnstaple Hill, Swimbridge, Barnstaple, Devon EX32 0PJ