

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Child Okeford, St. Nicholas CE VA Primary School

Address	Station Road, Child Okeford, Blandford, Dorset. DT11 8EL		
Date of inspection	21 June 2019	Status of school	VA
Diocese	Salisbury	URN	113796

Overall Judgement	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	Grade	Requires Improvement
Additional Judgements	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Requires Improvement
	The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Requires Improvement

School context

St Nicholas is a primary school with 154 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. A new headteacher took up post in April 2019.

The school's Christian vision

Be the best you can be
I can do all things through God who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13)

Key findings

- The theological underpinning of the Christian vision is not well understood by the community and is not driving the school sufficiently strongly; the monitoring of the impact of the vision is not robust enough.
- Collective worship is invitational. Music, bible readings and prayer are central to it. However, pupils are not given enough opportunities to plan and lead worship.
- Relationships within the school are good, the views of all are considered and pupils show a very good understanding of the importance of respecting difference and diversity.
- Religious Education (RE) is regarded as an important subject within the life of the school. However, at present there is no formal monitoring or evaluation of teaching in the subject.
- The new headteacher has a clear understanding of the needs of the school and is developing stronger partnerships with the church and diocese.

Areas for development

- Ensure that the governors monitor and evaluate the impact of the Christian vision upon the school and are thus enabled to make the vision more explicit.
- Develop the school's understanding of, and approach to, spirituality, by agreeing a definition and embracing planned and spontaneous opportunities so that pupils are given more chances to explore their thoughts and feelings.
- Extend the opportunities for pupils to plan and lead worship, enabling them to understand its importance in the life of the school.
- Develop the monitoring of RE so that senior leaders have a sharper knowledge of the standards of teaching and learning.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Inspection findings

The school has a long-standing vision and three core values of hope, love and trust, which were revisited in September 2018. The theological importance of the biblical narrative, which was added at that point, is not widely understood by the whole community. The relevance of the vision in the local context was not considered. The school has been through a period of instability in leadership, but the Christian vision has not driven leadership decisions or shaped practice strongly enough. Many policies are not rooted in the vision and the school has only partially addressed the issues from the previous inspection. Links with the local community have been strengthened and the school now has mutually beneficial relationships with groups in the village. The new headteacher is beginning to strengthen the school's Christian distinctiveness but it is too early to see much impact. She is seeking to develop staff understanding of current thinking in church school education. Partnership working with the diocese has only just begun and links with the local church are now being refreshed with the help of the rector. The governing body made a bold decision not to appoint a new headteacher on two occasions. Its 2018 action plan recognised the need to raise its profile in embedding a distinctively Christian spirituality throughout the school, but it has not monitored and evaluated the church school distinctiveness strongly enough.

The school is a caring and highly inclusive community. The work of the Special Educational Needs Leader, trained learning assistants and the use of the much-loved dog 'Millie' ensures that vulnerable pupils are well supported and feel safe and secure. In 2018, nationally reported outcomes showed pupils' attainment and progress were close to national averages but this year progress is slower. The curriculum is generally broad and there are a range of extra-curricular activities. A specially designed club involves less-willing participants, which indicates the school's caring nature. The school promotes social, moral and cultural development though it has yet to secure a clear understanding of spiritual development. There are not enough planned opportunities for pupils to engage with questions of meaning and their spiritual maturity is not evident.

The pupils are fully aware of the problems of deprivation and disadvantage worldwide. The recent project on refugees has clearly had a significant impact on pupils' thinking. They are very conscious of the exploitation of the planet and a number of pupils have formed an 'Eco Club' and run a recycling project about which they feel passionate. However, pupils do not always understand the nature of the relationship between the school's Christian vision and these projects. The school's core values are well understood by the pupils. Behaviour in school is generally good. Pupils trust one another and know how to resolve disagreements amicably. There are planned opportunities for them to consider others' viewpoints. This was evident in written work in RE showing conversations responding to God's purpose in drowning Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea. They recognise that tomorrow is another day when involved in incidents, but do not relate this to the Christian concept of forgiveness. Attendance is at the national average, indicating that pupils enjoy school. Pupils are listened to and one member of staff commented, 'our children are encouraged and will express their opinions whatever they may be'. Pupils are treated with dignity and respect and treat others in the same manner. Pupils have a very well-developed understanding of diversity and difference and, as one pupil said, 'if a new person joined our class, we would treat them the same whatever their race or religion – that does not matter one bit'. Relationships within the school are good and parents are highly positive about the care given. Pupils' mental health is supported by a range of agencies and staff are confident that if they had any issues there would always be someone to whom they could refer. However, links between this and the Christian vision have not been explicitly made.

Collective worship is invitational, based on bible teaching and contains opportunities for prayer, reflection and stillness. No pupils are withdrawn from worship by their parents, although some attend intervention sessions at this time. Planning, which is carried out by the collective worship leader, is thorough and based on themes. It is not always progressive through the week, although this is an intention. Clergy support worship well and there have been opportunities for a variety of different forms of worship from different ministers. This is currently not so evident. Music is a very important part of worship at St Nicholas and, as well as singing songs enthusiastically, pupils learn songs from other cultures such as from Africa. This ensures pupils' understanding of the worldwide nature of the Anglican church. However, some pupils do not see worship as being central to the life of the school and do not describe it as inspirational. There are not enough opportunities for them to lead worship, although this is being addressed in class worship. There is inconsistency in how the reflective areas in the classrooms are used. Pupils are developing a sense of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which is being reinforced by lighting three candles in collective worship. Pupils spoke warmly of the recent Pentecost service in church. The pupils are developing their

understanding of the Eucharist. Pupils and governors are involved in evaluation of worship, but pupils are unable to explain how their evaluations had affected future developments.

RE is seen by leaders as an important subject in the curriculum. It meets the Church of England statement of entitlement and pupils are developing their knowledge about Christianity and other major world faiths. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the letters they had received in response to questions about Hinduism. The school has adopted the Understanding Christianity resource but also uses its own materials. Planning by the RE leader is very thorough and highly creative. This is evident in the pupils' work which is in 'big books', prepared by teachers, which present the work of the class. This shows that the content of the RE curriculum in terms of knowledge is being well covered. This area of the school's work is stronger than others, but the influence of the vision is insufficiently strong.



The effectiveness of RE requires improvement

The quality of teaching in RE requires improvement because the school has no formal monitoring and evaluation systems to measure the quality and consistency of teaching in RE. While subject content is well covered, skills of analysis and enquiry about the big questions of life are not as well developed. The new resource of Understanding Christianity, providing a more enquiry-led approach to learning, has been introduced but is yet to be fully embedded. Assessment grids are beginning to be used but this is recent and there has been no inter-school moderation. Feedback to pupils in RE is inconsistent and often not detailed enough.

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