

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Finchampstead Church of England Aided Primary School

The Village
Finchampstead
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG404JR

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Oxford
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Wokingham
Date of inspection	11 th July 2017
Date of last inspection	3 rd July 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	110012
Headteacher	Sarah Morris
Inspector's name and number	Susan Bowen
Quality Assurance	Marcia Headon 1744

School context

Finchampstead is a smaller than average primary school of 116 pupils. Pupils are admitted in accordance with the school's admission criteria which gives priority to pupils living in the village or the catchment area. Pupils are mainly of White British heritage and the number known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs/disabilities is also below the national average. The headteacher has been in post since April 2015 and is leaving at the end of the Summer term 2017. The deputy headteacher will become the interim headteacher

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

- There is a clear Christian vision shared across the whole school community and Christian values are fully embedded in the daily life of the school.
- A well-developed link with the local church and its ministry team gives pupils varied experiences of Anglican worship.
- The outdoor space is used very effectively to develop pupil's spirituality through appreciation of the natural world.

Areas to improve

- Improve the consistency and quality of monitoring and evaluation by governors in order to inform future school improvement targets.
- Ensure that pupils across the school are given opportunities to plan, lead and evaluate collective worship in order to promote children's spiritual development.
- Improve the quality of assessment and moderation in religious education (RE) so all pupils are sufficiently challenged.

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

Christian values, which the whole school community were involved in choosing three years ago, are now fully embedded in the daily life of the school. The impact of the values of respect and friendship in particular is reflected in relationships across the school community. The values have an impact during the school day, for example, when pupils show respect for other people's points of view. Pupils enjoy a daily run when the younger learners are encouraged by older runners. Pupils recognise that this kind of behaviour reflects the Christian value of respect and the school's one rule, to treat other people as you would wish to be treated. The values make a strong contribution to learners' academic, spiritual and moral development. Behaviour in lessons, is good, with pupils showing respect towards each other. Pupils are able to link Christian values to Biblical references and stories learnt in RE lessons. For example, children are able to explain how the story of the Good Samaritan shows the values of respect and compassion. One pupil described the teachings of Jesus as metaphors. He stated, 'His stories may not be one hundred percent true, but he was actually teaching you how to live your life.'

The school has a clearly agreed definition of spirituality and pupils' developing understanding of faith and their personal beliefs are captured in RE books and class 'reflections' books. Very effective regular use is made of the extensive outside space which promotes pupils' appreciation and respect for the natural world.

Pupils are confident in talking about their understanding of faith and how their beliefs affect their daily lives. Pupils talk about other religions, demonstrating a growing respect for other faiths. However, they do not currently pay visits to other places of worship in order to strengthen this understanding. Learners understand that other cultures may be Christian and make comparisons between Christianity and other faiths in their RE lessons. The school has addressed underperformance in some of last year's data and recognises the need to improve standards in mathematics. The Christian character of the school has supported staff and pupils in this. Strong pastoral support from the vicar contributes to the distinctive Christian ethos. The school's vision is to treat each pupil as a unique creation and learners are encouraged to join in sport and music activities to discover their talents.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils and adults recognise that collective worship is a special time in the daily life of the school. Worship is based on Christian principles, Bible teachings, festivals and the school's Christian values. Pupils demonstrate knowledge of many Bible stories and the teachings of Jesus. Pupils talk particularly enthusiastically about 'Friday collective worship' delivered by members of the church ministry team, which they describe as involving them fully. Pupils remember actively participating in this worship which helps them remember the messages well. Pupils experience a range of different worship styles and Anglican practice, including Eucharist services. These varied experiences of Anglican worship enjoyed by the pupils are a strength of the school. A sense of reverence is created in worship by the lighting of candles and the choice of music. Pupils respond respectfully to the questions asked. However, overall pupils are less sure of the messages of worship and are not always aware of what they need to do or change as a result of what they had heard. Pupils talk about favourite songs and how much they enjoy taking part in services and writing prayers. Parents also welcome this. At present pupils are not sufficiently involved in the planning and leading of worship.

Pupils understand the purpose of prayer and know that it was possible to pray anywhere because 'you can do it in your head.' The pupils recognise that praying is not about asking for material things and that prayers are not automatically answered. One pupil commented that, 'Sometimes God doesn't just sort things out for you, sometimes he gives you time to work it out yourself.' Pupils know the value of prayer when they are faced with difficult situations like falling out with friends. In classes a prayer dice is used to determine which lunchtime prayer will be said. One pupil said, 'I will remember those prayers for the rest of my life.' Pupils often write prayers for worship and some of their prayers are sent to the church for the congregation. Pupils have a mature understanding of the Trinity and speak about the Holy Spirit as something that is 'blowing in the wind.' Since the last inspection an area for reflection has been developed in the school playground and children can join break time prayer and meditation groups. Currently there is insufficient formal monitoring of the impact of worship on the whole school community.

The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards in religious education are at least in line with the national expectation and in some cases above. Pupils make good progress from their starting points. RE is given a high profile with reports to parents and attractive displays around the school. Planning shows some evidence of the matching of work to pupils' ability and pupils' different aptitudes are recognised through differentiated questioning in lessons. Learners have a sound understanding of Christian teaching and the Bible and sufficient time is given in the curriculum for the teaching of other faiths. In lessons children listen with respect to the views of others and are not afraid to voice their opinions. The school makes links between the learning in RE to collective worship and understanding of the school's Christian values. The subject leader has recently started introducing staff to the new 'Understanding Christianity' RE materials, to work alongside the existing agreed syllabus.

The subject leader monitors RE teaching by assessing pupils' work, talking to teachers and through pupil conferencing. Pupils not achieving expected standards are identified quickly through discussions between teachers and the RE leader. However, there is insufficient evidence of long term tracking of pupils to ensure that any changes in teaching strategies have led to an improvement in standards. The RE leader has attended some professional training provided by the Diocese and has started to establish links with other schools. Some moderation of work has taken place. However, the impact of this is not currently informing school improvement planning and pupils are not therefore always sufficiently challenged.

Governors are regular visitors to the school and speak to pupils about their learning. Their findings are reported to the headteacher in informal discussions. This has led to some changes in process such as the rearrangement of a classroom to improve pupils' focus. The monitoring of governors of the impact of RE on pupils and its effect on promoting the Christian character of the school is not sufficiently frequent or formalised. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE.

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

There is a shared vision across the school community to develop the pupils as individuals with God given talents and gifts. Leaders at the school are effective in articulating this vision and in promoting and establishing its Christian ethos, to parents and the church community. The local vicar provides pastoral support to the school and staff, for example by leading a meditation club where children can share their worries and ask questions about faith. The strong links with the church and its hardworking ministry team make a strong contribution to the school's Christian character. At present the headteacher works in very close collaboration with the deputy headteacher. However, the school is currently in a period of change of leadership and not enough preparation and training time has been given for staff taking on the future leadership of RE.

Standards are improving despite a dip in some results last year and under-performance is addressed quickly. The school's senior leaders carry out some self-evaluation of RE, worship and the Christian character of the school. However, the findings of this evaluation are not yet evidenced in any targets on the school improvement plan. Governors have received insufficient up-to-date training in church school governance, particularly in relation to formal monitoring of the impact of Christian character, worship and RE. A target in the last inspection for the school to share practice in RE with other settings has only been partially met.

The church ministry team makes a highly positive contribution to the school and the celebrations of major Christian festivals and school acts of worship reflect the school's ethos. Parents speak of the school's compassion and understanding when dealing with any challenging situations, and for this they are very grateful. They describe the importance of the school's ethos and its welcoming, inclusive atmosphere which they say celebrates each child as an individual. Parents feel welcome at the school's church services and appreciate the school's 'family feel'.

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