

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### Little Plumstead Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Hospital Road, Little Plumstead, Norwich, Norfolk, NR13 5EW

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Norwich</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Norfolk
Date of inspection	13 June 2017
Date of last inspection	19 July 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided Primary 121119
Headteacher	Sonia Innes
Inspector's name and number	Stephen Green 809

#### School context

This popular and oversubscribed school is situated in a rural environment but with good access to Norwich and its cathedral. There are currently 208 pupils taught in single year group classes. The school has spacious grounds and light, modern buildings. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2009. The senior leadership team adopt key roles in leading the school through a system of distributed leadership, and there is a strong governing body including the rector, members of the diocesan schools' support team and the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE).

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Little Plumstead as a Church of England school are outstanding

- A strong and clear Christian vision influences all aspects of the curriculum and school life. Christian values are explored and regularly reinforced in religious education (RE) and collective worship (CW).
- Christian values have a direct impact upon relationships within the school and the pupils' excellent behaviour. Pupils have an obvious respect for adults and for each other.
- Governors play a key role, supporting staff and working with the senior leadership team to establish a long-term vision for the development of the school.

#### Areas to improve

- Continue to embed the use of the new RE assessment system so that it informs future planning and provides school leaders with an accurate understanding of pupils' progress.
- Extend the system for formally monitoring CW to include the views of parents and pupils, in order to provide school leaders with a more accurate picture of what is working well and how other groups in the school community regard worship.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to learn about other denominations within the Christian faith, in order to give them a greater understanding of the similarities and differences between different Christian denominations and cultures.

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

The school's newsletters and website make its Christian character explicit to parents and the community. Christian values underpin every aspect of school life. Pupils and parents are very aware of these and understand what each value involves. Parents strongly support the school's Christian ethos and value the open relationship school staff have developed with them. One parent said that pupils are 'obviously taking (the values) in. It comes out in conversations at home and the way they look out for each other.' The Christian character of the school has a significant impact upon the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils. Pupils' behaviour is usually of a very high standard, and both behaviour and pupil safety were deemed outstanding in the last OFSTED inspection. One governor maintained that 'the Gospel is lived out here in the way people relate to each other.'

The school's Christian character has a strong impact upon academic standards, which usually exceed national expectations. When they do not, staff have made strenuous efforts to improve them. When a recent cohort included a significant number of pupils who had special needs, they provided a supplementary full-time teacher, and focused support was offered by the school's pastoral manager. Although academic results for that cohort remained below expectations, the way the school supported them demonstrates its strong Christian ethos and commitment. The work of the pastoral manager continues to support other pupils in the wider school and valuable links have been made with family centres and other local support groups. Opportunities are sought in RE to create links to and reinforce values being focussed upon in CW. As a result, RE makes a valued and effective contribution to the school's Christian character.

There are many high-quality displays around the school which make its Christian values obvious to pupils and visitors. Pupils have a 'Golden Comment' display in the main foyer where they complete compliment slips recognising each other's strengths and qualities, and thanking people for their help and support. These are linked closely to the school's values. When asked what makes their school special, one pupil said that she likes it because 'there is always someone here to help me.' Another spoke about 'the people (being) caring and we trust each other.' 'In a church school,' another child said, 'we know that God will always forgive us.'

Pupils' spiritual development is emphasised across the curriculum, with many opportunities being created for learners to consider big questions and reflect upon their feelings. The school uses PATHS, a scheme which develops pupils' thinking strategies and encourages creative thinking. This scheme has had a significant impact in developing thinking strategies and encouraging pupils to express their feelings.

The impact of the school's Christian ethos can be seen clearly in the charitable work that pupils choose to do to help others. Examples of recent initiatives include raising funds to support Macmillan nurses, Red Nose Day, Action Aid and Water Aid. The school has an ongoing commitment to support a child's education in Bangladesh.

Pupils have a good understanding of and respect for other faiths as a result of good teaching in RE and CW, but less understanding of the different beliefs and practices within their own Christian faith. Pupils do not have many opportunities to visit places of worship used by different denominations, or to meet leaders of other denominations.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

CW is seen as a valuable part of the school day and as a key medium for developing the school's Christian values and ethos. All classroom-based staff and older pupils plan and lead worship, and staff reinforce key messages in their own classes. CW is monitored by the headteacher and the ethos committee, (which includes representatives of staff, pupils and the governing body), and pupils and parents have opportunities to express their opinions. One pupil described CW as the time when 'people come in and inspire us for the future.' Another said that she enjoys celebrating church festivals. Pupils have a good understanding of the Holy Trinity and visit the church to learn about its symbolism and traditions. Worship is inspirational and inclusive, and greatly enjoyed by pupils. Parents value the opportunities they have to join children in collective worship, and spoke of the positive impact it frequently has upon their children's attitudes and behaviour. Pupils have the opportunity to pray both individually and together during the school day, and some of their prayers, including the school prayer, are displayed around the school.

CW has an appropriate Biblical basis and a strong focus upon the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. It is usually led by school staff or the rector. Since the last inspection older pupils have also been given the chance to lead worship, and this has undoubtedly increased their sense of ownership and made them think about what their religion means to them. The headteacher acts as CW co-ordinator and is responsible for planning the programme for each term.

The rector is a valued member of the school and leads worship at least weekly. Governors monitor CW and the headteacher uses the records of these visits along with her own observations to inform future developments. Formal feedback following CW is only offered by staff and governors, although parents feel the school leaders always welcome their views.

### **The effectiveness of religious education is good**

Considerable investment since the last inspection has ensured that RE is well-resourced and has a high profile in the school. The process of acquiring a silver level RE Quality Mark (REQM) has enabled a good plan for further development to be drawn up.

The RE subject leader is very well informed and leads her subject with vision and competence. She has changed the way the subject is taught to involve a greater balance between knowledge and reflection. Following diocesan training she has introduced a new set of Understanding Christianity resources, which both support teachers in their own understanding and encourage innovative approaches to teaching and learning. As a result, pupils are developing a good understanding of Christianity. They visit the cathedral regularly to enhance their understanding of the Anglican faith. However, they are less well informed about other denominations within the Christian faith. Pupils have respect for other people's faith and beliefs. They learn much about major world religions, including through visits to different places of worship.

The RE leader is overseeing a new system of assessment but this is not yet sufficiently embedded to be able to inform teachers' planning and school leaders' views of the effectiveness of teaching and learning in the subject. However, current monitoring suggests that teaching is always good and sometimes outstanding. Pupils achieve at least in line with other core subjects and in many cases outcomes are even better.

Pupils enjoy their lessons, saying they find RE interesting. They are reflective and ask thoughtful questions. An example of this was a Year 4 pupil who asked in a circle time session whether the world-wide distribution of religions had an impact upon what time Ramadan could start for Muslims. Pupils are encouraged to ask 'Big Questions' about religious concepts, each enhancing their own beliefs and awareness through verbalising the question and discussion of appropriate answers.

Links with the school's Christian values and SMSC are intrinsic, with every opportunity taken to ensure that the curriculum identifies opportunities for reflection and the exploration of the impact of values on everyday lives. This plays a significant role in both the development of the Christian character of the school and the learners themselves.

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

School leaders at all levels clearly and confidently articulate their core Christian values of friendship, compassion, courage and respect. This is appreciated by parents and governors. Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and competently target those areas needing further development. Their leadership style reflects their own Christian beliefs, so that staff speak of being 'valued, respected and supported.' Self-evaluation involves all groups in the school community through the work of staff teams, the full governing body and the ethos committee. Staff training, particularly in the new Understanding Christianity resources, has been thorough and extensive. As a result, the first units to be trialled have been very successful.

The school has developed a system of mutual support and system leadership which supports senior leaders and ensures that the system of school leadership is both sustainable in the long term and flexible to meet short-term issues. This was demonstrated recently when the headteacher was on maternity leave and other leaders were able to ensure the school continued to run very effectively until she returned. Attendance rates are very high and rising. Members of the church community and PCC are regularly involved in supporting the school and a significant number are school governors. This has led to improved links with the PCC and the local parish church. The headteacher was involved in the interview process when the present incumbent was appointed, and the school features regularly on the PCC agenda. All governors' meetings begin with a prayer, and end with a reflection about the impact that meeting will have had for pupils. The school was described by the headteacher as 'the fifth church in the parish'.

Parents feel well informed, describing senior leaders as open and approachable. One parent described them as 'extraordinary. Consistently driving the school's Christianity.' Another spoke of the door 'always being open.' Many praised the 'ethos of putting the children first and encouraging them to form their own views.'

There is a very strong relationship with the diocese and the local church, and school leaders have a strong record of offering support to other schools, the diocese and the local authority. The headteacher has served on the diocesan standards committee and helped with headteacher recruitment, and the rector is a member of the DBE and the distinctiveness group. The school featured in Value of Values, a diocesan video about Christian values. In 2017 86% of the many parents who responded said that the close relationship between the local church and the school added value to their child's spiritual development. The school is very highly regarded by the diocese and the local authority, being chosen by the Bishop of Norwich to host a visit by the Earl of Wessex because of its strong Christian character.