

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Church Lench Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

Main Street, Church Lench, Worcestershire WR11 4UE

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Worcester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Worcestershire
Date of inspection	28 September 2017
Date of last inspection	22 September 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	First School 116792
Headteacher	Samantha Price
Inspector's name and number	Stephanie Boulter 785

School context

Church Lench Church of England First School is a smaller than average-sized primary school, with 71 pupils on roll. Pupils are taught in three mixed aged classes. The present headteacher was appointed in September 2016. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage and there is a small number from local traveller families. The percentage of children receiving special educational needs support is above the national average at 21%.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Church Lench as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Church Lench is a happy family based upon a shared understanding of and commitment to life lived according to Christian teachings and values.
- The headteacher's vision for leading this inclusive community, rooted in the Christian narrative ensures that all are enabled to flourish and be the best they can be.
- Pupil behaviour is exemplary and powerfully reflects the school's explicit Christian values.
- The high quality of relationships enhances the quality of school life for pupils and staff.
- The staff team is strong and cohesive with all members acting as excellent Christian role models for children and their families.

Areas to improve

- Formalise governors' monitoring of the impact of the school's Christian distinctiveness by amending existing systems of recording governor visits so as to enable the creation of an evidence base which informs future developments.
- Ensure teachers develop strategies to give effective feedback in Religious Education (RE), so that pupils understand clearly how to improve their work.

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

Church Lench VC First School is an effective learning community where Christian love abounds. Distinctively Christian values ensure an inclusive and nurturing school family where the well-being of the whole school community is a key priority. This is because the school's core Christian values of hope, responsibility, perseverance, compassion and thankfulness are central to relationships, attitudes and decision making. Children of all abilities clearly articulate how they make a difference to their lives and help them grow as people. One pupil explained, 'When someone is sad in school, I will show them compassion so that they can smile again and feel loved.' The school's distinctive Christian vision influences its approach to attendance, exclusions and its work with vulnerable children. The Christian belief that everyone is unique and valued by God underpins everything the school does. As a result, Church Lench provides a rich curriculum, both inside and outside the classroom, a strong Christian ethos and excellent links between religious education (RE) and collective worship. The school's clear vision and values are very evident in both these areas through consistent reinforcement by all staff. They strongly influence the wider curriculum and the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. There is a shared understanding of spirituality across the school. This results in children who successfully express their personal opinions and beliefs whilst recognising diversity and respecting others' beliefs and practices. The well-embedded Christian values also inform ways in which trusting relationships are developed and sustained within the school community. Consequently, relationships are strong, supportive and loving and are viewed as being a way of each person sharing God's love with others. Children and their families feel welcomed and accepted and know that they are free in this school to develop as unique individuals. Such freedom comes as a result of an uncompromising commitment to acknowledging and celebrating each person's individual gifts and talents and to a culture within which all are valued as children of God. An example of this is the way in which children are encouraged and enabled to do their best in their academic learning. They make good progress and this is monitored closely by teachers and school leaders as a way of ensuring that high standards are maintained so that all may flourish. Children link the school's core Christian values to Bible teachings and know how they help them to persist with work they find challenging. The school's clear vision and values are very evident in religious education (RE) and collective worship through consistent reinforcement by all staff. RE contributes very effectively to pupils' growing and deepening understanding of the Christian faith through the Understanding Christianity resource. These two areas strongly influence the wider curriculum and the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. Children are successfully helped to express their personal opinions and beliefs whilst recognising diversity and respecting others' beliefs and practices. Links with the parish church are strong, with the vicar being actively involved in the day-to-day life of the school. Regular fundraising enables pupils to experience the Christian values of hope, responsibility and thankfulness. One pupil when talking about the school's support for charities stated, 'We support WWF (World Wildlife Fund), because God created animals and he told us to look after them.' Parents feel that Church Lench's distinctively Christian character ensures that their children feel secure, are reflective and care about others on a daily basis.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is Outstanding

Great value is placed on collective worship and it is central to the life of the school, inspiring both children and staff. The daily worship programme is very well planned and delivered, which are clear indications of the importance and value placed on it within school. The strong focus on the school's Christian values in collective worship has a significant impact on pupils' exemplary behaviour and the inclusive, caring relationships which exist between all members of the school community. Different coloured clothes reflecting different times of the Christian year and the lighting of three candles effectively help pupils' understanding of Anglican traditions. Parents speak about the worship providing their children with a strong focus on prayer and reflection. As a result they are aware their responsibility for looking after others around the world by their support of charities. Through worship and the well-established Open the Book held in church, the regular use of stories from the Bible ensure pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of Jesus and of the Bible for Christians. This means that all children are able to discuss how these stories relate to the school's values, and their everyday lives. Pupils have a very good grasp of the Christian year through the celebration of key festivals such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Pentecost. The school's links with the parish church and the regular services held there ensure that children have a clear understanding of local Anglican practices at an appropriate level. Due to frequent references to the Trinity, children have a secure understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The provision for personal prayer and reflection throughout the school is a significant strength. There are productive links made between worship, RE and the curriculum which help children to understand the relevance of worship within the school's daily life. They have regular opportunities for prayer during worship times and at other points in the school day. Children recognise that through prayer they have opportunity to 'talk to God who will always listen'. They know that there are different elements to prayer which include 'saying sorry for wrong things done, saying thank you for all that God has done and asking God to help people in need'. Reflection areas

in each classroom and near the entrance of the school enhance provision for reflection and prayer and are regularly used. Parents are invited to the celebration worship weekly where they join in with prayers and acknowledge children's achievements. They talk about the profound impact worship has on their children at home, especially on their behaviour, the use of prayers and quiet reflection. The collective worship committee made up of Year 5 pupils plan and lead worship regularly. They can clearly articulate how this has contributed to their confidence and understanding of the Bible and the church year. Monitoring and evaluation of worship is completed by staff, governors, children and parents and feedback is acted upon. An example of this was the introduction of calm and gentle music as children entered the hall, so that it helped them to focus and reflect at the beginning of worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is Outstanding

With a high profile within the school, RE is a creative subject which makes a significant contribution to the Christian character of the school. This is because teaching in RE lessons forges strong links to the school's values and provides a structure that allows children to explore diversity and difference. Children benefit from relevant and meaningful visits to places of worship such as a synagogues and Hindu temple. They talk enthusiastically about a visit from an Imam and members of the Jewish and Hindu communities. This has enabled them to explore first-hand what faith means to others and discuss the similarities and differences between many other religions. Extremely good and often outstanding teaching ensures that children are fully engaged and are inspired by the content. As a result, children make excellent progress and standards of attainment in RE are in line or slightly above other subject areas. However, pupils do not always know how to improve their work because feedback does not consistently provide them with next steps to learning. This has been recognised by the subject leader as a development point through her own monitoring and evaluation. The development of the Understanding Christianity resource within the RE curriculum and also in collective worship has resulted in excellent understanding by the children of the big story of the Bible. It also gives them the confidence to explore key questions and complex Christian concepts such as salvation, which they explain with confidence. Teachers use questioning well to promote reflective thinking and a range of creative teaching ensure children are enthusiastic about their RE learning. RE is ably led ensuring that the subject is continually developing in the light of latest developments both nationally and locally. The subject leader has an excellent grasp of what needs to be done to continue to make RE an inspirational part of the school curriculum.

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

The headteacher effectively articulates her clear vision for the school as a distinctive church school and is a notable strength of her leadership. The result of this is a shared understanding of Christian distinctiveness right across the school community. As part of this vision, great emphasis is placed on nurturing the individual, with the result that everyone feels loved and valued. It shapes and drives all decisions and all actions taken. Christian values underpin the school's development plan, stemming from the strong Christian conviction of the headteacher, which is shared by her staff. Recent work on revisiting the school's Christian values has been extremely effective in clarifying the school's vision and ensuring that the values have a direct impact on children's lives. Governors know the school well and carry out monitoring on an informal basis. However, strategies for improvement are not fully effective because of the lack of formal monitoring. This was recognised by school leaders as an area for development. The strong leadership of religious education and collective worship leads to highly effective practice in both areas. This means that children enjoy both areas, learn from them and apply what they learn to their lives. Statutory requirements for collective worship and RE are met and the development areas from the last inspection have also been addressed. Professional development of staff is strong with the result that staff are being effectively prepared as future leaders of church schools at all levels. The school has strong and effective links with all its stakeholder. Parents say that the school is well led and value the open-door policy which enables them to raise concerns in the knowledge that they will be dealt with promptly. All agree that the staff are 'compassionate and caring'. Parents also value the contribution of the clergy, describing the vicar as 'a caring visible presence in the school'. The vicar takes an active part in leadership through governance, as well as in worship and pastoral support. These positive links mean that children look forward to services at the church and see them as something special. There is a high level of trust and respect between all members of the school community. This is due to a shared understanding of the headteacher's vision, which encourages and enables everyone to thrive and be the best they can be. As a result, this is a school which knows itself very well and understands how best to serve its community.