

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Ash Cartwright and Kelsey Church of England (Aided) Primary School

School Road, Ash, Kent. CT3 2JD

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Satisfactory

Diocese

Canterbury

Previous SIAS inspection grade

Outstanding

Local authority

Kent

Date of inspection

1 December 2016

Date of last inspection

14 December 2011

Type of school and unique reference number

118745

Acting Headteacher

Philip Marsh

Inspector's name and number

Canon Linda Burton NS426

School context

Ash Cartwright and Kelsey Church of England (Aided) Primary school is a smaller than average primary school of 175 pupils with 35 pupils in its nursery class. Most pupils are white British. The number of pupils with special educational needs or eligible for pupil premium funding is below average. The school was judged by Ofsted as requiring improvement in May 2015. The headteacher has been absent from 4 July 2016 and the acting headteacher has been in post since 1 September 2016. The school is receiving support from the headteacher of a nearby primary school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ash Cartwright and Kelsey as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- This is a happy and inclusive school where pupils feel safe.
- Leaders and all other members of staff work hard to provide personalised support for disadvantaged pupils and their families.

Areas to improve

- Develop a set of explicit Christian values so that there is a clear, shared articulation of the school's distinctive character by all members of the school community.
- Develop a shared understanding of spirituality and ensure this is reflected in curriculum planning across the whole school.
- Secure better governance by embedding the SIAMS evaluation schedule into strategic planning and analysis of the school's actions and performance, so that the Christian character of the school is identified and developed.
- Involve all stakeholders in the planning, delivery and evaluation of collective worship so that it clearly meets the needs of the school community.
- Consolidate the leadership and management of religious education (RE) in order to increase its contribution to the Christian character of the school and to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.

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

The school's mission statement states that as a church school its values (compassion, respect, friendship and forgiveness) are at the heart of all that it does. Agreed upon a number of years ago by the school community, these values are implicit in the life of the school. Pupils and parents know that it is a church school. Whilst many pupils can articulate an understanding of how the values inform their daily lives, they are unable to make confident links between the values and the biblical teachings on which they are based. Parents can articulate an understanding of the values but not all are aware of their distinctively Christian nature. In September 2016 staff and school leaders began the process of agreeing a new set of values to more closely reflect the school and its community now.

Attendance is good, and levels of absence have declined since September 2016. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average. Their attainment is significantly lower than that of other pupils at the school. The majority of pupils make expected progress, but only a small proportion make better than expected progress. Since September there has been a focus on specific, targeted support for identified individuals and groups of pupils. The school's well established systems of pastoral care and close partnerships with families have also been strengthened further. Through this the school is able to provide high-level personalised support for the wellbeing of disadvantaged pupils, laying the foundations for future success. Parents are highly appreciative of the support and encouragement the school gives to their children. Standards of behaviour in the school are good and the school's Christian values underpin its behaviour policy. There are well established systems (for example, the buddy system, the school council and the house system). These encourage pupils to care for each other and to take responsibility for their own and each other's actions. As a result it is a happy, inclusive school where pupils feel safe. The parents' and friends' association is active in support of a wide range of school initiatives.

Pupils tell their parents that the God they learn about at school needs their help to make the world a better place. There is much evidence of the pupils' commitment to care for those less fortunate than themselves, including projects initiated entirely by pupils in response to topics they have been taught. This provides an opportunity for SMSC education but there is no planned provision for the development of spirituality in areas of the curriculum. Overall this area is underdeveloped. An action plan for SMSC development is now in place but it does not recognise the significance of creating a clear, shared understanding of spirituality amongst staff and school leaders as the foundation for all other work. Most pupils enjoy RE and recognise its importance in helping them live happily with other people in the world. Opportunities for setting Christianity within the context of a multi-cultural world faith are limited. There are too few planned opportunities for RE to make a significant contribution to pupils' SMSC development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

A daily act of whole school collective worship is planned by the acting headteacher and the recently appointed RE leader. They use the Canterbury diocesan framework, in which the main seasons and festivals of the church's year are marked. This planning does not fully reflect the school's values. Worship is organised on a weekly basis. It is led most often by adults, including the acting headteacher, class teachers, the vicar of the local parish church and other church members. There is celebration worship on Fridays. Each class leads worship twice during the year and parents are very supportive of these occasions. Worship is biblically based; it includes singing and some elements of Anglican liturgy. Through it, pupils are able to develop some understanding of Jesus Christ and of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pupil involvement in worship is limited to small practical tasks given to them by the adult leader. They are not involved in the planning, leadership and evaluation of worship. There is a Lighting the Candle group, but senior leaders are unaware of the scope of creative work possible with Key Stage 2 pupils in developing collective worship and their role in leading it. Few pupils are able to articulate the ways in which they can put the moral messages from their worship into action in their lives. Some older pupils do not find worship particularly engaging. The involvement of the vicar and members of the church in the celebration of Christian festivals and important events in school life is regarded by all members of the school community as an important part of belonging to a church school. These celebrations are very well attended by parents. Messy Church and Snics Club (an after-school club run in the church) are attended by pupils and their parents.

An action plan is now in place and work has begun to develop all aspects of collective worship. Reflection areas in classrooms have recently been enhanced, making them more interactive. This has increased and enriched the opportunities for pupils to engage in prayer and reflection during the school day. Other opportunities to understand and develop spirituality are under-developed. Occasional monitoring of whole school worship has taken place since October 2016, but no formal systems of monitoring or evaluation are in place.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

RE is taught in accordance with the Kent Agreed Syllabus and Diocesan Schemes of Work. This ensures that pupils have the opportunity to study Christianity and other world faiths. Following a time of staffing changes, an experienced specialist RE leader is now in post. The standard of the majority of teaching in RE is good, and there is some evidence of creative and challenging task-setting. Standards of attainment for the majority of learners are in line with national expectations. Following an audit of staff RE skills and rigorous whole school monitoring of RE (including pupil voice) by the RE leader, a comprehensive action plan is now in place. Work is under way, and there is evidence of good progress being made to improve and align all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment in RE across the school, and to align its standards and assessment practices more closely with those of other core subjects. Progress has been made on both of the development points for RE from the previous inspection report. Most pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of Christianity and enjoy learning about other faiths. Pupils are respectful of diversity. Parents greatly value RE.

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

Recent years have seen considerable upheaval and change in the leadership and staffing of the school. During this time, more attention was paid to the improvement of standards in teaching and learning, and the definition of the school as distinctively Christian in character received less attention from school leaders. The promotion and development of the school's Christian ethos was not a priority. Documentation points towards a lack of shared vision and mutual support. No evidence was seen to demonstrate strategic planning or effective self-evaluation during this time. Since September 2016, this situation has stabilised substantially. The new leadership has shown itself more able to act effectively – across all aspects of the school's life – and its vision has focused much more on the improvement of the school through the development of its distinctively Christian character. Senior leaders, including governors, show evidence of commitment to ensuring that the school's Christian distinctiveness pervades all aspects of the school's life, and that this is made more explicit. A process of defining new values for the school has begun. Senior leaders and governors acknowledge that these values, whilst they need to reflect the school and its community, also need to be distinctively Christian. The school has evidenced its commitment to effective RE, not least through the appointment of an experienced specialist teacher as its new RE curriculum leader. Although she is in the first few months of her time in the school, there are clear indicators already of her effective leadership. In addition, links with the local community are well established, and the relationship with the local church is good. Progress has now been made in meeting all the points for development from the previous inspection. Arrangements for RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements. The school works well with families. This is a school with the capacity to improve rapidly as a church school.

SIAMS report December 2016 Ash, Cartwright and Kelsey Church of England (Aided) Primary School CT3 2JD