

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Christ Church SW9 Church of England Primary School

Cancell Road, London, SW9 6HN

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Diocese

Southwark

Previous SIAS inspection grade

Good

Local

Lambeth

Federation

SW9 Partnership

Date/s of inspection

23 January 2017

Date of last inspection

February 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

100610

Executive Headteacher

Jayne Mitchell

Inspector's name and number

John Viner NS144

School context

Christ Church is a smaller than average primary school, located in North Brixton and serving the parish of Christ Church, Brixton Road. It is federated with St Andrew's CE School, Stockwell and shares an executive headteacher. Its 219 pupils reflect the rich diversity of the immediate area. There are higher than national proportions of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, those who speak English as an additional language, those with special educational needs and those for whom the school receives additional government funding. Around three quarters of pupils attend church. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are well below national expectations. In 2016, Ofsted judged the school to require improvement.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Christ Church as a Church of England school are good

- Leaders and governors share and articulate an ambitious Christian vision for the school rooted in their understanding that all pupils are unique and made in God's image.
- The partnership with St Andrews School and the leadership of the executive headteacher are supporting rapid improvements in the school's performance.
- Christian values underpin the school and make it a place where, as pupils say, people matter.
- Collective worship is at the heart of the school and affirms all who attend, regardless of faith or belief.
- By the time they leave the school pupils have a good understanding of Christianity and of the key facts of other world faiths.

Areas to improve

- Develop greater clarity and shared understanding about the school's Christian distinctiveness and purpose so that all stakeholders can explain the importance and impact of the specific Christian values it promotes.
- Establish a school-wide understanding of spirituality that enables pupils to better engage with deep questions of meaning and purpose.
- Increase opportunities for pupils' involvement in and evaluation of collective worship
- Through an improved understanding of spirituality and better assessment of pupils' spiritual development, deepen their thinking in religious education (RE) so that their skills of analysis and enquiry are improved.

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

The school has a long history of Christian distinctiveness and is defined by its Christian and Anglican character. Although this means that there is a focus on giving pupils memorable experiences, there is a lack of clarity around the school's values and the way that it promotes a shared understanding of spirituality. This has impacted negatively on the standards that pupils have achieved, the progress they make.

Pupils know that this is a Church school and that they are welcomed, regardless of faith or background. They say that this is a place where everyone matters, people are friendly, and where most of them behave well. While most recognise that the school is distinctively Christian, they are too vague about the specific Christian values it promotes. They cannot explain how the school demonstrates its Christian character, how it impacts on their personal development or on the way the school is run. Nevertheless, there are warm positive relationships between and among adults and learners and pupils know they are safe, valued and special. The majority of pupils attend regularly and are enthusiastic about the school and the wide range of learning opportunities it provides both in and beyond the classroom.

These opportunities make a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development so that, regardless of their faith or background, they develop an appreciation of diversity. However, because opportunities for pupils' spiritual development are not always recognised or planned for, their responses to these experiences are limited. Pupils generally enjoy RE and know that it is important to their lives. They understand that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith. RE makes a positive, although inconsistent, contribution to the school's Christian character, and to pupils' overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is central to school life and affirms all who attend, irrespective of their faith or belief. Pupils recognise that worship and prayer underpin the school and are important to its Christian character. Because of this they have good attitudes to worship; they behave reverently, respond positively and participate enthusiastically. They recognise when worship requires them to be quiet and thoughtful and when they can be more demonstrative. Pupils say that they particularly enjoy opportunities to play an active role in worship, especially through readings, prayers and role play.

Worship is distinctly Christian. It is Biblical and rooted in the person of Jesus and in the understanding that Christians regard God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Through the use of a liturgy to signal the beginning and end of worship, including the lighting of a candle, pupils gain good experience and understanding of Anglican tradition and practice, which is further strengthened by the regular acts of worship that take place in the church. These events are open to parents, who attend in good numbers.

Through worship, pupils appreciate the importance of the Bible and develop a good understanding of the nature and purpose of prayer. They regularly use the Lord's Prayer and other Anglican prayers in worship and there are some good opportunities to write their own prayers for public use during and at the end of the school day and in worship. While pupils' sense of personal spirituality is somewhat undeveloped, this focus on prayer contributes to their spiritual development.

Worship is carefully planned by the RE leader and incumbent around Christian themes and the church calendar. Once a week, worship takes place in the classrooms where, pupils say, they can pray more intimately and personally. Regular input by the incumbent provides an important link with the parish church. Because worship is led by a range of school staff, the incumbent and regular visitors from the Spinnaker Trust, this helps to keep it fresh and interesting. It is regularly monitored by the incumbent and RE leader, who sometimes seek the views of pupils and this ongoing review ensures that planned improvement can take place.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Despite a recent decline, standards of attainment for the majority of pupils are improving and are approaching national expectations. This is because pupils make good progress from what are often very low starting points. Pupils are enthusiastic about RE, indeed when asked how the school could improve, at least two pupils wanted more of it! Teaching is good overall. Pupils say that teachers make RE fun because they provide a range of interesting activities. Many pupils demonstrate good levels of analysis and interpretation and have a developing

understanding of key differences and similarities between faiths. As the school improves its shared understanding of spirituality, so teachers are able to engage pupils in deeper questions about meaning and purpose.

RE has a high profile in the school and the recently introduced diocesan scheme of work provides a strong framework, which gives pupils a good experience of key faiths and beliefs. By the time they leave the school, pupils have a well-developed understanding of Christianity and the Bible, as well as a broad appreciation of the key points of the other major world faiths. The curriculum is enhanced by visits to places of worship, which pupils enjoy and which facilitates the school's good promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are systems in place for the regular assessment of RE, although further work is needed in order to ensure that teachers have a deep understanding of pupils' progress and how to deepen their thinking.

RE is strongly led by a dedicated and knowledgeable subject leader who has worked with diocesan officers to introduce the new syllabus effectively. Assisted by the incumbent, she is providing high levels of support for teachers to ensure that they have the necessary subject expertise to teach RE. She has developed robust systems for the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, which ensures that she understands the priorities for improvements that will further raise standards.

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

The executive headteacher, key staff and governors share and articulate an ambitious Christian vision for the school that is leading to rapid improvement and raising standards. Although they do not yet articulate the school's specific Christian values clearly enough, they present a united view of the impact that its Christian character has on the lives of pupils and their families. There are strong systems for keeping the school's Christian distinctiveness under review and this leads to accurate self-evaluation. As a result, leaders and governors know their school well, understand its immediate and longer term needs - including identifying and developing future leaders - and plan to address them. The timely actions that leaders are taking to improve the school's performance are accurately focused and grounded in a shared understanding that all pupils are unique and shaped in God's image. This good leadership has secured collective worship and the provision of religious education so that each reflects the school's Christian distinctiveness. Parents recognise this and, despite the school's recent brief decline, take the long view that this is a school where their children thrive.

There are some significant partnerships that add capacity to the school's leadership. The federation with St Andrew's school makes leadership stronger and is of mutual benefit so that lessons from one school can be applied effectively to its partner. Collaboration between the schools provides very good support for the RE leader through access to experienced teachers who work alongside new staff to raise their confidence. The school is very well supported by diocesan officers and has taken advantage of opportunities for the professional development of staff. The strong partnership with the parish church strengthens the school's Christian distinctiveness and helps to engage pupils' understanding of and engagement with global, national and local communities. Although a minority of families attend the parish church, the school and church are jointly recognised as a beacon of Christian hope to the community they serve.

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