

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

### Sywell CEVA Primary School

Overstone Road, Sywell, Northamptonshire, NN6 0WA

**Current SIAMS inspection grade**

**Good**

**Diocese**

**Peterborough**

Previous SIAS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

Northamptonshire

Date of inspection

17 January 2018

Date of last inspection

6 February 2013

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Aided 122030

Headteacher

Russell Lunn

Inspector's name and number

Carolyn Gleeson 929

#### School context

The school is rural primary school. It is smaller than the national average. The majority of pupils are White British but there are a significant number of children from ethnic minority groups. Less than 2% of pupils have English as an additional language. The number of children with special educational needs is slightly less than national average. The number of children for whom the school receives additional funding is low, compared to the national average. There has been a change in headteacher since the last SIAS inspection but not since the last Ofsted.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sywell CEVA Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- The school's distinctive Christian vision of 'working together in God's hands' inspires the positive relationships between all members of the school community, the children's excellent behaviour and their improving attainment.
- Prayer plays an important part in school life, nurturing the children's spiritual development. Some children use their own written prayers which they see as a way of enabling them to 'talk to God'.
- Collective worship takes a variety of forms and actively enhances the children's spiritual and moral development.
- Religious education (RE) is well planned and taught and enriches the pupils' understanding of Christian values.

#### Areas to improve

- Agree and share with the whole school a definition of spirituality so that everyone understands how it can be further developed.
- Engage both pupils and adults in the evaluation of the recent changes and innovations in collective worship to ensure that the intended impact is being achieved with all members of the school community.
- Share the distinctive Christian vision and ethos of the school more overtly on the school's website, so that it is clear that these are fundamental to the everyday life of the school.

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

The school's twelve chosen Christian values are prominently displayed around the school, including in stained glass windows in the hall and pebbles on the playground. The whole school community is able to articulate the values and the children are able to link some of them with Bible stories. This has correspondingly led to an understanding as to how these chosen values are distinctively Christian and to how they are relevant in their daily lives. These values are clearly reflected in the children's excellent behaviour. In 2017 attainment at KS2 was above the national average in reading, writing and maths. Both the children and adults are able to link improving academic attainment, to the positive Christian ethos lived out in the school. The children are made aware of local and global issues. Many children have suggested charities they can support, such as collecting presents for the local hospital. As a result of their understanding of the school's Christian values, the children see supporting the wider community as a way of living out Jesus' example.

The Christian ethos of the school clearly values and develops the uniqueness of each child. This is evidenced in the way that all the adults and children respect and support each other, the positive attitudes to learning and that attainment is improving. As a result, the school is oversubscribed, with many families from outside the village requesting places for their children.

The children value the use they make of the classroom reflection areas, the outdoor prayer garden and the 'woodland walk' to write their own prayers, reflect on their learning and how to do their best. The school benefits from the commitment and care of the weekly parents' prayer meeting, with one parent describing the school as being 'covered in prayer'. Whilst the school does not yet have an agreed definition of spirituality, some of the older children are able to articulate what this means to them.

The children have an understanding of Christianity as a world wide faith, lived out in different cultures around the world. They are able to talk about the similarities and differences between Christianity and other faiths. This is enhanced through external visits to places of worship as well as welcoming visitors of other faiths to the school. As a result the children can articulate how faith shapes people's attitudes to each other and how members of diverse cultures live side by side in harmony.

Children talk with enthusiasm about RE lessons, where they can explore 'big questions' about religions and what faith means to them and others. They can clearly demonstrate respect for differing viewpoints. Consequently the children can reflect on the Christian ethos within the school, teaching them to treat others as they would like to be treated themselves. The children thus realise that they can support others through fundraising. RE is given a high profile in the school, reflecting and enhancing its Christian character. As a result of careful planning, RE makes a significant contribution to the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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

Collective worship forms an integral part of the school day and is based around one of the school's twelve chosen Christian values. The headteacher has introduced different styles of collective worship this year. Members of the school community talk with enthusiasm about the Friday 'celebration worship', to which parents are invited. As a result, parents are able to appreciate how the Christian values the school has chosen, are lived out in the everyday life of the school. These new approaches to collective worship are yet to become embedded and their influence on the spiritual development of the learners fully assessed and evaluated.

Since September children have started to plan and lead collective worship themselves. They say that they enjoy doing this as it enhances their understanding of that term's Christian value and its links with Bible stories. This is developing a deeper understanding of how Jesus influences the lives of Christians. Governors and senior leaders monitor and evaluate collective worship and its impact on the learners but do not currently benefit from the input of the children.

The children learn prayers as well as writing their own to read out in collective worship. They talk positively about how prayer helps them when they are worried. As a result of this, they listen and respond to each other with respect.

The older children have been involved in putting forward 'big questions' to be considered once a week in worship. Their responses are displayed on the 'wonder wall' in the hall. This has encouraged the children to think more deeply about what it means to be a Christian and how Christians live their lives by Jesus' example. These questions and responses clearly support and demonstrate the children's spiritual and moral development.

The children can explain the significance of some established traditions of worship, such as why a candle is lit to represent Jesus as the light of the world. At the start of collective worship they are invited to respond to the Peace, with the majority choosing to do so. They also develop a good understanding of Christmas and Easter and some

Bible stories. Currently the children only have a limited understanding of different Christian traditions in worship. The parish has been without a rector for a year and has not had much capacity to help the school develop children's understanding of Anglican traditions.

Displays around the school and other evidence show that the children have learnt about the Trinity as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As a result they can talk about this, in age appropriate terms, with some confidence and understanding.

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

Inspection evidence supports the school's view that religious education (RE) is well planned and led. All the staff have been trialling some of the Understanding Christianity units which they feel have enhanced the children's learning and understanding. Teaching is good across the school and assessments show that the standards of attainment are in line with the syllabus expectations.

The children have been encouraged to pose questions and become actively involved in discussions. This has led to deeper thinking and reflection as evidenced in their written work. However, the opportunities for children to respond to the feedback given is not always consistent across the school.

The children recognise both similarities and differences between faiths as a result of the course they follow from the Northamptonshire syllabus. They talk about respecting others and their beliefs and are able to link these to the school's Christian values and Bible stories they have heard. Visitors from other faiths have reinforced and enhanced the learning through first hand experience.

Teaching and learning is effectively monitored by the RE leader as well as governors. As a consequence, the school has highlighted the need to further differentiate work for the higher ability children.

As a result of work done in their RE lessons, the children are developing the ability to pose deeper questions of meaning and purpose as demonstrated in their big questions. This in turn is furthering the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children and their understanding of the school's chosen Christian values.

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

The headteacher's strong Christian faith inspires the whole school community as he clearly demonstrates the Christian vision, 'working together in God's hands', within the school. This has influenced the very supportive way the staff and governors, work with each other, teach the children and engage with families.

Collective worship has been given a high priority this year and is consequently encouraging the children to focus on the importance of prayer in their everyday lives and also to develop their thinking and questioning. This is thus furthering their spirituality, even though the school, as yet, does not have its own clear definition of what this means to them.

Through the work of the ethos committee the governors are increasingly focussing on the school's Christian values in their leadership and governance. This gives rise to a belief in the importance of every individual, so that every child is known and supported well. This was described by one parent as feeling 'part of the school family' and is clearly demonstrated in the good relationships between everyone.

The leaders have a firm understanding of the school's priorities as a church school through clear self-evaluation. Consequently, improvements, both in strengthening the Christian ethos as well as academic achievement, have been made. Opportunities have been taken, through training and bespoke projects, to develop the roles of the RE lead and other staff and governors, which have clearly impacted on the distinctive Christian ethos and improving attainment.

Links with the local church have been maintained despite the parish being without a rector for the past year. The school visits the church at least once a term and leads a service there. Through these services, parents and the wider community have gained a greater understanding of the school's Christian values and how these are lived out in school. Every opportunity is given to recognise children demonstrating these values in their daily lives. The way in which the values are presented on the school's website does not make it immediately obvious how intrinsically important these values are to the whole school community.

Leaders have taken opportunities through bespoke projects and professional development offered by the diocese. As a consequence of this the school has developed its Christian vision and ethos.