

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Hathersage St Michael's Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School

School Lane, Hathersage, Hope Valley, Derbyshire S32 1BZ

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Derby
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Derbyshire
Name of multi-academy trust	N/A
Date of inspection	26 January 2017
Date of last inspection	6 March 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 112885
Headteacher	Fiona Jackson
Inspector's name and number	Kerry Palmer 60

School context

Hathersage St Michael's is a smaller than average rural village school serving a community which includes a significant number of commuters to nearby cities. The children, from 2 to 11 years old, are almost all of White British heritage. Few are socially disadvantaged children. The number with particular needs or in receipt of additional pupil premium support is below national averages. The headteacher has been in post for just over 3 years and there have been significant staff changes in recent years. The school has been supported by the nearby parish church of St Michael & All Angels since its inception over 150 years ago.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Hathersage St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The dedicated, professional and highly motivated headteacher and leadership team who drive a broad, exciting and rigorous education for every child driven by clearly state Christian values.
- A well informed and engaged governing body and parish community who celebrate the school's church foundation.
- Staff, parents, governors and children who recognise and value the school's Christian distinctiveness.
- A school at the centre of a trinity of school, church and village, working together to successfully promote a mutually supportive community.

Areas to improve

- Review key documentation to make it explicitly clear that Gospel values drive the school's vision.
- Plan staff development of significant theological concepts in Christianity to improve religious education (RE).

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

Hathersage St Michael's is an excellent church school. The application of Christian values, expressed through 'Golden Values', modelled by all staff working in a committed and professional team impact powerfully on children's lives. Its Christian character is also evident throughout the school in many displays and interactive reflection areas. Children flourish as the 'Learning, Laughing and Living' vision statement desires. They work hard, are supportive of

each other and say they feel happy and safe. However, the Gospel source of school values is not explicitly clear or appreciated by many in the school community. Attendance is above average and behaviour is excellent. Data indicates that children make expected or better progress and by the end of Key Stage 2 achievement significantly exceeds national averages. This includes the small number recognised as disadvantaged whose needs are well supported. The breadth of provision goes wide, music is a strength with many instrumentalists and two choirs, including a junior church choir. There are many sporting opportunities, including inter-school events at Hope Valley College, and many clubs and enrichment activities. On site breakfast, after-school and holiday clubs are run by Peak Time Kids Club in the shared Nursery building. Relationships amongst all are positive, open and mutually supportive; children display trust and compassion. In addition to structured buddying systems, several parents commented on the thoughtfulness and consideration of older children who naturally reflect Jesus' values when befriending those younger. Parents, staff and governors constantly speak of 'a happy, caring school family'. The school council promotes concern for others by leading a variety of fund and awareness raising activities for worthy causes such as Children in Need, Samaritans Purse and Save the Children. Empathy and sensitivity are the result, 'We are so lucky, it's not fair,' a child said. The school's church foundation, particularly RE, contributes significantly to children's social, moral, cultural and spiritual development. Much time and thought has been given since the last inspection, particularly under current leadership, to broadening the curriculum and widening children's horizons so that there is sensitivity and respect for those of other cultures and faiths. Participation in 'Young Voices' at Sheffield Arena and visits to a mosque and Derby Open Centre are examples. Outdoor learning opportunities, including Forest School, have expanded and are well used sparking curiosity, imagination and creativity. Along with the Eco Council, they promote an appreciation of the wonders of God's world and enhance spiritual development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Christian worship is recognised as central to school life. Children say the example of Jesus and reflection times help them at home and school. One child explained, 'Jesus came to show us how to live'. As an example, the theme of leadership emphasised the servant example of Jesus when he washed the disciples' feet. A calendar of significant themes, including major church festivals guide worship ensuring continuity in a variety of formats. All staff attend and share in leadership, along with local clergy and occasional visitors enriching children's experience. Candles feature in worship and classrooms, recognised by children as representing 'Jesus, light of the world'. There is some understanding of the Trinity but this is insufficiently developed. The committed and experienced worship coordinator ensures consistency and positive development through regular monitoring, evaluations by children, staff discussion and support from the diocese. The active involvement of children in leading worship has significantly increased since the last inspection with teams providing a liturgical format which features in whole school and class worship. Children recognise that worship is different to assembly. 'Assembly is just getting together, we worship God,' one commented. Prayer is an important component with opportunities for children's own prayers. A developing innovation is the introduction in each class of a focussed reflection area and prayer opportunity central to weekly class based worship. A child said, 'I prayed for my grandad'. Whilst Bible stories feature regularly, there is insufficient link of school values to Gospel stories or celebration of achievement with 'God given gifts and talents'. The school's range of musical activity is well used, lively worship songs are enjoyed and choral and instrumental music feature. Governors often attend school worship and the vicar regularly leads and discusses developments with school leaders. This, along with worship in the parish church, ensures children have an insight into Anglican tradition but they do not have sufficient appreciation of Christianity as a world-wide faith. By way of contrast, the school also worships in the village Methodist Church and there are strong links with the Methodist and Roman Catholic churches in the village. Family and friends enthusiastically share in class led worship and festival services in church. The vicar is a well-loved member of the school community and valuable pastoral resource.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

RE is taught creatively using a range of imaginative strategies that engage children with age appropriate challenge. Young children delight in role play in a church setting, widening their language as they explore 'pulpit' and font'. Outcomes, over time, support the school's view that teaching is consistently good or better. Focussed questioning by teachers probes and deepens children's thinking. For example, as part of an investigation into sacred places, a Year 3 class become 'detectives' investigating the possible use of church artefacts. The teacher teases out previous knowledge as suggestions are made. The vicar, follows up the children's ideas later in the lesson. Children enjoy the challenge of deep thinking and there is much evidence of enquiry, evaluation and reflection. Children's work is carefully assessed and marking strategies move them forward. Standards are good and in line with other core subjects. The increasing use of cross-curricular approaches is embedding RE place as a core subject and impacts significantly on the school's Christian distinctiveness. Whilst primarily Christian, as expected in a church school, the RE curriculum enables children to gain an age appropriate appreciation of other faiths. In a year 6 class, using laptops to explore similarities and differences between Christian and Hindu beliefs, a child suggested that the many Hindu gods were more like separate personalities of one god, like pieces of a jigsaw. The discussion then led to the Christian God being a three piece jigsaw, but appreciation of Father, Son and Holy Spirit was hazy and needs developing throughout the school. The school's spirituality policy and Christian character informs planning across the curriculum contributing to the many successful strategies to promote social, moral, cultural and spiritual development. RE is not yet outstanding because its place as a core subject, with Christianity at its heart, promoting the school's Church foundation needs embedding.

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

The dedicated, professional and highly motivated headteacher and leadership team work hard to promote the best education for every child driven by clearly stated Christian values. Subtle changes of emphasis, under current leadership, have strengthened the school's church foundation. Feedback from parent questionnaires makes clear that many are far more sympathetic to the school's Christian vision than some years ago. However, this vision is still not obvious in key documentation. All staff and governors, in a spirit of Christian service, contribute enthusiastically to the school's rigorous pursuit of continuous improvement. Christian distinctiveness is a key priority in the school's planning. Well informed and effective governors play a significant role in monitoring, review and contributing to well-focussed development priorities. The RE and worship link governor reports to the full governing body on a regular basis. Through a buddy system, taking a particular interest in one class, and link governor responsibilities for one subject area, governors gain a comprehensive insight into the school's strengths and areas for development. The views of all stakeholders are sought and considered. Foundation governors are ecumenical, including representatives of local Methodist and Roman Catholic churches. Staff are empowered by relevant professional development opportunities to take additional responsibility and grow as leaders. The school is at the heart of a very active village community. The annual village gala with school well dressing, the school summer show, open to all in the Memorial Hall and village bonfire run by the PTFA being just a few examples. Statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are fully met and the potential for further positive development is excellent.