

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Litton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Litton,
Buxton,
Derbyshire.
SK17 8QU

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Derby
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Derbyshire
Date of inspection	25 May 2017
Date of last inspection	5 June 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	112886
Headteacher	Bridget Hanley
Inspector's name and number	Louise Patterson (310)

School context

Litton VA Primary School is a very small school with 50 pupils on roll, being taught in two equally sized mixed age classes. The school is physically at the centre of the village and is within walking distance of the church. Almost all pupils are from white British backgrounds and are drawn from families with at least one working parent. There are currently no children eligible for free school meals but there are 16% with additional needs. The current headteacher has been in post for nine years and the other teacher is currently on maternity leave. The teacher currently undertaking that role has taken on the co-ordination of collective worship.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Litton Voluntary Aided Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

- There are excellent relationships throughout the school which are based on Christian values. This results in an extremely positive and supportive learning environment.
- There is a very distinctive Christian ethos within the school which is understood and can be articulated by all stakeholders. This is securely embedded in all aspects of the school and impacts very positively on the school's provision and outcomes for the pupils.
- High quality collective worship, religious education and the strong relationship with the local parish form a solid foundation for the Christian life of the school.
- Pupils are confident, well-behaved and developing into well rounded individuals in the knowledge that they are loved by God.

Areas to improve

- Continue to develop the role of pupils in the planning and delivery of worship.
- Strengthen pupil understanding of diverse communities through links with other schools and visitors from a range of backgrounds.

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

There is an explicit Christian ethos which permeates all aspects and dimensions of the life of the school. This is having a significant impact on all those involved in the school. Part of the mission statement of the school says that it 'encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith, and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers to its pupils'. This mission is lived out daily through the ethos, relationships and the treatment of every child as an individual, underpinned by the Christian faith. This results in pupils who are well rounded, confident and spiritually aware individuals who are consistently encouraged to be the very best that they can be. Though there are a significant proportion of pupils with some kind of additional need there is still the emphasis on the personal, spiritual and academic achievement of every child to reach their full potential in a safe, caring and Christian environment. There is a good range of opportunities and responsibilities, both within the classroom and around school, afforded to pupils of all ages. This is enabling and encouraging them to be responsible and caring individuals with a real empathy with other members of the school community but also with the wider school and church community. The utilisation of the outdoor learning and spiritual spaces is having a positive, deep and lasting impact on pupils, enabling them to be reflective and respectful of nature's beauty. The impact of this is the outstanding quality of care and respect for each other and the natural world.

Pupils are able to articulate what it means for them to go to a church school, saying, 'God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are all in our school', 'we follow Jesus and he taught us to do good stuff' and 'we care for each other because of Jesus'. Even the younger pupils have a clear, age-appropriate concept of the impact of the Christian foundation of the school. Data indicates that outcomes for pupils are exceeding national expectations. The numbers in each cohort are very small, therefore the data can fluctuate year on year. The positive outcomes are an indication of the highly effective support and nurture given to all pupils which is fundamental to the development of every child. The teachers' and teaching assistants' are clearly committed to the school as an academic and caring, inclusive establishment rooted firmly in Christian values. This shared vision by all involved is a strength of the school. There is an emphasis placed on the personal growth of every child which means that pupils are developing into well-educated, rounded, and morally grounded individuals through the priority placed on their academic progress but also their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The development of global awareness through the use of a range of multi-cultural resources and the religious education (RE) within the school is enabling pupils to gain a deeper understanding of a range of culturally diverse backgrounds. The school acknowledges that this is an area for further development. Pupils say that they feel extremely safe and well cared for, which contributes to the excellent attendance. There are very high expectations for behaviour, care and love, with all staff acting as excellent role models. All staff consistently and constantly demonstrate their care for pupils both in the classroom and outside. This results in pupils who are extremely well behaved and have a very positive attitude towards school. They engage readily with all aspects of school life, including the academic, and are keen to come to school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.

Worship occupies a central place in the life of the school and it reflects the school's deeply embedded Christian ethos. It is enabling both staff and pupils to develop a sense of community and Christian fellowship, with all staff in attendance. There are regular opportunities for the development of the spiritual dimension within worship with singing, prayer and periods of quiet reflection. Pupils commented, 'it's fun and everyone likes it' and 'I like the time to reflect after a Bible story'. The opportunities to take part in elements of worship are taken up with enthusiasm, with lots of volunteers who clearly know the content very well. Pupils are keen to volunteer to lead the opening and closing response prayers and light the candle. Pupils have an understanding that the teachings of Jesus and Christian values which are discussed in worship are to be lived out through their behaviour towards others and the choices they make. The impact of this is pupils who are very considerate of others and consistently make positive choices. These values and teachings are regularly reinforced through the appropriate use of Biblical content. Pupils and staff are fully engaged in the worship and clearly enjoy the experience. As a pupil commented, 'it's a good time to reflect' and 'it's fun and everyone likes it'. Prayer is a regular feature of the school day, with the vast majority of pupils having an understanding of what prayer is. Prayer is used within worship and also at the end of day. Pupils are given opportunities to write their own prayers and say that they can write them 'whenever and how ever we like'. Having undertaken a study of prayer recently in key stage 2 there is a clear understanding of the types of prayer and their appropriate uses. Planning for worship is usually undertaken by the co-ordinator for worship in conjunction with the headteacher and clergy using the Twelve Baskets themes. The worship has clearly been well planned and thoughtfully delivered. This role has been ably taken over by the cover teacher whilst the co-ordinator is on maternity leave. Pupils are not currently involved in this stage on a regular basis although they would welcome the opportunity to both plan and lead more whole acts of collective worship in the future. Local clergy deliver worship on a regular basis, which pupils greatly enjoy and the school regularly visits the local church and Methodist chapel for worship. This approach is widening the Christian experience within the school.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.

RE has a high profile within the school's curriculum. Outstanding teaching and rigorous assessment using the levels in the Agreed Syllabus for Derbyshire ensure very good standards across the school. It is clear that RE is given a high status with levels of attainment and progress at least in line with core subjects. Pupils demonstrate an excellent recall of prior learning giving a clear indication that excellent teaching and learning has taken place over time. The teaching of Christianity is given prominence and there is a balance of other world faiths. Planning, monitoring and assessment are well organised by the subject leader, who is currently on maternity leave. The headteacher has maintained the subject during her absence. There is evidence of rich and varied curriculum which includes elements from both attainment targets 1 and 2 and from a range of world faiths. The very good use of art and the creative is used to enhance the spiritual development of pupils within the subject. The model making exercise in key stage 2 to represent the Trinity was extremely successful and thought provoking for all those involved. This approach is having a very positive impact on the pupils, who agreed that this is their favourite subject 'because we are always learning about new stuff' and 'it's really fun'. The co-ordinator responsible for RE uses a range of strategies in order to properly assess standards and ensure continuing good practice. There is effective regular monitoring of lessons and review of assessment procedures. Pupils reflect upon the thoughts, feelings and actions of others during RE and worship. Teachers use innovative techniques to make learning fun, as well as challenging learners. Good examples are the use of model making at key stage 1 and the excellent utilisation of artefacts in a lesson about prayer in key stage 2. Pupils are able to relate their ideas and make links to their own beliefs, clearly demonstrating empathy and understanding. Though they recognise the importance of diversity and world faiths this has not been enhanced through links with schools nationally and internationally or widening the range of visitors to the school.

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

The highly committed and very capable Christian leadership and management of the headteacher and governors makes a significant contribution to the success of this outstanding church school. The school regularly reviews the Christian distinctiveness of the school with regular discussions within full governing body about areas such as collective worship and RE and their impact on the school. After the last inspection the governing body spent a considerable amount of time every meeting discussing the distinctively Christian nature of the school to enable them to move towards becoming outstanding. The governors know the school very well. The results of the questionnaires and governor monitoring visits are reported back to the full governing body and inform future developments in this area. The Christian distinctiveness is effectively promoted through the website which gives a very clear indication that the Christian foundation is central to the life of the school, stating that it is 'at the heart of the Christian community'. Parents speak very highly of the school as a church school. They said such things as, 'Litton school does an excellent job in encouraging its pupils to live by Christian values', 'a safe Christian environment' and 'Christian values are fundamental'. They say that they are kept very well informed about their children and that they appreciate the 'open door' policy that the school has in place. They said that 'there is always someone to talk to'.

Though the staff team is small they are all fully committed and enthusiastic and fully support the Christian vision and ethos of the school. The careful and thoughtful appointment of a replacement during maternity cover indicates the importance placed not only on succession planning to ensure the quality of the education but also on sustaining the outstanding Christian ethos and distinctiveness. There is a real sense of them working outstandingly well together to enhance the excellent education being given to every child. Pupils are encouraged to take on appropriate responsibilities, which is helping them to develop a genuine sense of community and duty. Pupils feel that they have a voice within the school and they say that their ideas are taken seriously and are often acted upon. There is an effective and mutually supportive relationship with the local parish. There are many contacts both formal and informal, enabling pupils to have a clear understanding of the importance of the church in the life of their school. The school, the local church and the community work very well together. Governors are effective and are acutely aware of their role as leaders of a church school. They take their role as leaders of a Christian community very seriously. Foundation governors have a clear and positive view of the school and their role within it. The school feels that it is extremely well supported by the diocese and takes full advantage of the training provided by them. This relationship with the local Christian community is having a significant impact on the Christian life of the school. The school has made significant progress in addressing the areas for development from the previous inspection. All stakeholders are now more aware and able to articulate the Christian values of the school and pupils have more ownership of the worship. Outdoor spaces are effectively utilised for reflection and pupils say that there is somewhere to go to 'think'.

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