

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Hartlebury VC Church of England Primary School	
The Village, Hartlebury, Kidderminster DY11 7TD	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Worcester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Worcestershire
Date of inspection	3 February 2017
Date of last inspection	26 March 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	135042
Headteacher	Caroline Unitt
Inspector's name and number	Stephanie Boulter 785

School context

Hartlebury Voluntary Controlled Primary School is a smaller than average primary school set in a village location, with 173 pupils on roll. The school has grown steadily and attracts families from outside the catchment area. The vast majority of pupils are of white British heritage and numbers of pupils with special educational needs and those known to be eligible to receive Pupil Premium funding are low. The school opened its own Early Years non-maintained school based provision in September 2014.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Hartlebury VC Primary as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Every child and family is cared for in the fullness of the Christian values of the school, supported pastorally and given the gift of aspiration
- The Christian vision and dedication of the leadership and management of the school, including governors, ensures that outcomes for pupils have systematically improved over time
- Christian values are lived, not simply taught. Staff lead by example and the pupils respond in exemplary fashion. Consequently the school is a shining example of Christian love and care.

Areas to improve

- Formalise monitoring by all school leaders and governors of the school's distinctively Christian character, collective worship and religious education (RE), so that their impact on learners can be independently evaluated and leads to challenge for all leaders.
- Develop more frequent opportunities for pupils to engage in writing their own prayers, have time to reflect and be 'still', so that pupils' wellbeing and spiritual development is further enhanced.

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

The vibrant school community thrives within an atmosphere in which the development of the whole child is secured through a strong commitment to Christian values. The school's mission statement 'We grow in the Christian values of love, tolerance and forgiveness; learning together, respecting each other' underpins everything the school does. Pupils are able to talk confidently about the importance of core values in the context of the teachings and example of Jesus and the way it influences their daily life in school. The school's proclamation of these values is also evident in the outstanding relationships between all members of the school community. The strong Christian environment creates a culture in which all pupils feel secure and supported and this enables them to learn confidently. This success is also closely interwoven with the development of pupils' personal spirituality; learning and worship are interlinked and pupils can confidently talk about their beliefs and are given many opportunities to do so. Pupils also say that they have a voice that will be heard by leaders and that their views are respected. This is because the school's actions to improve pupils' chances are strongly rooted in distinctive Christian values which ensure all pupils are valued as unique children of God and are inspired to succeed. Parents, too, say that, 'The school is an inclusive community where everyone is involved regardless of ability.' Pupils' efforts are constantly acknowledged and celebrated and, as a result, pupils want to be in school. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning is outstanding because they enjoy and appreciate all the learning experiences they are given. This is enriched by attractive reflection areas and displays in classrooms and Christian symbols around the school which helps to reinforce the school's distinctiveness and supports pupils' spiritual awareness and development really well. The school has a strong commitment to Christian stewardship and supports a range of national charities. Pupils understand the importance of being effective stewards of 'God's creation', and take pride in the outside spaces which include a developing reflection area, which they are very proud of. Pupils speak passionately about the importance of caring, kindness and showing generosity and are able to link their values to the actions of Jesus in the Bible.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is central to the life of the school. It is planned carefully and includes themes based on the Bible, Christian value, and festivals, as well as events of national significance. Jesus is at the heart of all the school does and worship helps pupils to understand how the teachings of Jesus guides Christians in their daily lives. Anglican traditions are evident and includes the worship table with liturgical colours, and one candle with three parts. These help pupils understand the Christian calendar and the Trinity. One pupil explained the Trinity as 'three things that cannot be separated and makes sure you're safe'. Pupils understand the importance of prayer but would like more opportunities to write their own prayers and have them read in worship regularly. Pupils have a very positive attitude towards acts of worship and regard them as an essential element of being a church school. When asked about the value of forgiveness, younger pupils speak with confidence stating how 'God wants us to say sorry if we have upset someone, because if we don't say sorry that upsets God'. The links with the local church and community play a strong part in enhancing pupils' experience of worship and this relationship is very much viewed as being part of one big family. Planning of worship responds to the needs of the children and the development of the worship team is a positive development since the last inspection. Parents confirm that their children speak about worship at home and feel it has contributed greatly to helping the individual and the school community when there has been a bereavement. Pupils readily talk about worship and God, they are deep thinkers and this is often reflected in their questioning and responses during worship. As a result, prayerful and meaningful worship takes place, with a focus on Christian values and Jesus' teaching in the Bible. As one pupil commented, 'Worship is good because you get to learn about Jesus, become a 'worship detective' and also to sing'.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious education (RE) has a high profile at Hartlebury, is considered a core subject and is well led by a dedicated, passionate teacher. Outcomes are in line with other core subjects and the introduction of the new Locally Agreed Syllabus has resulted in pupils engaging in high quality discussions throughout both key stages. Pupils are encouraged

to consider big questions, such as 'Is there a God?' and this enables them to use and understand subject specific vocabulary such as atheist, agnostic and theist. High quality talk and exploration underpin lessons, ensuring that even the youngest pupils love RE and are able to think deeply about stories from the Bible and make links to their own behaviour and lives. Assessment is developing well and has resulted in teachers having a growing understanding of pupils' progression, which informs planning. Pupils retain a great deal of pertinent information about other faiths and appreciate common values with respect for difference. Pupils display a secure knowledge of the key aspects of Christianity and the introduction of the Understanding Christianity resource has been embraced by the school. RE visits to contrasting places of worship including a mosque, gurdwara, synagogue and a Hindu temple are enthusiastically welcomed by pupils. These visits give pupils an increasing understanding of different religious cultures and an appreciation of diversity, as well as opportunities to make links between the beliefs, practices and value systems of the faiths they have studied. RE planning incorporates the school's core values into lessons and makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils.

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

Christian values are at the heart of all decision making driven by school leaders and governors who are eager to foster the education of the whole child in this village setting. The committed and passionate headteacher has established a common Christian ethos which is modelled by a cohesive staff team. They are committed to sustaining an outstanding Christian environment in which all aspects of pupils' development and wellbeing are fostered and promoted through biblical teachings and Christian values. Staff development is actively promoted with relevant training, including support from the diocese. Parents have a strong relationship with the school and they recognise the Christian character of the school and comment that Christian values are spoken about and used at home. The school and church are at the heart of the community and are held in high esteem resulting in solid partnerships between the school, parents, church, and the community it serves. The 'Open the Book' team provide valuable links with the local church, ensuring further opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils. The headteacher and governors are fully aware of the need to focus more on the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the school's Christian distinctiveness, RE and collective worship on pupils. This will enable all governors to be more challenging in their role. The RE lead has attended diocesan training on 'Understanding Christianity' which is an example of the strategic direction to increase the theological literacy of pupils and improve RE standards further. Statutory requirements for both RE and worship are met. Partnerships with the Diocese of Worcester and three other church schools, known as the Trinity are strong. Parents are confident that at Hartlebury every child is considered to be unique and special and attribute this to the school's distinctive Christian ethos and values.

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