

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Oakridge Parochial Church of England Primary School

Oakridge Lynch, Stroud, Gloucester, GL6 7NR

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Diocese

Gloucester

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Local Authority

Gloucestershire

Date of inspection

21 June 2017

Date of last inspection

18 January 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

VA 115674

Executive Headteacher

Lisa Austin

Inspector's name and number

Carolyn Banfield 610

School context

Oakridge Parochial CE Voluntary Aided Primary School is a much smaller than average school with 43 children taught in two mixed-age class groups. The majority of pupils come from the immediate and surrounding villages and are from a white British heritage. The number of children with special education needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. Those eligible to receive support from pupil premium funding is also below. The school has been in a management partnership with another local CE primary since April 2011 sharing an Executive Headteacher. The governing bodies of both schools federated in September 2014.

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

- A clearly defined set of Christian values is embedded within the life of the school giving purpose and meaning for the whole community.
- Through its distinctive Christian character, the school successfully creates a caring and inclusive environment where pupils feel valued and respected. They know that they are loved and precious to God and this has had a direct influence on their behaviour, well-being and attitudes towards learning.
- The executive headteacher, together with an effective federated governing body, has ensured that the partnership with Bisley Blue Coat is mutually beneficial. Shared good practice has brought about increased opportunities and experiences to support pupils social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) development.
- The strong and supportive links with the church and local community significantly enhance the schools Christian character and pupils' learning experiences.

Areas to improve

- Share and embed the renewed vision and ethos statement so that clearer links with the Christian values can be made.
- Convey the schools Christian principles and practice in key documentation, signage and communications so that all stakeholders fully understand what motivates and informs decision-making and strategic planning.
- Implement and embed the new religious education (RE) syllabus alongside the Understanding Christianity programme, ensuring that all teaching and learning is inclusive, dynamic and consistent.
- Extend the Christian distinctiveness strand of the School Development Plan (SDP) to provide an on-going mechanism to monitor and evaluate the success of the school against all aspects of the SIAMS framework.

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

The school has very successfully developed and strengthened its distinctive Christian character since the last inspection. This is principally because of the consistent and resolute focus it has given to a set of explicitly Christian values which are now embedded. The 12 values from the 'Roots and Fruits' programme form the foundation for daily life and underpin the school ethos. Pupil understanding is clearly illustrated through personal explanations as evidenced on the values tree and reflected in their behaviours. This has recently been given further impetus through the linking of Christian values to each element of the schools vision strapline 'Learning, living, laughing'. As a result, greater synergy between the vision and values is being promoted. Consequently, pupils increasingly recognise that the distinctive character of the school has a positive impact on their well-being, attitudes to learning and achievement. One pupil summed up responses to the values as 'showing me how to live a good life, be compassionate and do my best.' Subsequently, behaviour is good and relationships are strengthened by the understanding that all are equal in the sight of God. This contributes to the tangible sense of 'family' identified and appreciated by all stakeholders. Year 6 pupils are proud to wear 'Truly Trusted' badges which they feel acknowledge their ability to exemplify the value of trust in the service of others. The uniqueness of each pupil is mirrored in the way individual needs are catered for. As a result, pupils make good progress and outcomes are broadly in line with national expectations. The inclusion within the ethos statement of the Gospel verse from John 10:10 'and they shall have life in all its fullness', is a clear expression of the school's mission. This is made obvious through the curriculum which is both creative and enriching. Pupils are encouraged to explore their learning through many first hand experiences, which provide a focus for their personal interests. Forest school, 'welly walks', visits to Copsgrove farm, are regular activities through which pupils experience 'God as Creator'. Consequently, pupils want to be in school and this is reflected in attendance which is above the national average. Staff readily promote a shared understanding of spirituality, and give emphasis to the development of human wholeness through all areas of the curriculum. As a nurturing community, staff and pupils are encouraged to 'discover who we are, why we are, and – perhaps more importantly – what we might be.' Therefore, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) provision is good. This is because it is rooted in the teachings of Jesus. Through RE, pupils are encouraged to explore questions of meaning and purpose. They demonstrate an awareness of a range of cultures and show interest and respect when considering the beliefs and faith of others. Worship and RE make a considerable contribution to the distinctive Christian character of this community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship occupies an important place in the life of the school. It is a positive and valued experience because all are brought together as a Christian community. Consequently, pupils say that they feel part of something special. A systematic and focused programme provides an excellent structure from which to promote and celebrate the school's values. This is having a substantial impact on distinctiveness together with pupil understanding because of the level of engagement and the interactive nature of the occasions. The values board is used as a reference point and through their contributions to this display, pupils are able to demonstrate how worship influences their thinking and behaviour. Considering the idea of forgiveness, pupils recall the story of Peter's denial and how Jesus then forgave him. They understand that because Jesus did this, there is a Christian duty to do the same. Input from staff, clergy and parish partners ensures that pupils are exposed to a variety of styles and creative formats. Adults model quality leadership and as a result, the older pupils now lead aspects of worship on a regular basis. Greater involvement of the pupils in planning has been identified as a next step. This is an initiative which continues to be explored and evaluated by the schools that form the Bisley Benefice. Monitoring of worship has also been carried out by governors. Pupils respond well to the key questions posed, and increasingly demonstrate a growing ability to think deeply about the ideas being shared. Opportunities to explore meaning through Bible stories are plentiful. This is particularly so through the 'Open the Book' programme which effectively brings life to the characters and messages shared. As a result, pupils are acquiring a secure knowledge of the life and teachings of Jesus. A developing theological understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is apparent because of the symbolism used during worship and the links pupils make through the teaching of Christianity in RE. The window, mirror, door approach, implicit to the worship programme, makes a considerable contribution to the SMSC development of pupils. The partnership with the church enhances this further. The celebration of major Christian festivals and special occasions such as Christingle, facilitate an appreciation of the church year and associated traditions. This is effectively strengthened by participation in 'Experience Journeys' such as that for Pentecost. As a result, pupils demonstrate a growing understanding of key Christian beliefs and are developing the language with which to describe the implications this has for believers. Prayer and time for quiet reflection is an integral part of the worship life of the school. When reflecting on prayer, one pupil commented that 'you are able to share anything with God because he is with you every step of the way'. Achievement worship is viewed positively by all stakeholders and parents make a significant effort to attend. This is because they see it as a real celebration of the school's mission.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

RE is taught creatively using a range of strategies and approaches that engage pupils with age-appropriate challenge. This is reflected in class RE scrapbooks and demonstrates a variety of recording methods. Visits and visitors are used effectively to enrich the subject as well as give focus to pupil's own interpretations of faith. Because activities are well planned for, pupils are exposed to experiences that require them to apply a range of skills. Class teachers are adept at posing relevant lines of questioning and as a result pupils interact well with the materials being shared. Their responses demonstrate a deepening understanding and respect for the ideas under discussion. Walking the labyrinth at Gloucester Cathedral, is a good example of how experiences are used to teach about religious practice whilst also encouraging pupils to reflect on what the practice means to them. Consequently, pupils enjoy the subject and this is exemplified in their ability to talk about their learning, particularly where topics have inspired their thinking and imagination. Work covering the 'journey of life', which includes an exploration of rites of passage has led pupils to an understanding of the impact of religion on believers. The concept of death is openly referred to and as one pupil described, 'for Christians death is not the end but the beginning of another one spent with God.' Some are able to make connections between their learning of Christianity and other religions to augment their understanding. RE makes a good contribution to the Christian character of the school because it forges strong links to the school values and provides a structure that allows pupils to explore them in depth. Gospel teaching is made relevant to current issues and challenges. This is because teachers consistently relate the secular to the religious and vice versa. The subject knowledge, enthusiasm and expertise of the RE leader has significantly influenced the quality of teaching and learning taking place. She has been instrumental in motivating staff through relevant training opportunities, to trial the new resource 'Understanding Christianity'. Monitoring activities have identified gaps in pupils' prior knowledge so adaptations to meet the needs and abilities of both key stages have been applied. This is already having a positive impact. Because teaching is good, pupils make good progress and standards are in line with national expectations. Planning for the implementation of the new Diocesan Agreed Syllabus is well underway.

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

The passion of the headteacher and commitment of leadership at all levels has ensured that this church school community has continued to thrive and flourish. This is because they have been consistent in their resolve to raise standards and improve outcomes for pupils. This is evident in the way that they have embraced the development points identified in the previous inspection. As a result, explicitly Christian values have become embedded to underpin a vision that reflects its church foundation. However, some stakeholders do not readily recognise the links between the vision and values. A recent review of that vision, led by the incumbent, has successfully brought about a vision and ethos statement, which explicitly describes the schools mission. Using the analogy of a wheel, in which the hub is the vision, the spokes are the values and the rim the practice, staff and governors are confident to articulate what drives school improvement and inform decisions. A visual representation of this has been designed so that meaning can be conveyed to all stakeholders. The creative curriculum supports the whole child and provides an extended day through breakfast and after school clubs. Leaders take swift and appropriate actions to address areas of underachievement. This is particularly true in writing, which has been a priority area for improvement. The proportion of pupils joining the school at non-standard entry points has increased. Although challenging, leaders ensure that the needs of individuals, whatever their background or starting point are met. This is an indication of the commitment of all to uphold the gospel verse, John 10:10 so that the whole community can truly enjoy 'life in all its fullness'. The development of the school's Christian distinctiveness forms a strand on the SDP and this has provided direction for improvement. However, this strand has not been monitored and evaluated as rigorously or to the same extent as other SDP priorities. Governors hold link roles and are regular visitors to the school. The partnership with the church is strong. The incumbent has played a significant role in enriching the Christian life of the school and has contributed extensively to the well-being of the community through a range of initiatives. Although a period of interregnum has just begun, the incumbent has left a prominent legacy. As a result, governors, parish and benefice partners, have taken on the mantle of her work. The partnership with Bisley Blue Coat and membership of the Bisley Benefice is mutually beneficial. This is proving to be sustaining and motivational. Resources and opportunities enrich the curriculum and this is particularly so in terms of SMSC development. Parents are very positive about the school. They are also supportive of the values that encourage their children to make affirmative choices. Development of church school leaders is taken seriously and is evident in the many development and training opportunities undertaken by both staff and governors. The RE and collective worship leader has received excellent support and is particularly well qualified as a result. Her imminent secondment to another local church school as acting headteacher, is testimony to the quality of leadership developed at Oakridge. Overall, leadership is highly effective and leaders demonstrate a clear appreciation of what is required to maintain and improve standards. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.