

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

### Launton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Bicester Road, Launton, Oxfordshire, OX26 5DP

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Oxford</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Date/s of inspection	9 November 2016
Date of last inspection	1 November 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 123103
Headteacher	Lisa Howson
Inspector's name and number	Lynne Thorogood 799

#### School context

Launton C of E (VC) Primary School is set in a village location and serves its local community as well as the town of Bicester. It is a smaller than average school of 146 pupils from largely White British families, with below average numbers of pupils with special educational needs and fewer pupils entitled to the Pupil Premium grant than in most schools. Numbers of pupils in these categories have increased in the last three years and the school overall is increasing in size due to both popularity and local development. After a period of some turbulence, staffing is now stable. A new head teacher joined the school in 2013.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Launton CE Primary as a Church of England school are good

- A Christian belief in the value of each person results in a careful interrogation of all data and the implementation of effective strategies to support the wellbeing and progress of all.
- Relationships within the school, with parents and with the wider community are a strength. All stakeholders speak highly of the impact of the embedded Christian values.
- Spiritual development is very good because reflection is encouraged in many contexts, including RE, collective worship and through work derived from the school's 'Parable Garden' initiative
- Close, positive relationships with local clergy and churches enrich the Christian ethos of the school and develop a good understanding of Christian and Anglican traditions.
- The Christian faith of the head teacher and key staff drives decision making and developments across all aspects of the life of the school.

#### Areas to improve

- Establish rigorous systems of self-evaluation of the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school involving pupil voice, parents, staff and governors in order to secure further improvement.
- Explain the distinctively Christian concept of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in order to develop pupils' understanding of Christianity.

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

The school's Christian values are derived from its aims: 'Growing Character; Growing Learning; Growing Community' which link with its whole-school Bible based 'Parable Garden' initiative. The values are not high-profile on the school's website or documentation, but in school they are understood from a distinctively Christian perspective by all and create a respectful family atmosphere and good attitudes to learning. Pupils say, 'Values make the school a better place because people think about them all the time.' As a consequence, behaviour and relationships are very good. Pupils confirm that bullying, in any form, is 'non-existent'. They are polite, courteous and appreciative of what the school provides. Older pupils show genuine care for younger children without prompting. Pupils also speak with pride about the work they have done in the school grounds to develop planters and beds as part of the parable garden project and speak confidently and knowledgeably about the four parables they link with. This effectively enhances their understanding of the values and their roots in Christian teaching, and promotes good spiritual development. The parable garden also enhances the already good links with the local church, which is a partner in the initiative. Local businesses have offered good support including donations of plants to the project.

School staff live out the Christian belief that everyone is important and that social, emotional and wellbeing issues are as important as academic outcomes. Parents confirm that the school has a strong pastoral ethos, exemplified by their care for a pupil whose parent was ill. This focus on individual needs and circumstances is also applied to the scrutiny of results. Where attainment and/or progress is not as good as it could be staff demonstrate the school's values through careful and thorough analysis of data which leads to appropriate strategies to support improvements in learning. For example, new strategies, yielding good results, have been introduced to support reading, and now pupils' progress exceeds expectations for their age. Across all subjects, including religious education (RE) pupils achieve well. They enjoy how their achievements both in and out of school are celebrated in Friday assemblies. This helps develop confidence and self-esteem. Pupils also learn the value of perseverance because there is always encouragement to strive to do even better and, in the words of the head teacher, 'be as good as they can possibly be'. Pupils understand the importance of compassion and applied it to their understanding of global issues when they were keen to raise money for Water Aid and Toilet Twinning recently.

Pupils understand that teachers live out the school's values. They say, 'Teachers really get to know you. They guide you in the right way to go.' Quiet areas, reflection books and the parable garden are well used and enable pupils to express thoughts that are important to them, supporting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. Through RE they develop a growing understanding of Christianity and other faiths. This helps them reflect on the relevance of faith for themselves and develop respect for others who hold different beliefs. Skilled questioning in RE lessons encourages pupils to think deeply, as they are challenged to justify or explain responses. This further promotes SMSC development.

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

Collective worship is understood by pupils to be an important aspect of every day and makes a rich contribution to their SMSC development. It is also enjoyed by staff including support staff and on occasions by governors. It draws on Biblical stories, most recently the parables, to explore the school's values and how they are important to Christians. Pupils develop an understanding of how the messages in these Biblical sources are relevant to the day to day life of the school community and the individuals within it. The local vicar, who is also a parent, is a frequent and welcome visitor and regularly leads worship based on the Anglican tradition. Pupils listen attentively and behaviour, relationships and commitment to social and charitable action indicate that they take the messages to heart.

Themes for worship are carefully planned by the worship and RE co-ordinator, head teacher and vicar with contributions from teachers. All teachers also lead class worship, thus strengthening their own engagement with the Christian nature of the school's values. As a consequence, pupils develop an understanding of key Christian festivals, some Anglican liturgy and the significance of prayer. Pupils are less secure in their understanding of Christian beliefs about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with even the oldest pupils struggling to identify the three parts of the Holy Trinity. Pupils know the Lord's prayer and are encouraged to write their own prayers for use in worship services. There is never a shortage of volunteers to write and lead prayers for the whole school, and pupils from all classes have opportunities to contribute weekly. There is, however, no school prayer and prayer before lunch and at the end of each day is inconsistent across classes.

Good use is made of the church for services celebrating Christian festivals and seasonal events, and pupils are invited to contribute to and occasionally lead church worship. They say they enjoy these opportunities to take responsibility. Parents respond enthusiastically to invitations to attend church-based events and many, including

those of other faiths pack into the church for special services. The church is also used as a resource in RE teaching, helping pupils to develop their knowledge of the Anglican tradition.

Pupils are happy to talk about what their experiences of worship mean to them and they have a variety of views and ideas. There is, however, no systematic gathering of these different responses, together with evaluations by other stakeholders, to inform future planning and development.

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

The school has been, and continues to be, on a significant journey in its development as a church school. Leaders including governors, the head teacher, the leadership team and the parable garden co-ordinator have a clear vision of how the school is progressing, particularly with its strong culture of values linked to parables. Parents, pupils and others speak of a really inclusive school which draws on the opportunities and strengths of being a church school. For example, all groups speak highly of the significant involvement of the vicar, who provides strong support for the school in developing its Christian distinctiveness in many different ways, including pastoral support to the staff and parents, regular meetings with the RE and worship leaders, formerly serving as a governor and leading worship.

The head teacher, appointed since the last inspection, gives clear and supportive leadership and the impact of her vision on the development of the school is substantial. Her own Christian faith shines out in every aspect of her leadership and the academic and personal achievements of the pupils are foremost in the drive to further improve the school. She demonstrates the Christian belief that everyone is loved by God in the way she deals with all members of the school community. Leaders, including governors, live out their values by ensuring they have a good understanding of the school and develop effective strategies and interventions in response to the monitoring and evaluation of attainment and progress. Christian principles guide strategic and financial planning and decision making, for instance in the financial investment in the parable garden initiative, and in decisions about which charities to support through pupil's fundraising activities. Leaders and managers have ensured that all areas for development highlighted by the last SIAMS inspection have been fully addressed.

Governors monitor school development, including completing evaluations with a focus on the impact of the school's Christian values. Church school distinctiveness is monitored by the ethos group, which meets regularly to develop a whole-school approach to the promotion of the school's Christian character. The school recognises the potential benefits of development and formalisation of its various monitoring and evaluation procedures to bring about further improvement in its distinctiveness as a church school.

Several parents confirmed that they had selected the school because of its Christian foundation. One parent said that although the family do not attend church themselves they felt that children were getting a very positive experience of Christianity from the school. They are welcomed into the school and are involved in many different aspects of school life. Leaders have forged good and supportive links with other local schools, including church schools and the diocese. This has enabled the development of some positive networks, the result of which has been an improvement in achievement and distinctiveness. This has also provided effective opportunities for staff training and development. Leaders have allocated responsibility for RE to a member of staff who is highly committed to its development. She has been well supported and resources have been made available for professional development of staff to take the subject, including the parable garden, forward with increased confidence. A very strong relationship between the school and the church benefits both.

SIAMS report November 2016 Launton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Bicester OX26 5DP