



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Alconbury Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	School Lane Alconbury Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE28 4EQ
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Ely
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Good
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Date of inspection	21 October 2016
Date of last inspection	18 October 2011
School's unique reference number	110809
Headteacher	Jane Watts
Inspector's name and number	Judith Ruff 528

School context

Alconbury school has 190 pupils on roll. It serves the villages of Alconbury and Alconbury Weston, with a number of pupils travelling from surrounding areas. Since the previous inspection, there has been a change of headteacher and deputy headteacher and a 50% turnover of staff. Pupils with special educational needs or disabilities form 20% of the school population, with five pupils supported by Education Health Care Plans. 16% of pupils are in receipt of pupil premium funding. Pupils are mainly of a White British heritage. The church of St Peter and St Paul is a short walk from the school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Alconbury as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The outstanding Christian leadership of the headteacher, strongly supported by the staff, clergy and governing body, ensures that the needs of all pupils are met.
- The strong and effective partnership with the local church community enables the school to benefit from a wide variety of expertise, especially in developing the school's Christian character.
- Christian values are so embedded within pupils' day to day experiences in school, that they impact upon their behaviour and actions out of school.
- High quality collective worship opportunities enable pupils to engage with the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and leads to lives being inspired and transformed by his example.

Areas to improve

- Extend further pupils' opportunities to plan and lead worship across the school, so that they deepen their understanding of the structure and importance of worship to Christians.
- Increase the opportunities, both within and outside of the school buildings, for pupils to engage in silent reflection. This is to ensure that the already good opportunities for spiritual development within the school can be further deepened and embedded.

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

'This is my commandment, that you love one another'. In this school, the 'Alconbury Family' commits itself on a daily basis to living out this vision through the determination of every member of the school community to 'educate the whole child'. Distinctively Christian values are deeply embedded within the life and rationale of the school community, to teach the pupils that God knows, loves and values each one of them as distinct and unique, made in his image. Pupils are overwhelmingly articulate as to how these values shape their lives, 'This school has helped me with making friends, building up my confidence in making relationships and knowing that they are made more secure through trust and forgiveness' said one pupil. Parents interviewed really value the secure grounding that the school gives their children in the Christian faith, where regularly their children talk about demonstrating values in the home environment. The school goes 'the extra mile' to support families. The 'Tree Tops' nurture provision enables pupils to talk through the traumatic changes in their lives, either through bereavement or changes in family circumstances. All this is done in a safe, secure and listening environment. Notes from children who have attended this provision testify to the impact it has had on enabling them to talk through these concerns and worries. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision (SMSC) is of a high quality because the Christian character continually underpins the whole curriculum. This is supported by a thorough curriculum audit, which lists opportunities for these four areas to be highlighted and promoted. Pupils achieve well above national averages from a range of starting points. They speak freely about perseverance, responsibility and courage giving them the motivation and determination to overcome difficulties. As the class slogan says, 'I can't do it – yet'. Pupils with special educational needs and those in receipt of pupil premium monies make good progress. This is because of the exceptionally high levels of care and attention that are focused on them, with very effective and supportive dialogue with parents and carers taking place. Attendance rates are high, with pupils enjoying all that the school provides for their continued education. Pupils take the value of 'service' very seriously, willingly taking on roles such as pupil 'befrienders', school council representatives and a range of monitor responsibilities. They truly care for the plight of others across the world. On the morning of the inspection they had reflected on the 50th anniversary of the Aberfan disaster and the impact that it had on families involved. Pupils have a growing understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural global faith, developed through the RE unit on Vellore in Southern India and the links with the Kampala Children's Centre in Uganda. They are taught to appreciate the diversity amongst Christian denominations, through inviting representatives from the Quaker, Baptist and Methodist traditions into school to talk about the differences with the Anglican traditions. Religious education (RE) makes a significant contribution to the Christian character of the school. It is high profile, exciting through its cross curricular opportunities, such as opportunities to write some wonderful reflective poetry on what love is. It gives pupils a secure understanding of Christianity from where they can begin to explore, compare and contrast other world religions. It gives them a deep appreciation and respect for the importance of faith and belief in people's lives.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is at the heart of the school's vision to educate the whole child. It is given high profile within the school and used on a daily basis to educate, inform and transform young lives through the teaching of Christian values linked clearly to biblical material and Christ's teachings. Pupils are inspired to go out and live their lives reflecting those messages which they have heard through stories, prayers and opportunities for quiet reflection. Pupils' prayers are thoughtful, reflective and at times spontaneously delivered with confidence and conviction. The school's 'prayer chair' offers excellent opportunities for pupils to think about prayer and its importance as the church year develops and the seasons unfold. Opportunities for further reflection areas are in the early stages of implementation, ensuring that maximum use is made of spaces within and outside of the building for this purpose. Collective worship is thoroughly planned and opportunities built in for regular evaluation by pupils, staff and governors. Pupils are able to confidently talk about the person of God and his son, Jesus Christ. They have a growing understanding of the Trinity and of the Holy Spirit. Leaders are clear about the purpose of worship and its importance in bringing the community together to praise, celebrate, share and pray. This was evident in the 'Celebration Worship' observed, marking the end of the school half term. The atmosphere was tangible in terms of the pride that was felt in pupils' achievements, both personal and academic. It was obvious that every child in this school is precious and deserves to have their hard work and efforts fittingly recognised and rewarded. The atmosphere for worship is carefully created through the use of calming visual images and a candle lit to signify the start of worship. Pupils know Anglican liturgy in the form of welcoming prayers and the call and responses made. Opportunities to worship in the church for key festivals are used very well to enable pupils to plan and lead

aspects of these services. Pupils are involved in writing prayers, reading from scripture and acting out chosen Bible stories using role play. Through these opportunities, pupils are keen to develop their skills and experience in planning and leading worship. Responding to this the school is in the process of developing a pupil collective worship leadership group within school. Clergy members regularly lead worship and a monthly 'Rock Café' at the church offers opportunities for families to worship together. This is growing in numbers. 'Open the Book', a group from the local church tell stories from the Bible using drama. This is very popular and parents speak of their children coming home and recounting excitedly the story that they heard. The Bishop's 'Lent Challenge' is taken very seriously by the school community and resulted in a number of gold certificates of recognition for their efforts. Music is a key part of worship; pupils sing in an uplifting and heartfelt way. Monitoring and evaluation of worship has had demonstrable impact, such as the moving of the timing of the Monday act of worship, in order to start the week together as a school family, focusing on the chosen value of the week. Staff members new to the school describe how their leadership of worship has been transformed by observing the headteacher's energetic and engaging way of bringing pupils into a worshipful atmosphere. She is able to open up the scriptural texts in a meaningful and age-appropriate way so that all can understand their messages.

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

In this school, under the dynamic Christian leadership of the headteacher, with the full support of staff, governors and clergy the vision of 'loving one another as I have loved you' becomes real, tangible and demonstrated in daily actions. From a small word or act of kindness to staff 'going the extra mile' to support vulnerable pupils who need additional support, care and attention. The church community fully understands its responsibilities to the school. The Parochial Church Council (PCC) regularly prays for the school community, members from the church community serve as governors and others help in a myriad of ways within the school. This unselfish, self-giving model of leadership prompted a parent to say, 'The school encourages children to behave towards others in the manner in which God would want them to – to show respect, kindness, love, be giving and charitable, understanding and strong for the weak'. School leaders have worked collaboratively with other stakeholders to produce a vision of a Christian family, caring and loving each other through good times and bad, seeking to uplift and celebrate strengths and talents, whilst working in a determined and focused way to improve on skills that require further attention. The headteacher, clergy and governors are committed to the well-being of both staff and pupils. Partnerships are formed between governors and staff members which build trust and understanding over time. The rector and the curate both offer pastoral support for staff and are regular visitors to school offering advice, prayer and loving pastoral support. Pupils' lives are transformed and energised by this atmosphere of unconditional love for each person. It is demonstrated through the good academic progress rates, but also through the blossoming of thoughtful, reflective and responsible future leaders. These pupils know that they can make a difference to the lives of others, whether this be through charitable actions or unseen deeds of kindness and they are willing and able to work towards this end. Self-evaluation is accurate, drawn from parents, pupils and governors. From this self-evaluation leads effective, well-focused future plans for building on the already outstanding provision currently in place. Both RE and collective worship are well led and consistently reviewed, strengthened through understanding gained through networking opportunities with other church school leaders. The school nurtures and develops its staff extremely well, giving those who are interested in church school leadership opportunities to engage in diocesan activities as well as leadership development programmes. Foundation governors in particular, lead in an exemplary way within the school. They use their skills and talents unselfishly for the good of both staff and pupils. They discuss, plan and evaluate how provision can be further improved and support with regular visits. They ensure that the PCC is kept regularly informed of school news and the headteacher writes regular articles in the local newsletter. The school, through a variety of services open to parents, has 'normalised' church going for a number of parents for whom this would not have happened. Attendance at family services has grown considerably, with the recent 'Harvest Supper' having over one hundred people attending, many from the school.