

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

| <b>Great Gidding VC Primary School</b>               |                   |
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| Main Street, Great Gidding, Cambridgeshire, PE28 5NX |                   |
| <b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>                | <b>Good</b>       |
| <b>Diocese</b>                                       | <b>Ely</b>        |
| Previous SIAMS inspection grade                      | Good              |
| Local authority                                      | Cambridgeshire    |
| Date/s of inspection                                 | 19 September 2017 |
| Date of last inspection                              | 13 September 2012 |
| Type of school and unique reference number           | VC Primary 110813 |
| Headteacher  | Suki Hinton       |
| Inspector's name and number                          | Anna Reeder 659   |

### School context

The small village school is in the centre of the village of Great Gidding, adjacent to the parish church of St Michael's. Since the last SIAMS inspection there have been 4 interim headteachers. This was an unsettled period for the school with a high staff turnover. The current headteacher took up the substantive post from the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2017. She has worked in the school as part of a support team since January 2017. The school is currently organised into 3 mixed-age classes with one full-time newly qualified teacher, and 4 part-time teachers, including the headteacher. The Parish also has a new priest in charge since June 2017 due to a reorganisation across the benefice.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Great Gidding as a Church of England school are good

- Relationships throughout the school and its community are supportive and developmental. The school has a real family feel which has been sustained through its Christian foundations during a period of change. The Christian values of the school serve as a framework of support and guidance for all members of the community
- The school and church are determined to work together to support one another to grow after a period of change.

### Areas to improve

- Re-develop the school's Christian vision and values involving all key stakeholders to refine them into a version that is child-friendly, accessible to all and memorable.
- Establish links with a culturally diverse school or church community outside the UK to develop pupils' understanding of cultural and religious diversity in the international context.
- Develop spaces for reflection within the school grounds to enable increased opportunities for prayer and reflection throughout the school day.

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

Recent attainment data for the school has fluctuated greatly as the cohorts are usually very small. Since the last Ofsted report steps have been put in place for rapid and sustained improvement. This has made an impact with the current achievement results much improved. Although the National Curriculum is adhered to, the school focusses on delivering a rich curriculum that allows every pupil to develop their own unique potential and gifts in all areas, whether academic or not. In this school, each child is regarded as unique and special, made in God's image and precious in his sight and every effort is being made to ensure success is experienced by pupils. Year 6 pupils are given carefully chosen special roles and responsibilities to develop them as individuals and to help personify the school's Christian values. The emphasis on caring for each other was clearly seen at lunchtime and playtimes with the oldest pupils supporting the youngest, and the whole school socialising freely and happily with one another. A reception child told me he felt happy and safe at lunch as he 'could sit with older children and get used to them and make friends.' Christian values such as love, kindness and courage underpin the school's behaviour policy and class rules. Care, respect and quality relationships are paramount and they are lived out in the supportive daily life of the school. Relationships are excellent with everyone very much feeling part of the school's family. 'The teachers take good care of you. They go around everybody and help. They are lovely!' The school has high attendance and the pupils are keen to come to school. They rush in enthusiastically at the start of the day. Parents talk passionately about the school being a warm, welcoming, friendly, happy place where their children are loved, nurtured, cared for and respected. Opportunities to develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils through musical, sporting, social and community events are carefully tracked and evaluated each term, providing them with different experiences to enrich their learning. Parents talk positively about this holistic approach to developing their children. Despite being a small school, there is diversity in ethnicity, faith, family make-up, social background and nationality. The school recognises and celebrates this difference. The school offers a protective environment where both pupils and staff can share their experiences and situations. Religious education (RE) makes a good contribution to pupils' knowledge of both the Christian and other world faiths, enabling them to compare and contrast beliefs and to understand the importance of faith and belief on people's daily lives, deeds and actions. The RE curriculum develops pupils' understanding of core Christian concepts. The school uses the big question approach to teaching RE.

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

At the last inspection there was no formal evaluation of collective worship and its impact. Monitoring and evaluation of worship since this time by senior leaders and foundation governors has resulted in it now having a clear structure, with the inclusion of key Anglican liturgical phrases and responses. A reflective atmosphere and a familiar structure has been established which enables children to think and respond spiritually. A monitoring cycle is in place and visits have taken place by foundation governors and senior leaders. This has led to decisions being made which have improved provision. There is also regular evaluation from the pupils about worship, providing a valuable resource. Foundation governors do not yet utilise these to identify any areas for future development as well as measuring the impact of any changes with the worship leader. Pupils' active participation and involvement has increased. Worship ambassadors lead with opening and closing responses, say prayers and lead actions to song words and read from the Bible. Pupil evaluations show that they enjoy contributing to and leading worship more frequently than before, and that it makes them feel involved. Pupils are not yet fully involved in all aspects of planning stages of worship. Every act of worship includes a time of quiet reflection and prayer. Classes have reflection areas that children contribute their thoughts to. At the end of a theme these are gathered in reflection diaries and 'think about it' books as a record of their ideas which the pupils can return to, as well as providing evidence for the worship leader to use for future planning. Daily worship is well planned and is based on the Christian Values for Life resource. Children and adults refer to what is being taught in worship when discussing situations that occur at other times. The current value is courage and a Year 6 pupil referred to this when he talked about his nervousness about moving to secondary school. He understood that with courage he could start to feel confident about this new challenge. Pupils are beginning to make links between the biblical teaching and their own lives. A child spoke about how being brave like David could make a difference, if he could tell his friends how he was feeling. Pupils appreciate the opportunity to spend time in stillness. 'In a busy school day it gives me time to think about important things.' They make good use of quiet areas in the building but outside reflection spaces are not yet available. The school would like to develop this further by providing suitable spaces in their outdoor environment for reflection. This development has been identified but is not yet implemented. Worship follows the cycle of the Church's year and all major festivals are celebrated in the parish church with good attendance from the parental and church community which demonstrates the positive parish links. On the day of the inspection the school walked to the neighbouring parish church for their whole school morning worship led by the priest in charge. The pupils were attentive and enjoyed responding to God's word after the parable of paralysed man was skilfully retold and explained in an accessible way that made it meaningful to all. Bible stories are frequently used to illustrate worship themes. There is

a strong focus on Jesus Christ as a central figure in Christianity. Pupils have a good knowledge of gospel stories and they understand that Christians learn from Jesus' example and teachings, and some pupils are starting to live their lives according to these. Clergy led worship deepens the school community's understanding of the theological basis of worship. The priest in charge in liaison with the school's worship leader is focusing on developing the pupils' understanding of the Lord's Prayer and their understanding of the Holy Trinity which, from evaluation, the school feels could be clearer. The level of clergy involvement and partnership has been very strong. The new incumbent and headteacher are very keen for this to continue to flourish and have planned to continue to make the church service for the pupils a regular opportunity.

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

Leaders clearly place importance on the school's Christian foundation and despite the many changes, have worked consistently since the previous inspection to embed distinctively Christian values within the school. The values are displayed prominently throughout the environment and are clearly on the school's website. Governors have worked alongside school leaders to ensure Christian values are central within the school's life despite a period of headteacher instability. The leadership team are keen to revisit the school's core values with the arrival of a permanent head teacher and to distil their Christian principles into a format that is accessible to all, so they can be talked about and referred to easily by both the pupils and all the school community. Although the Christian values are there in practice, they are not currently embedded in the day-to-day vocabulary of the school. Foundation governors have made good progress in their monitoring role and work faithfully to develop the practices which enhance the Christian distinctiveness of the school. The outcomes of these monitoring activities have improved and shaped developments, such as increased pupil participation in worship. Clear self- evaluation processes enable the staff leaders to have an accurate understanding of where further improvements are needed. These feed into school action plans. There are good quality plans, both for RE and collective worship, which demonstrate an understanding of their importance in a church school. The school will adopt Understanding Christianity materials this academic year in order to develop all teachers in their role in a church school by enhancing their understanding of Christianity and making them confident RE teachers. However, these are not currently incorporated into the school's main development plan. There is a clear sense of direction for improvement led by the newly appointed headteacher, well supported by the school's worship and RE leader. All the team work to promote the well-being of all learners and to help them to overcome any barriers, leading to improved attainment and progress. A broad enquiry-based curriculum including RE promotes learners' spiritual development and well-being. Leaders ensure that staff are supported to develop their skills, experience and confidence in leading worship and teaching other world religions. Both RE and collective worship make a significant contribution not only to pupils' understanding of the chosen values, but also their knowledge about other world religions. Leaders have identified weaknesses in pupils' understanding of global Christianity and are exploring ways of improving this, including developing links with a church school community outside the UK. The church partnership has been strong and clergy interest, commitment and involvement significantly enhances pupils' understanding of Christianity as a living faith, as well as offering spiritual guidance and pastoral support to all. The priest-in-charge is new to Great Gidding but knows it well as part of the benefice. She now has responsibility for St Michael's church as well as another seven in the parish. She is determined to continue the excellent pastoral support offered to the school, and has already met with the leadership team and is known and accessible to the pupils. On the day of the inspection she was involved in an impromptu prayer for a shrew that had died and was being carefully buried by a group of children at playtime. Links with the diocese are good and staff have benefited from training opportunities. The school meets statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

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