

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Luke's Church of England VA Primary School

French's Road, Cambridge. CB4 3JZ

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Diocese

Ely

Previous SIAS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

Cambridgeshire

Date of inspection

22 March 2017

Date of last inspection

5 March 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Primary 110838

Headteacher

Francesca Catterson

Inspector's name and number

Elizabeth Pitcher 448

School context

Pupils at St Luke's come from diverse social and cultural backgrounds with 40% of pupils speaking English as an additional language. This is a smaller than average primary school with 201 pupils on roll and higher than the national average join or leave the school part way through their education. The school has high level social need, with 39 pupils receiving pupil premium funding and 25 pupils accessing free school meals. In the past two years there have been significant staff changes, which has led to the restructuring of the leadership team. Following a period of instability the current headteacher took up post in January 2016.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Luke's as a Church of England school are good

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school as a church school and is well supported by a strong team of staff and well-informed governors.
- The school's Christian values of love and respect for one another within this multi-cultural setting drives the aspiration for pupils' achievement and their personal development.
- The vision and dedication of school leaders and strong links with the church are valued and respected by parents.

Areas to improve

- To raise the profile of the school's Christian ethos and vision by increasing the range of displays in all areas of the school, highlighting the explicit links between the school's values and the biblical teachings on which they are based.
- To develop pupils' understanding of the purposes of prayer by exploring their ideas and by increasing their own involvement in writing personal and wider community prayers.
- To embed the effectiveness of the new religious education (RE) leader through monitoring and evaluation of impact with a specific focus on differentiation and developmental marking.

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

St Luke's captures a loving, family ethos. The school has revisited and reaffirmed its Christian vision which is shared with the community. This, together with the agreement of the core values by staff, pupils, parents, governors and clergy helps to clarify and articulate the school's distinctive Christian character. This is reflected through a shared understanding by adults in the belief that each child is precious and is to be nurtured as a child of God. This commitment, rooted in respect and love, is shaped by the exploration and practical application of the half termly Christian values. These values are consistently incorporated into the curriculum and explored in worship and celebrated for individuals on a weekly basis when they demonstrate 'values in action' in the life of the school. The core values of kindness and responsibility are demonstrated through pupils' fundraising, such as for the local East Anglia Children's Hospice, Children in Need and Macmillan Cancer Care. The alignment of these values also ensures support for the most challenged and vulnerable pupils and their families, enabling learners of all abilities and backgrounds to reach their potential in terms of their well-being and personal development. The commitment to inclusion results in improved attainment which is above national expectations, with good progress across the school and very good progress of pupils who receive pupil premium funding. RE makes a positive contribution to the Christian character of the school because teaching is good. The structure of the planning and teaching of RE ensures that pupils are becoming increasingly aware of diversity which links to a previous development point. This is because it promotes reflection and expression of views about Christianity and world faiths, so that pupils can grow in their understanding as to how lives and values systems can be influenced by religions, as well as understanding the differences and similarities between religions. This is leading to tolerance and respect for each other. As a result, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects (SMSC) of the whole child are developing well.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship brings together the whole school and promotes a sense of belonging for all - those of the Christian faith, other faiths and of no faith. Pupils say they know that worship is a special time and they enjoy linking biblical themes with the school's Christian values, through a range of worship styles. Parents and pupils look forward to worship at St Luke's church to celebrate Christian festivals led by the local clergy. Worship is systematically planned by the headteacher. This means that pupils develop an understanding of seasons of the church year and the teachings of Jesus, underpinned by the school's core values. The systems for the monitoring and evaluating of collective worship have developed well since the previous inspection, involving foundation governors and pupils, the outcomes of which impact on future planning. Worship is led by enthusiastic school leaders, staff and clergy. Collective worship meets statutory requirements. Pupils say they enjoy taking part in worship and in writing and saying their own prayers and this links well with one of the previous development points. Through exploration of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, pupils can explain the concept of the Trinity at an age appropriate level of understanding. Whole school worship makes a good contribution to pupils' understanding of the Anglican tradition with its main elements, although understanding about other Christian traditions is less well developed. They talk about the lit candle representing Jesus, the light of the world and about the significance of the empty cross; he died on the cross and 'he came back to life.' In the worship observed, pupils were actively engaged in listening, responding and singing. They quietly reflected on what having trust - the value for this half term - meant to them personally and prayers, written by pupils were offered. Although pupils participate enthusiastically, their understanding of the various purposes for prayer is not yet fully developed. However, reflection areas in classrooms are starting to encourage personal prayer linked to Christian values. One pupil comments that the reflection space in his classroom is a place where he can 'calm down' and think about the values from worship which help him to get on better with others.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The requirements of the Cambridge Agreed Syllabus are followed and these are personalised for St Luke's, as a VA school, so that the teaching of Christianity has central focus and others faiths are explored. This takes account of pupils who come from a range of different cultural and religious backgrounds. A scrutiny of RE work in pupils' books, classroom observations and pupils' responses show that standards in RE are mostly in line with national expectations for the majority of pupils, as reflected in current assessment levels. This is because most of the teaching of RE is consistently good and actively involves pupils in opportunities to respond to challenging and probing questions through discussion, reflection and exploration on ideas of belief. They also respond well to personalised questions and reflection upon their own life experiences. However, teachers sometimes do not provide sufficiently differentiated work for those pupils who would benefit from smaller steps to success and as a result, some pupils do not fully meet the objectives of some lessons. Visits to local places of worship help to promote stronger understanding of other faiths, as well as their own. For example, exploration of similarities and differences between Christianity and other faiths is clearly explained in lessons and through discussion.

Developmental marking, where teachers guide pupils towards next steps has started to show some impact in developing subject knowledge.

Although the RE leader is relatively new in post, she is already developing a clear view of attainment and achievement through her early monitoring and evaluating, which is supported by the RE foundation governor. This information feeds into ongoing planning and influences in-school training. Leadership training from the diocese has been accessed and training for the new national materials, Understanding Christianity, is developing well. This means that the RE leader is becoming well equipped to support other teachers while trialling the materials in the school. RE meets statutory requirements.

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

Strategic planning is at the centre of the work of St Luke's and its Christian distinctiveness is identified as a priority within school improvement plans, through which leaders ensure that life at St Luke's is guided by its Christian ethos. The headteacher's strong leadership and vision for taking the school forward encourages governors and staff to work well together as a cohesive team, in the belief that every child deserves the best life chances. This means that Christian values are characterised by leaders' compassionate attitude towards attendance and exclusions. They believe passionately that they 'do not give up on anyone' in the commitment that every child deserves to come to school to learn. This has led to improved attendance and fewer exclusions. School leaders and governors analyse the impact of strategic actions. For example, RE and collective worship policies have been reviewed and foundation governors monitor through learning walks, observations and data analysis which impact on future plans. Monitoring of worship identified a need for deeper understanding of the purpose and place of prayer in the life of the community. Worry-style boxes for pupils to write down what or who they want to pray for have been introduced and pupils say that talking with teachers is helping them to 'work things out' so they can pray with a purpose. The school has developed positive partnerships with the St Luke's church council and The Church Schools of Cambridge Trust (CSoC) who provide additional funding, resources and training to ensure a high quality environment in which pupils can thrive. Regular strategic discussions between the headteacher and the director of the trust are used to explore the best strategies for ensuring the school's Christian distinctiveness is sustained. This impacts positively on the support provided for pupils and their families. For example, the lay chaplain was recently appointed, whose training was facilitated through CSoC. This appointment makes a valuable contribution towards the support and nurture of the most vulnerable pupils. The strong relationship with the local clergy is an integral part of the life of the school which benefits from the good support of the diocese. Parents say they appreciate the inclusive ethos of this caring community with its 'open door' where their children feel safe and secure. One parent comments, 'although I am not of the Christian faith, I feel that I belong and feel a part of the St Luke's family'. Parents comment that they recognise 'the palpable heartbeat' of Christian values which is integral to everything the schools does.

SIAMS report March 2017 St Luke's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Cambridge. CB4 3JZ