

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Nicholas-at-Wade Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Down Barton Rd, St Nicholas At Wade, Birchington CT7 0PY

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Canterbury
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Kent
Date of inspection	5 March 2018
Date of last inspection	5 February 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	118689
Headteacher	Heather Kemp
Inspector's name and number	Jane Garrett 618

School context

St Nicholas at Wade is a single form primary school with 210 pupils on roll. The school lies on the edge of Thanet and it admits pupils from Birchington and the surrounding villages. The majority of children join the school in Reception. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is below the national average as is the percentage of children receipt of pupil premium funding. Pupils are mainly of white British heritage. The majority of staff and governors have joined the school since September 2016.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Nicholas at Wade as a Church of England school are good

- The school is successful at creating a caring, Christian environment, with mutually supportive relationships between staff, parents, pupils and governors. This successfully underpins the academic achievements of all pupils. There is a strong culture of inclusion which sustains the view that all are special in God's eyes.
- The developing work with the school and church has helped to strengthen links between them and the community. The church makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual life of the school.
- The school's Christian character has been given greater prominence through the distinctive Christian vision and values. This is starting to transform the ethos of the school. Pupils have a good understanding of how the values impact on their personal development and learning.

Areas to improve

- Fully embed the Biblical stories that underpin the school's values so that they are known and understood by pupils.
- Ensure that explicit ongoing evaluation and development of the school's Christian distinctiveness becomes a specific focus in the termly reporting to the governing body, incorporating a rigorous monitoring process to inform development planning.
- Make Christian values explicit in written documentation, in order to communicate the Christian ethos of the school clearly to parents and to the wider community.

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

The school is a happy, friendly and welcoming community that works hard to demonstrate the school's values of honesty, courage, resilience, kindness and being the best you can be. Pupils know these well but they are not clear about Bible stories that exemplify them. The school behaviour policy is tied into the values and so helps to embed the values into the life of the school. A 'Barnabas day' based on the values has helped to keep the profile of them high. This addresses a focus for development from the previous denominational inspection, which was to explicitly teach the Christian values. The school's vision statement, 'a place to belong, a place to grow' was chosen because it is similar to that of the church's and therefore links them. Pupils feel cared for and they try to show kindness and respect towards one another. This is modelled by adults and adopted by the pupils. The senior leaders work very much as a team to provide emotional support for children and families. 'Christian values are evident in the way staff respect the children', explained one parent. Parents feel well informed and say that the school responds well to any concerns raised. They manage difficult situations sensibly and compassionately. To help parents of new entrants when they start school, a 'pop up' café is held in church to support parents.

Pupil progress is above national expectations as is attainment. The school is very popular and oversubscribed. Parents explained that they chose the school because it is local and has a good academic reputation, but they were also very aware that it is a church school. Therefore, parents are very supportive of the Christian status of the school and encourage discussion about spiritual and moral issues. Effort is made to support pupils of all abilities and needs. For example, a nurture room is used to address the specific needs of some children and counselling is available. Attendance is currently 96.3% and this is above the national average. This is because school and parents work together. Parents recognise the importance of education and are supportive. In a Year 6 religious education (RE) lesson on Easter, children were encouraged to discuss evidence that might substantiate the resurrection of Jesus. One pupil explained that when the disciples saw the marks on Jesus' hands and feet they knew He must be alive. This provoked discussion, thought and challenge. However not all teaching of RE has been as effective. There are a few pupils of other faiths, for example Jewish and Muslim children. They are encouraged to talk about their faith. Value is given to their contributions in RE lessons and raises the self-esteem of those children. It also helps others to understand more about difference and diversity. There are some creative opportunities for personal prayer and reflection through the use of reflective areas in every classroom and a spiritual garden outside, so helping to build the spiritual development of pupils. They contribute to a variety of charities including harvest contributions for the local food bank. This helps to raise awareness of people who are needier and yet live nearby and contributes to their moral and social development. Other charitable links include Sport Relief, NSPCC, Red Nose day and a sponsored bounce for improvements to the local park.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Daily collective worship is valued and seen by pupils and adults as an important part of the school's life. It is well planned and organised on a weekly basis. Year 6 pupils regularly lead class worship across the school. This includes Biblical material and sometimes drama which pupils enjoy and are able to relate to their own lives. This addresses a focus for development from the previous denominational inspection. Whole school worship is led by senior leaders and the parish priest. Whenever appropriate, the school values are addressed, strengthening the knowledge and application of the values to the school community. Displays of the values help pupils to reflect on them. Through worship, pupils are gaining an understanding of biblical material and Christian teaching. This includes a developing age-related understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Worship includes some elements of Anglican liturgy and singing. For example, at the start of worship children say the peace and shake hands with each other. Worship is enhanced by celebrating the main seasons and festivals of the church's year. There are limited opportunities to experience different worship styles from other Christian traditions. Prayer is a regular feature of school life, they are said at various points during the day and both staff and pupils place prayers on the prayer tree. Some of these prayers are read by pupils during collective worship, so emphasising the importance of their prayers to God. The new incumbent takes worship regularly and has helped to make Christianity more accessible to pupils. Worship is monitored by governors and the school council also discuss worship and any changes they would like to see. Class worship follows on from collective worship so that school values and themes are linked between the two.

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

Since the previous denominational inspection, the school's Christian character has been made more explicit through the distinctive Christian values and vision that are now prominent within the life of the school. The Christian ethos of the school has supported both staff and pupils through recent difficult times. The ethos of the school underpins academic achievement which is well above the national average. Vulnerable pupils, though a very small percentage in the school, are very well supported in order for them to be equally successful. This is underpinning the nurturing of

the Christian faith in its pupils and providing good support for pupils' wellbeing. It is also evident in the day to day organisation of the school and in the good relationships among adults and pupils. The school's policies do not fully reflect the Christian values. Some foundation governors are regular visitors who help with daily school activities. This gives them a clearer understanding of the school and enables them to better fulfil their strategic role. There is evidence of formal monitoring by governors and regular conversations inform the development of the school. However there is no systematic plan to address issues that may arise from the monitoring. Regular discussions on the results of monitoring both worship and RE and the development of the school's Christian distinctiveness are not recorded in governor minutes. This was a focus for development for the previous denominational inspection.

The new incumbent and headteacher are developing a strong partnership between school and church. This relationship is mutually beneficial and has raised awareness of the Christian ethos of the school in the community. For example, the school choir is often invited to participate in church and at baptisms, so helping to build on links between school and church. The school is part of a group of local church schools known as M7V. They meet to share training opportunities. In partnership, they enhance staff professional expertise, enrich curriculum provision. This has meant that priorities for schools have been shared and supported, such as increasing participation and the leadership of pupils in collective worship. These opportunities have strengthened the school both academically and as a church school. The RE leader attends diocesan training and is supporting staff with the introduction of the new 'Understanding Christianity' programme. Pupils have attended workshops and festivals at Canterbury Cathedral and this helps them to see that they are part of the wider church. Relationships with parents and carers are strong. Parents feel that the school promotes Christian values because pupils discuss the values and how they can apply them and it is evidenced through pupils' relationships with one another. Statutory requirements for religious education and collective worship are met.

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