

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Sedlescombe Church of England Primary School	
Brede Lane, Sedlescombe, East Sussex. TN33 0RQ	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Chichester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	East Sussex
Date of inspection	24 November 2017
Date of last inspection	23 March 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 114522
Headteacher	Caroline Harvey
Inspector's name and number	Connie Hughes 765

School context

Sedlescombe CE Primary is a one form entry village school with 218 pupils on roll. One third of pupils come from the village and two thirds from the urban areas of Hastings, St Leonards and Battle. The majority of pupils are of a White British heritage from a range of social and economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. The headteacher was appointed to the school in September 2016. The senior leadership team was re-structured in September 2017 and consists of key stage leaders and the inclusion manager. There is a well-established partnership with the vicar and parish of St John the Baptist Church.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sedlescombe Primary as a Church of England school are outstanding.

- The passionate commitment of the headteacher, staff and governors ensures explicit Christian beliefs and values strongly underpin pupils' inclusive daily learning and pastoral experiences, nurturing the well-being of the whole child.
- Collective worship is an affirmation and celebration of Anglican tradition, biblical teaching and Christian values and fully supports the spiritual development of the school community.
- Inspiring and effective religious education and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development provide excellent knowledge, skills and learning experiences for all pupils.
- The school leadership team and governing body play a dynamic role in the continuing development and celebration of the school's strong Christian ethos within the wider community.

Areas to improve

- Through the governors' ethos working group increase the explicit monitoring and evaluation of the school's Christian ethos to secure evidence of the impact of the school's Christian distinctiveness on the development of the whole child.
- Develop a broader range of leaders from other Christian denominations to enable pupils to experience and develop an understanding of different worship practices.

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

The school's explicit Christian vision and values are celebrated through stimulating and eye-catching displays from the moment you enter the school and throughout the physical environment. Interactive and inspiring examples of motivating curriculum topic themes, incorporating spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development reflect the application of Christian values through a breadth of pupils' learning experiences. Standards of attainment across the school are broadly in line or above national expectations, with all pupils, including the most vulnerable, being successful in their learning. Inclusive provision, through the skills of all staff, a trained counsellor, behaviour support practitioners and nurture provision enable pupils with significant needs to achieve well. Personal care and well-being for all pupils is strong. The school's chosen Christian values, including kindness, tolerance, respect, generosity, and forgiveness, are explicitly centred upon biblical teaching. Pupils follow a three-week theme which focusses on a value explored through whole school and class worship and these significantly influence pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning; 'we learn to follow our school rules which are God's rules'. Engaging and creative curriculum and extra-curricular activities reflect how pupils naturally apply Christian values in their daily lives, demonstrating exceptional personal responsibility, independence and an outstanding willingness to support others. For example, the successful Forest School curriculum fully engages pupils from key stage 1 and 2 in a range of social, spiritual, scientific and technical skills, purposefully building their independence and self-esteem as they explore, enjoy and appreciate the beauty of the natural environment and learn how to 'protect God's world'. The implementation of the religious education (RE) 'Understanding Christianity' curriculum is making a significant contribution to engaging and developing pupils' deeper understanding of the key concepts on the Christian faith and the school's church foundation. Interactive and enquiry based learning experiences embedded in the RE curriculum, enable pupils to explore and make sense of biblical texts, purposefully develop pupils' knowledge of the connections between key Christian beliefs and traditions. All pupils actively engage in structured learning about different world religions enabling them to explore, understand and respect Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith in a diverse society. Assessment strategies, identified for improvement in the previous inspection, are impacting positively on pupil progress. Pupils consistently show great concern and care for the world community through regular fundraising, including for Jeans for Genes, St Michael's Hospice, Children in Need and Remembrance Day.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

Explicit Christian leadership of daily collective worship from the headteacher, staff, vicar and pupils are a significant influence on the core values that underpin the daily life of the school. It is transformational, enabling pupils to grow and develop in the Christian faith; 'it is very much a Christian school... we respect and follow our values... to love, be honest and truthful'. A new collective worship policy, introduced in the last year, incorporates the more active part pupils are now making in planning and leading worship themes, which is enabling them to develop a deeper understanding of what is being taught. The headteacher provides well-structured, inspiring and creatively resourced worship themes. These strongly influence and contribute to pupils' deep knowledge and understanding of gospel/Christian values, Anglican tradition, liturgical responses, major festivals in the Church calendar and the life and teachings of Jesus. Pupils' SMSC development is inspired, nurtured and developed through daily worship and RE, characterised by distinctly Christian values and biblical teaching. A beautifully crafted altar and a candlestick representing the Trinity, gifted to the school by the former headteacher, is a symbolic focal point for worship. Observing whole school worship, pupils were fully engaged in relating the qualities of Jesus' disciples to the school's core Christian values, personal attributes and those of their friends, identifying the importance of trust, loyalty, respect and working together. Interactive classroom reflection areas focus on whole school/class worship themes and related "big questions"; these challenge, engage and enrich pupils' spiritual development. For example, exploring biblical teaching of the values of respect, tolerance and equality enables all pupils to engage in more in-depth discussion on personal and moral responsibility. Learning outcomes recorded in class reflection books show pupils willingness to recognise and celebrate 'we are all different, all equal... we are all God's family,' (Psalm 139, John 13 v34, 1 Peter 2 v17). Class led whole school worship makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' understanding and application of reflection, prayer and worship. Pupils are enthusiastic in their responses to collective worship, 'we enjoy coming together as a whole school... we pray to God... act out Bible stories...we discuss and share our understanding... we sing joyful songs... our headteacher makes it enjoyable and fun.' However, pupils have limited experience of worship led by a range of leaders from different Christian traditions. Pupils, staff and the community participate and celebrate the Eucharist three times a year, spiritually guided by the vicar, who is a regular and popular leader of school worship. Reflecting on their recent Eucharist worship experience a pupil wrote a personal prayer, 'Thank you, God for the Holy Trinity, please guide us through our life and show us the right way'. Prayer is central to the pupils' worship and daily experiences, contributing significantly to their understanding and spiritual development. The easily accessible prayer tree and prayer ball are used regularly in worship, enabling pupils to plan and lead the school in prayer. The foundation governor's ethos working group, monitors worship experiences to evaluate how 'children are able to listen, contribute and interact with whoever is leading acts of worship'.

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

The headteacher fully embraces, nurtures and communicates the school's Christian ethos with a positive and optimistic outlook. School leaders, governors and staff have a clear vision of how distinctive Christian values are central to every aspect of school life. Together, they are committed to 'developing a moral compass, based on Christian and moral values, for pupils to follow throughout their lives'. The school is outstanding in bringing these aims to life through an established Christian vision and values which significantly impact on pupils' academic, emotional and social development. These values guide school policy and daily practice. For example, the behaviour policy is built upon the premise of forgiveness, recognising what is good about each and every one. 'Christian values are the heartbeat of our school... they are modelled, discussed and encouraged throughout the school... children who struggle to follow such values are guided and supported by adults and their peers,' explained staff. Securing evidence of the impact of the school's Christian ethos on the academic achievement, personal development and well-being of all pupils is a strategic element of the school improvement plan. The governors have a strong presence in the school, leading with integrity, expertise and a breadth of skills. They confidently demonstrate how the school's Christian values inform discussion and decision making, as they maintain a strong focus on driving school improvement to meet the needs of all pupils. In the last year the establishment of a governing body 'ethos working group' supports and challenges the leadership team in embedding of the school's church foundation in all aspects of school life. Current procedures to gather and record evidence to monitor and evaluate the school's Christian distinctiveness lack the rigour to provide tangible evidence of impact. The school teaching team, with well-represented governor/stakeholder attendance at the recent staff training day, are currently engaged in a review of the school's Christian vision and values, to further enhance the school's Christian distinctiveness. The recently established pupil leadership team are working with their peers to ensure their reflections and responses inform the leadership team decision making. The governing body actively promote the school's distinctive Christian foundation and is a significant factor in the process of appointing staff, as evidenced in a strong Christian fellowship within the school team. Established professional links with the local authority and diocese of Chichester enhances church school leadership skills, RE and core curriculum development and staff expertise to enrich provision for all pupils. Applying distinctive church school experiences and a breadth of creative skills pupils enthusiastically participate in the diocesan annual art competition and the memorable Year 6 Leaver's Service. Relationships across the school community are collaborative and supportive, enabling all pupils and staff to feel happy, safe and valued. A strong and supportive partnership with the vicar and parish St John the Baptist enhances the school's Christian faith foundation and the spiritual life of the school community. The profile of the school's faith foundation is explicit in all communications with parents and the wider community. Weekly newsletters, for example, have a strong focus on collective worship themes based on their chosen Christian values. Weekly 'good work worship' celebrations, well attended by pupils' families, reflect the school's Christian faith foundation. The inspiring sensory garden, developed in partnership with the school community, with an explicit prayer and reflection area, is an outstanding contribution to pupils' spiritual and social development. Parents and carers unanimously shared, 'we have happy children who attend a church school... we are encouraged to know, understand and share the school's Christian values and beliefs... they expect us to be more tolerant ... and to persevere when life gets more difficult!' Statutory requirements for religious education and collective worship are met.

SIAMS report November 2017 Sedlescombe Church of England Primary School Sedlescombe East Sussex TN33 0RQ