

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Kersey Church of England VC Primary School	
Cherry Hill, Kersey, Ipswich. IP7 6EG	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	St Edmundsbury and Ipswich
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Suffolk
Name of School	Kersey Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Date of inspection	10 th February 2017
Date of last inspection	29 th March 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled Primary 124705
Head teacher	Elizabeth Donaldson
Inspector's name and number	Jenny Daniels 664

School context

Kersey is a smaller than average primary school in a rural village with 71 pupils on roll. A 'village' school serving the local community with 60% of pupils coming from further afield. A new head was appointed in September 2016 after the previous head served just 5 terms and an interim head prior to that. The school currently has 11 children on the special education needs or disabilities (SEND) register with no statements; lower than average levels of pupils eligible for pupil premium and very low numbers of children from minority ethnic groups. Currently, 97% of pupils are White British. The school has strong community links with the local church and parish and also with the diocese. In 2016 children achieved well above national averages at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Kersey as a Church of England school are good.

- The positive Christian ethos permeates all areas of the school promoting good behaviour.
- Relationships are strong across all areas of the school and community, based on mutual respect and care.
- The supportive and nurturing environment, along with the teaching of religious education, develops the pupils' spiritual confidence and maturity and plays a major role in determining the Christian character of the school.

Areas to improve

- Establish a robust and rigorous monitoring and evaluation schedule of collective worship (CW) to evaluate the extent to which it makes an important contribution to the overall spiritual development on all members of the school community and bring about any necessary changes.
- Develop the role of the worship council to include the planning and delivery of collective worship to broaden their experience and deepen their spiritual development.
- Develop the capacity of all staff in the teaching of religious education (RE) and in the leading of CW to strengthen the leadership of the school as a Church of England school.

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

The school leadership has a clear vision for school improvement which is underpinned by the love, justice, truth and forgiveness of Jesus. These values are integral to the work of the school, including its curriculum. The values, which are rooted in Christian principles, are understood by the pupils who are able to explain each value and its use in everyday life. House points are awarded where pupils are seen actively outworking these values. These values permeate and drive all aspects of the school, policies and procedures from the curriculum to the daily collective worship. Pupils demonstrating these values are celebrated in the Friday celebration assembly. Behaviour of pupils is good and relationships between all members of the school community are strong and can be attributed to the Christian character and values of the school. This is evidenced by pupils saying how they learn “about the values for life” from their teachers and from stories in the Bible. The current theme of ‘generosity’ was explained by one pupil as Jesus being “generous when he healed the ten lepers”, and that “he, (Jesus) teaches us to be generous and give to other people too”. The spiritual, physical well-being, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. The able, gifted and talented group of pupils recently had the opportunity to engage in a prayer day with neighbouring schools. However, not all pupils have benefited from such opportunities to engage in similar experiences that develop a personal spirituality. The Christian character, ethos and values help pupils to feel nurtured and genuinely cared for. Small class sizes and good teaching ensures that all groups of pupils make above national average progress. Attendance is good. Pupils say they “feel safe” at school and talk proudly of their school and the good relationships they have with each other as demonstrated when talking to the learning council. Some pupils spoke of how the undercover friendship benches provide areas “where you can go if you’re feeling sad”. Work done in religious education is displayed both within and outside the classrooms. These interactive, thought provoking RE displays encourage the pupils to reflect and respond to key questions. Pupils can explain and discuss the displays, showing how RE challenges their thinking and contributes to their pupils’ understanding of other faiths and cultures.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Daily worship is planned across the year using a cycle of themes including special days and events. Collective worship is planned systematically so that there is continuity, variety and a clear focus on Christian beliefs and festivals. CW is distinctively Christian based on biblical teachings, setting out the values of the school in their Christian context. The half termly value celebrated in CW is posted on the school’s website along with the current supporting activity sheet. The school takes advantage of the close proximity of the church and CW is held 3 days a week in the church. Pupils respond to CW by listening, willingly responding and participating enthusiastically in song, prayer and reflection. The worship council meet termly with the worship lead and foundation governor to discuss the planning of key festivals. These pupils are responsible for the daily setting up for CW and lead in the lighting of the candle and the reading out of prayers. The worship council are very proud of the role they play but talk of how they would welcome the opportunity to plan and deliver CW on a more regular basis in addition to the key festivals. Prayer plays an important part in the life of the school with pupils frequently writing their own prayers and graces, contributing positively to the prayer life of the school. Prayers are said at each end of the day as well as before lunch. A prayer tree is positioned within the church and is used by the pupils to “pray to God and Jesus”. The majority of pupils can say the Lord’s Prayer by heart and speak of how prayer is “talking to God” although pupils had a limited understanding of the meaning of the Lord’s Prayer. Pupils have some understanding of Christian festivals and could accurately recall the symbolism of the recent Christingle service as one pupil talked of the “red band as the blood of Jesus”. The school holds a ‘thanks giving’ service in the autumn and a Candlemas combined with a Christingle service in the spring term. They hold a Eucharist based service in the summer term, once a year but those interviewed seemed to have no understanding of the meaning of this service. However, this service is well attended by parents, governors and the local community and is a clear statement of the school’s place in the local Christian worshipping community. The leadership and management of the school have undertaken some monitoring of the impact of worship on the learners themselves but this is not yet sufficiently robust and rigorous to include all stakeholders and bring about any necessary requirements. This was an action from the previous SIAS inspection (29th March 2012), and remains as an area for urgent attention.

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

The effectiveness of the leadership and management, including governors, is good because of their mutual understanding of how the church distinctiveness has a significant impact on the pupils' academic achievement and personal development. Through carefully planned, targeted support every pupil achieves their maximum potential within the nurturing caring ethos. All decisions are led and driven by the strong Christian ethos and robust recruitment and induction processes ensure that all staff are fully committed to uphold the church school distinctiveness. A husband and wife share the responsibility of rector. They conduct services in the church on a rota basis four times per term. They provide spiritual support through their leading of CW and through their input into the planning, alongside the worship council, of the key Christian festivals. The website has a hyper-link to the parish church and regularly informs parents of forthcoming events at the church via the weekly newsletter. Parents and governors speak of the close partnership with the parish church and how this close connection enriches the lives of all stakeholders by promoting community cohesion. Parents on the playground talk of the school being "approachable" and a place where, "Staff take time to nurture the children". Parents articulate how pleased they are with the school and support the school in many practical and fund raising ventures. Parents welcome the 'open door' policy that exists, are comfortable approaching the school and feel valued. The Church school distinctiveness and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of all pupils is closely monitored and evaluated as they form key objectives in the school development plan. There are clear recruitment and induction procedures in place as evidenced in the SMSC and worship policy which ensure new employees are sympathetic with the school's values. The school has good links with the diocese. The head teacher attends local clergy meetings, and the diocesan conference. One of the foundation governors is a member of staff as well as a member of the parochial council ensuring that the school is kept in touch with developments and strengthens the link with the church and school. She takes the RE lead in school; has excellent subject knowledge and understanding and advises staff on planning and teaching in Key Stage 1. She ensures that RE has a high profile within the overall curriculum, teaches the 2 classes in Key Stage 2 and regularly attends diocesan training for RE. Standards in RE are closely monitored and evidence in books reflects those of the core subjects although not all staff teach RE. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship. Since its last inspection the school has increased its Christian signage outside the school.

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