

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

### The Priory Church of England Primary School

Wick Lane, Christchurch, Dorset, BH23 1HX

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Winchester</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Dorset
Date of inspection	19 June 2018
Date of last inspection	18 June 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	VA 113847
Headteacher	Paul Ruffle
Inspector's name and number	Laura Bosworth 928

#### School context

The Priory is a small primary school with 218 pupils aged 4 – 11 years on roll. Nearly all pupils live locally and most are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average as is the proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. The current headteacher took up his post in January 2018 following a significant period of instability in the school's leadership since the last inspection. The school is part of the Christchurch Learning Partnership.

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

- The new leadership team are ensuring that the distinctive Christian ethos is at the heart of all school improvement and development.
- Through the core Christian values of love, forgiveness, respect and aspiration, leaders are securing positive relationships and good learning behaviours.
- Teaching of religious education (RE) is engaging and inspiring because individual lessons are well planned and teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Pupils and staff value the time given for prayer and worship and this has a positive impact on pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

#### Areas to improve

- Continue to develop the RE curriculum so that the medium and long term plans are defined and agreed by all, ensuring that the teaching of Christianity as a global faith, learning about other faiths and opportunities for spiritual development are strategically planned across the age range in an organised and defined structure.
- Improve the quality of written work in RE so that it reflects the high quality thinking and discussion that takes place in lessons.
- Further improve the impact of worship by allowing greater opportunities for pupils to plan and lead prayer and worship times and by increasing the opportunities for parents and families to become actively engaged in the worshipping life of the school.

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

The impact of Christian character is good because the governors and school leaders have a firm commitment to the Christian distinctiveness and values that underpin the life of the school. This is evident in the way that the Christian ethos has been maintained during a period of significant turbulence. The recently appointed headteacher has already begun to build on these firm foundations as he drives forward the necessary school improvement to establish this school as an outstanding church school. The headteacher's commitment and passion for the school are very evident, and he is ably supported by the subject leader.

The Priory is a nurturing school where all feel valued and supported. Relationships are strong and reflect the school's core values of love, forgiveness, respect and aspiration. Staff are working hard as a team to raise academic standards in an environment which truly cares for the whole child. Outcomes for pupils are improving as a result of this work and pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning. The school is also working hard to secure better levels of attendance and some positive impact is evident in the slowly decreasing number of pupils meeting 'persistent absence' thresholds.

The new headteacher is driving the development of a wide and engaging curriculum which ensures pupils are enabled to develop academically, emotionally and spiritually. Lessons facilitate and encourage pupils to engage in respectful conversation and debate, as a result pupils use and apply their knowledge and skills effectively as they explore different concepts in a range of subjects.

The RE curriculum and collective worship programme support the distinctive Christian character of the school and pupils can describe how Christian teaching helps to guide the way they behave towards others. Pupils regularly and naturally reference their school values and Bible stories as things which provide them with moral guidance. The work of the school is further strengthened by the support of the local clergy and families value the opportunities they have to celebrate with their children in Christchurch Priory.

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

Collective worship is good because pupils and adults in the school value it and view it as an important and key part of their day. Time for prayer and worship is seen as special and is treated with reverence and respect. Pupils understand that the learning and reflection that comes from their worship time impacts on how they lead their lives both in and outside of the school. Pupils spoke readily of the impact a recent worship had had on their thoughts about abilities and disabilities and how it had made them reflect on the ways in which we are all unique and special.

Governors and the school leaders monitor the effectiveness and quality of worship. They have recently involved pupils in the evaluation process through pupil questionnaires. Pupils clearly express how they enjoy being active participants in worship and they readily joined in with Year 2 who led a chant about lies during the worship observed. The older pupils have key roles in setting up for worship and they read prayers and reflections during the acts of worship on a regular basis. Pupils also explain how they enjoy the opportunities they are given to act out Bible stories in the 'Open the Book' celebrations. Pupils have many opportunities to pray during the school day and often write their own prayers in response to themes and events reflected on in class. For example, some moving and thoughtful prayers were seen that had been written by Key Stage 2 pupils in response to the anniversary of the Grenfell fire. The school has recognised that pupils could build on this and be much more actively involved in planning and leading prayer and worship times.

Pupils gain knowledge of Anglican traditions through the regular use of Christian prayers and hymns. The cross in the hall is dressed in the colour appropriate for the time in the liturgical year and the lighting of three candles occurs at the beginning of worship to represent the Trinity. Pupils from both Key Stage 1 and 2 were able to clearly express their understanding of the Trinity and supported their explanations with references to the Bible.

The local clergy regularly lead worship in school and main Christian festivals are celebrated throughout the year in the church. Parents and families have not yet been involved in regular opportunities for worship within school but they are kept fully informed about the Christian value in focus through the school newsletters and the website. In this way they are able to engage in discussions about worship with their children at home and they really appreciate this effective communication from school.

Parents are aware of their right to withdraw their children from worship and one parent clearly described the positive support that has been provided by the school to ensure that her wishes have been followed in relation to her family's faith background.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

The quality of religious education (RE) is good because teachers plan a wide range of engaging activities which motivate the children. Approaches which inspire deeper thinking include discussion and debate, research, art and technology. This approach ensures that pupils make good progress over time. The concept of creation was the focus in two lessons observed. In a Year 1 class pupils were encouraged to consider what a creator needed in terms of personal attributes and skills and then they effectively unpacked the Christian story of creation through a range of cross curricular activities designed around each of the seven days. In a Year 5 class pupils were exploring and analysing different views on creation and enthusiastically expressed and explained their own ideas.

Pupils speak very enthusiastically about RE and they view it as an exciting and inspiring subject as the result of the good teaching across the school. They demonstrate good thinking skills and readily discuss and debate difficult questions and challenging concepts such as comparing the biblical story of Creation with the scientific 'Big Bang' theory. Good progression was seen in lessons and the structured way in which students were supported in developing their enquiry skills from Key Stage 1 to Key stage 2 was very good. The range of cross-curricular work in RE was good, however, the quality of writing was not quite as high as standards achieved in literacy lessons and did not reflect the higher standards of thinking and reasoning displayed verbally in the lessons observed.

During the inspection a range of evidence relating to the teaching of other faiths was seen, this included displays and work in books. Pupils spoke knowledgeably about aspects of other religions they had been studying including Key Stage 1 pupils who explained Shabbat, the Jewish day of rest, and Key Stage 2 pupils who spoke enthusiastically about a lesson on enlightenment and Buddhism. However, the school recognise that there is not yet an agreed plan for what will be taught when as they are currently evaluating how they will combine and develop the different syllabi that they have been working from. 'Understanding Christianity' is being used effectively as a core scheme of work to cover learning about Christianity, and both 'Living Difference III' and 'Discovery RE' are being evaluated as resources for the teaching of other faiths. Agreeing an approach will ensure that all year groups receive an appropriately balanced curriculum which covers Christianity as a global religion, develops an appropriate understanding of other faiths and allows them planned opportunities for spiritual development.

Leaders ensure that RE has a high profile and they have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development in RE as a result of recent monitoring and evaluation work. Regular work scrutiny and valuable feedback from the subject leader is beginning to have a positive impact on pupil outcomes. Recent work on assessment in RE has helped to inform the subject leader but this is in the early stages of development.

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

The recently appointed headteacher is providing inspirational leadership in the school. He is ably supported by all staff who have confidence in him and are working hard as a team to achieve ongoing improvements. The subject leader is knowledgeable and enthusiastic and models very effective teaching in RE. Together with the headteacher, she demonstrates a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and the key areas for improvement. The school is strengthening its capacity for improvement through partnerships with other schools.

Governors and clergy work closely with the leadership team to ensure that the distinctive Christian vision for the school is understood by all. Even prior to pupils starting school, there is clear communication about the Christian ethos. At a recent meeting new families were invited to join in with a moment of reflection and all new pupils were given a small candle on a flower shaped base as an initial gift from the school. Links have already been strengthened through the parish Children's Worker who leads the Trinity Club in school.

Leaders recognise the importance of spiritual, social, moral and cultural development and ensure that there are opportunities for children to develop their understanding of themselves and the world around and beyond them. Every class has a special reflection log where pupils can record their thoughts and ideas about special moments in their lives both within and beyond the school.

The statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are met. Leaders ensure that they take account of parent and pupil feedback through questionnaires and open communication. Governors are very supportive of the work of the school but also provide appropriate challenge and they understand the role they play in driving necessary improvements. Staff and leaders feel that they receive good quality training and development which is enabling them to carry out their roles effectively. They also feel supported in their own personal development.