

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

### Ashley Church of England (VA) Primary School

Ashley Road, Walton-on-Thames. Surrey. KT12 1HX

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|--|-----------------------------|
| <b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>                            | <b>Outstanding</b>          |
| <b>Diocese</b>   | <b>Guildford</b>            |
| Previous SIAMS inspection grade                                  | Outstanding                 |
| Date of academy conversion                                       | 1 September 2014            |
| Name of multi-academy trust / federation [delete as appropriate] | Good Shepherd Trust         |
| Date of inspection   | 17 October 2017             |
| Date of last inspection  | 19 December 2012            |
| Type of school and unique reference number                       | Primary 141294              |
| Headteacher  | Richard Dunne               |
| Inspector's name and number                                      | Dr Trevor Walker (NSIN 908) |

#### School context

Ashley CE School is a large primary with 510 pupils on roll. The majority of children are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils receiving SEN support, and those with English as second language is below the national average. Relatively few pupils come from disadvantaged backgrounds. The school has grown since the last inspection and is now three-form entry in Year R, 1 and 2. As a popular and over-subscribed school there has been rapid growth in numbers. A major building programme has been undertaken to accommodate a three-form entry school. The school is an academy within the Good Shepherd Trust.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ashley as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Behaviour is excellent and pupils show the utmost consideration, respect and courteousness.
- The breadth of the curriculum offers a wide range of opportunities for pupils to understand the richness and bio-diversity of the planet and actively care for God's creation.
- The nature of collective worship allows the pupils to grow in appreciation and understanding of the Christian faith.
- Pupils develop a strong sense of spirituality through both reflection and prayer as they progress through the school.
- Religious education (RE) is a strength because of the priority given to the subject, the passion in teaching the subject and the pride that the pupils take in their work.

#### Areas to improve

- Review the range of the values, deepen their Christian dimension and understanding, and link them ever more closely to the harmony principles.
- Ensure that the governors are more actively involved in the monitoring and evaluation of Christian distinctiveness.
- Increase pupils' involvement in acts of collective worship by including them in leading and planning.
- Continue to deepen the partnership between the school and the church, considering, in particular, how to extend the functions of chaplaincy and support theological understanding across the school.

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

Ashley CE Primary is a caring and welcoming community, where pupils can learn about and explore the Christian faith. It has a firm commitment to understanding the richness and bio-diversity of the planet and instils, in its pupils, the need to actively care for God's creation. Running through the school, are seven principles that are captured under the overarching concept of 'harmony': diversity adaptation, interdependence, the cycle, health and well-being, oneness and geometry. The school's harmony song expresses the importance for the pupils to: 'live our lives in balance ... to connect to the seasons, to live within our needs'. An understanding and the practice of sustainability permeates the school's community, its learning and life. An example is found in the parents' green stall where the school's home-grown vegetables are displayed and sold. In addition to these principles, the school promotes a value of the month over the course of a two-year cycle. These are linked to the Christian narrative through biblical passages. However, while pupils can give a good account of the biblical links, they are not always as secure as they could be in their understanding of the meaning. The number of values that are involved means that their ownership and depth of understanding is compromised. This has been recognised by the school and there is an intention to review the values and, sensibly, to bring them into line with the principles of harmony. This will be undertaken in order to develop and deepen the Christian dimension of both values and principles.

The school's ethos is expressed through a culture that is positive in terms of strong and supportive relationships. Behaviour is excellent and pupils show the utmost consideration, respect and courteousness. The richness of curriculum provision is a particular strength of the school, and one that captures enthusiasm and inspires learning. Pupils become enthusiastic learners who are active in creating meaning and purpose, gaining, as they do so, a respect for evidence. Pupils' attainment is high. When considering their starting points, overall progress is broadly in line with similar pupils nationally, although compared with last year this has improved in reading. The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is likewise similar to most other pupils nationally. Attendance is high and there have been no exclusions in recent times. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision makes an important contribution to pupils' development and there are well-planned opportunities for them to explore, to reflect and respond. Pupils' have a good understanding of diversity and difference and they develop a deep respect for all aspects of the natural world. Pupils spoke with feeling regarding their concern for local and global concerns such as homelessness and people living without the basic necessities, such as clean water. One pupil spoke of her outrage at the persecution of people seen as outsiders, such as had happened in concentration camps in international conflicts. RE makes a very strong and important contribution to the Christian distinctiveness. Pupils understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith is less secure.

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

The school's stated aim is to live out the Christian faith through worship, personal interactions, reflection and prayer. One parent said that 'the school is a prayerful place where the children can explore'. The collective worship is explicitly Christian and this has been even more deeply embedded in the most recent planning. There is a strong emphasis on the atmosphere of each occasion through the practice of quietness, calmness and reflection. Pupils offer insightful comments that respond directly to the challenges presented from chosen biblical passages. The development of Anglican traditions is supported through the use of artefacts such as a cross, the Bible and the use of liturgical colours on the worship table. The monthly values are regularly referenced, as in the worship observed. Pupils were respectful, fully engaged with the content, sang with enthusiasm and, at the conclusion, recited the Lord's Prayer. During the course of the week there is an established pattern of year group and whole school worship and each element makes a special contribution. Pupils develop, during the course of worship, a good understanding of foundational Christian concepts and festivals such as Trinity and Pentecost. Nevertheless, while pupils are interested and fully engaged in their worship, it would be beneficial for them to be more involved through the planning and leading of worship.

The development of personal prayer and reflection is given high priority. Pupils write their own prayers and place them on a cross and each week teachers select these prayers for use in the worship. Prayers are said regularly across the school day and pupils say grace before their lunch. Pupils develop a strong sense of spirituality within both reflection and prayer as they progress through the school. One member of the staff expressed this as 'finding harmony within yourself'. This journey of spirituality culminates in the Year 6 residential visit to Chamonix in the French Alps. Here pupils expand their experience through encountering deep questions around the themes of creation, its preservation and origins. During this time, each child pledges commitments forged through their experience. The development of the practice of prayer could be even further strengthened through the use of dedicated prayer spaces and activities in the school building.

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

Standards in RE are high and pupils achieve at least in line with other subjects of the core curriculum. Regarded as a core subject, the school uses the Guildford Diocesan Guidelines. The subject's high priority is evident from displays around the school, the range of work and the standards of presentation. The curriculum includes blocked units to facilitate more creative opportunities within in the subject and in order to make more use of the outdoors and external visits. Advent and Easter walks, for every class, take place at the local church and there are plans to increase the number of visits to other places of worship. Pupils learn about and from other religions including Judaism, Islam and Hinduism. In the lessons observed, teaching and learning was of a high standard. The approach to learning was enquiry-based and in each lesson this was motivated by a question for exploration. In a class of younger pupils, the children were considering the responses of Mary and Martha when Jesus visited their home. One child said that 'I am more like Mary because I like listening to God's word'. In a class of older pupils, the teacher's skilful use of on-going assessment ensured that she adapted her teaching to pupils' understanding and corrected their misconceptions. Nevertheless, more could be expected of the more able through deepening their understanding in line with their capabilities. Assessment is developing, in the light of changes to the rest of the curriculum and pupils are now assessed for every unit of work in the subject.

The subject leader has a very positive impact upon the subject and through her monitoring and book sampling she has identified what needs to be done to secure continuing improvement. She has established an effective partnership with the diocesan advisers. Through a process of dissemination, teachers' subject knowledge of world religions has markedly increased. There are termly staff meetings focused on RE and staff regularly seek out her advice.

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

The headteacher provides strong and dedicated leadership, based on his passion to provide a high quality of church school education and care for all. The approach of contextual richness, aligned with enquiry-based learning, is shared and embraced by members of staff who feel valued in playing their part as members of the school community. The school has a clear vision in terms of the direction, ethos and Christian nurture of the children. Nonetheless, it now needs a stronger underpinning to further develop the school's Christian distinctiveness. Defining and deepening this distinctiveness through the values needs reviewing and, where necessary, revision. The values need rooting within a deeper theological understanding as a foundation for teaching, application and understanding.

Senior leaders and governors ensure that the school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship and RE. They ensure that the life and learning of all of the school community are underpinned by the school's principles and values. However, monitoring and evaluation for the improvement of Christian distinctiveness, by governors, supported by senior leaders, needs to become more systematic and rigorous in order to ensure that there is continued improvement. The school's process of self-evaluation has included the specific areas that are pertinent to being a church school and this is evident in the strategic and improvement planning. However, while the current plan includes important priorities relating to collective worship and RE, it would be better focused through more incisive gathering of current and relevant information. The governing body has established a group dedicated to the monitoring and development of the Christian ethos which is now actively addressing these issues. The impact of their work needs more time to become fully embedded in order to have full impact.

The strong leadership of RE has been well supported through an effective partnership with the diocese. The partnership with the local church has moved forward considerably since the last inspection and the incumbent is planning to further deepen her involvement. An example can be seen in the plan to lead staff in exploring their own personal spirituality as well as through expanding the theological foundations of their subject knowledge. The school says that it feels well supported by the church, through, for example, the Easter and Advent walks. The school is starting to participate in Sunday morning worship. The school is considering how it can strengthen its work through more productive partnerships within the Good Shepherd Trust; sharing and co-developing its excellence in curriculum and learning. Parental partnership is strong and they are wholeheartedly supportive of the school. Through surveys, the school has a good understanding of parental views. Parent expertise is used to enhance the curriculum and a prayer group meets regularly to pray for the school.