

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

### The Weald CE Primary School

Beare Green, Dorking, Surrey. RH5 4QW

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Guildford</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	September 2015
Name of multi-academy trust	Good Shepherd Trust
Date/s of inspection	24 May 2017
Date of last inspection	8 February 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy 142083
Headteacher	Rachel Jacob
Inspector's name and number	Dr Trevor Walker (NSIN 908)

#### School context

The Weald is an average-sized primary school with 262 on roll. Pupils come from a number of surrounding villages. The vast majority come from White British backgrounds and only a few have English as their second language. Nineteen percent receive SEN support, which is just above the national average. Seventeen percent receive pupil premium funding which is below the national average. The school joined the Good Shepherd Trust in September 2015, following a period of considerable instability in the school. The headteacher joined in April 2016.

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

- Christian distinctiveness is shaping the school's journey of improvement; a journey that has been firmly rooted in the ethos of the school.
- The school's Christian character, and the subject of religious education (RE), supports and extends the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) provision.
- Care and provision for vulnerable pupils is good.
- Collective worship has a high status within the life of the school and has a positive impact on pupils and adults alike.
- Leaders and governors are rigorous in their monitoring and evaluation of the Christian distinctiveness of the school.

#### Areas to improve

- Strengthen, through staff discussion, definition and agreement, the nature, practice and progression of spirituality.
- Increase pupils' experiences and understanding of Christianity as a world-wide multi-cultural faith.
- Consider how assessment practices in RE can be brought into line with practice in the other core subjects so that teachers can better evaluate progress and diagnose pupils' needs.

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

The school is proud of its Christian foundation, which is confidently worn as a badge of honour. The school's vision statement states that the intention is: 'to be outstanding in all that we do as ambassadors of Christ'. This is shaping the school's journey of improvement; a journey that is firmly rooted in the Christian ethos of the school.

Christian distinctiveness shapes relationships and conduct and pupils are learning through more positive attitudes and appropriate behaviour in lessons. The Christian character consistently informs the approach to personal development, well-being and attendance. The school's five distinctive Christian values have become increasingly well embedded and understood. Pupils are able to link the values to relevant biblical passages and to the wider Christian narrative. A 'values tree' in the entrance hall promotes, in an eye-catching display, the importance of the values to the whole school community.

Standards are rising rapidly from a low base and the Christian character of the school is playing a significant part in the journey of improvement. At the end of the school year 2015-16, standards were much lower than could have been expected. The school's own performance information for 2016-17, and the monitoring of the Trust, indicates that pupils are now making good progress overall in the core curriculum subjects of reading, writing and mathematics. Improved progress extends also to the vulnerable pupils who have been given a high priority that has resulted in better and more effective care and provision. The school ensures that the development of spirituality is given prominence through, for example, the use of the prayer spaces and identifying special moments within the day. Nevertheless, this needs to be strengthened by a deeper and shared understanding of the meaning, scope and progression of spirituality through staff discussion, definition and agreement.

The school's Christian character, and the subject of RE, support and extend the provision for SMSC. RE has secure links to the school's values and promotes respect for diversity and difference. Celebrating religious and cultural heritage is a strong feature in the life and work of the school. A Muslim girl, in Year 5, demonstrated detailed understanding of the Christian faith alongside her pride and commitment to her own religion and its traditions. She explained she would like more opportunity to explain her thoughts and the practices of Islam to her classmates. This is something that the school has already planned to include in the following unit of work. Pupils do not have such a secure understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith.

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

Collective worship has a high status within the life of the school and this has a positive impact on the overall ethos. Planning demonstrates that the themes of daily worship are biblically and morally based. It is, nevertheless, inclusive and respectful of other world religions, so meeting the needs of those of all faiths and none. Anglican traditions are given an appropriate priority and festivals are celebrated in the local church, with clergy involvement. The school's worship draws on the school's Christian values and develops a collective and personal experience of spirituality for both children and adults. Pupils gain an understanding of important religious ideas, for example, the meaning of Pentecost and the older pupils understand concepts like the Trinity.

The act of worship observed, focused on Jesus' ascension. Members of staff performed a dramatic sequence to serve as a contemporary example. This captured the imagination in such a way that the pupils could build the foundational concepts that could be later accessed as their religious understanding and faith matures. Enthusiastic singing added to the sense of occasion and pupils led prayers and those involved listened to music that had previously and appropriately been suggested by a pupil: Vaughan Williams', The Lark Ascending.

Prayer features prominently and a pattern of prayers, including grace, are used through the course of each day. Strong partnerships have been established with the local church and the incumbent is a regular and respected visitor to the school. Pause days are being incorporated into the curriculum, and, recently, one such day culminated in a whole-school Holy Communion service. The use of physical space is well considered in order to encourage thought and prayer. Interactive displays that help to promote spirituality have been mounted in classrooms and each class has chosen a specific cross to set the tone of their dedicated space. A prayer room has recently been established with the involvement of a group of pupils that are known as the 'faith group'. The room incorporates a range of zones to encourage thought and prayer and the current activities include a focus on world issues and opportunities, through practical expression, for practising forgiveness. There have been constructive discussions with pupils as to

how this can develop further and imaginative plans are afoot.

Leaders and governors ensure that continuous improvements in collective worship are brought about through monitoring and evaluation. Pupils are involved in leading readings and prayers, but could be more involved in planning.

The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship.

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

The school follows the Guildford Diocesan Guidelines for RE and the subject is regarded as a core subject in the curriculum. The subject leader has only been in post for one term but has, already, and alongside senior leaders, made important and worthwhile changes to underpin necessary innovation and improvement. He communicates much higher expectations than had previously been the case and, through rigorous monitoring, has gained a detailed understanding of how to take the subject forward. The school carefully tracks the progress of pupils in RE and is currently considering how to develop its assessment practice to be in line with other core subjects.

Overall, the standards of achievement in the subject are not as high as they are in the core subjects of reading writing and mathematics. However, attainment and progress are now beginning to show a marked improvement, but more needs to be done to ensure that they are consistently in line with those that could be expected from pupils of a similar age. The range of written work does not yet demonstrate the originality and insightfulness that are present in pupils' thoughts and ideas as they are expressed in their lessons. Presentation is a weakness and there is too much reliance on worksheets.

In the lessons observed, the teaching made a positive impact on pupils' progress. Questioning probed their thoughtful contributions and extended their understanding by encouraging them to go further in deepening their knowledge and skills. Assessments for learning could, nevertheless, be more focused on exploring misconceptions and using these as starting points for further enquiry. In Year 6, pupils offered perceptive comments as they compared religious practices across a range of other faiths that they had studied. Pupils in the Reception Year were using Bible passages about animals in order to develop religious ideas, for example, that of the lost sheep.

The school meets the statutory requirements for RE.

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

Leaders and governors articulate a clear vision based of Christian distinctiveness. This is actively promoted across the school community and is well understood by all those concerned. Leaders share a passion for ensuring that the school's Christian character serves as a basis for raising standards in a realistic, sustainable and inclusive manner. This is strongly supported by effective governance of the Christian characteristics of the school and appropriately holds the headteacher and senior leaders to account. Staff members say that the school's Christian values influence the daily management of the school, for example, in terms of the respect among members of the school community.

Evaluation and monitoring by senior leaders and governors has become more systematic, focused and rigorous than previously. Forward planning is comprehensive and ambitious and includes a focus on the on-going improvement of the distinctive features of a church school.

Parents spoken to were highly supportive of the school and its caring ethos. One parent spoke movingly of how her child, who had suffered a serious illness, had been cared for and supported. Parents expressed their confidence in the present and the future. Partnership with the local church is productive, although there is even greater potential to involve the wider church community. The vicar is a regular and respected contributor to collective worship. Use of the resources of the diocese and the support of the academy trust has been positively embraced, and, as a result, the school has become more outward looking. Partnerships have been formed with other trust schools, for example in terms of moderation of standards.