

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Sarratt Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The Green, Sarratt, Rickmansworth, WD3 6AS

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	St Albans
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Date of inspection	22 March 2017
Date of last inspection	13 March 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled Primary 117404
Headteacher	Pippa Bremner
Inspector's name and number	Judith Ruff 528

School context

Sarratt is a smaller than average primary school with 160 pupils. 31% of pupils come from the village of Sarratt, with the remainder travelling from nearby areas. Numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals and those receiving special educational needs support are below national averages. Pupils are predominantly from a White British heritage. Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes of staff. At the time of the inspection the school was led by an interim co-headship, covering the extended absence of the substantive headteacher. Holy Cross church is a fifteen minute walk away across a country route.

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

- The links with the local church, particularly the work of the vicar, are strong and positively support staff and leaders' understanding of the importance and value of collective worship and religious education (RE) in a church school. Experiences such as the annual labyrinth event deepen pupils' spirituality in a profound way.
- The adoption of 'The Sarratt Way', treating others as we want to be treated ourselves, and underpinned by explicit Christian values has supported and upheld the school community and shaped their relationships through the most challenging and difficult times.
- Religious education (RE) is making a significant contribution to pupils' understanding of the importance of religion and belief in people's lives through high quality teaching and learning opportunities.
- Recent opportunities to enable Year 6 pupils to plan and lead acts of worship demonstrate how well pupils use these occasions to explore the purposes and impact of worship and how much their thinking and understanding grows through the stages of preparation and delivery.

Areas to improve

- Complete the review of the mission statement and values resulting in a clear, explicit and distinctively Christian vision for the school, building on the successes and historical achievements of the past.
- Increase pupils' understanding of diverse Christian communities by exploring and making links to other local Christian denominations and raising awareness of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith.
- Develop a systematic, formalised process for monitoring and evaluating collective worship, so that all stakeholders are part of the process. Ensure that outcomes from this in terms of raising the quality of provision are fully understood and communicated.
- Increase the capacity for all governors to contribute to the strategic development of the school as a church school by ensuring that discussions on Christian distinctiveness at full governing body meetings are regular and comprehensive and that working group minutes are properly received and discussed.

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

'In this school 'The Sarratt Way' is acted out, rather than just being put on a wall' said a parent. The school has embedded the strapline, 'We treat others as we want to be treated ourselves' over a period of time. This enables parents to understand the importance of the ten chosen values through newsletters, 'Gold Book' awards and in their children's attitudes and approaches to both their work and their social interactions. 'I see in my child a developing persistence and determination to keep going, even though they might not get top marks, but they do get recognition for their efforts and this increases their sense of self-worth', said another parent. A deeply nurturing approach to every child as a precious child of God, immensely valued and precious is typified by the extra lengths staff are prepared to go to. This is exemplified through support structures such as resilience training for Year 6 pupils, counselling for individual children and the development of the 'Hug Garden'. This is a special place, designed and being developed by the pupils, creating a space for quiet reflection and the promotion of an awareness of the beauty of God's creation. Pupils, under the leadership of a talented parent helper, are growing their own produce and thinking about how they can develop the sensory appeal of the garden. Attendance is currently just below national average. However, the school works hard with a locally based family support worker to improve levels of persistent absenteeism. At present two pupils have long term medical conditions, which impact on their attendance. Fixed term exclusions are only used in conjunction with a range of positive strategies to reintegrate the pupil at the earliest opportunity. Achievement levels are rising rapidly, particularly at the lower end of the school, where 2016 outcomes were above national averages. Pupils in upper Key Stage 2 are being well supported to achieve as well as they can, which includes pupils in Year 6 retaining their teacher from the previous year. Disadvantaged pupils attain at least in line with their national counterparts. Pupils' behaviour is good, based on the values of respect and forgiveness. Pupils relate their obligation to forgive others from the parables of Jesus, such as the 'lost son' and the 'unforgiving servant'. Pupils willingly serve others through taking on additional responsibilities such as play leaders, choir membership and school ambassadors. An impressive array of extra-curricular provision supports the development and nurturing of individual talents such as skills in sports and music. Relationships within the school community are good, strengthened by the core Christian values of responsibility, courage and resilience to fulfil the second half of the school strapline, 'To do our best to be our best selves'. This belief and conviction has supported members of the community through hugely challenging and turbulent times, from which they have emerged stronger and more committed to the success of the school as a distinctively Christian school. Pupils' understanding of diversity amongst other Christian denominations is under-developed, as is their appreciation of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. RE makes a good contribution to pupils' knowledge and understanding of the impact of religion and beliefs on people's lives and how it shapes their actions and concerns. For example, following a unit of work on Islam, a pupil organised a cake sale in order to raise funds for cancer research. RE is taught creatively and well throughout the school. Recent training for use of the 'Understanding Christianity' units has further strengthened staff knowledge and understanding of core concepts of this religion.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Staff interviewed spoke of the daily reinforcing of 'The Sarratt Way' with the key message to look after each other and act as peer models within the school, promoting and living out the gospel teachings as encompassed in the chosen core values. They appreciate the first collective worship of the week because it, 'Sets the tone for the week, allows me to tailor the message to my own individual class and gives me a common language to use with the children in order to ensure greater consistency with and application of the chosen value'. On a personal level, staff members spoke of the importance of calm, to be able to sit and think and reflect upon the message of the Bible story or chosen theme. Pupils interviewed had a less secure understanding of the purposes of worship. They enjoyed writing prayers, learning new songs and hymns and thinking about the words in terms of supporting the key focused value. They recognised that lighting candles was a way of acknowledging the presence of God. In contrast, the Year 6 pupils who had been involved in planning and leading acts of worship for Christmas and were currently preparing for the Easter service, were able to describe very powerfully their understanding of how core messages could be delivered through the use of Bible stories. A small group was thinking about contrasting the commercialisation of Easter to a simple role play on the crucifixion, leaving those watching to ponder and reflect on the importance and centrality of the passion story to Christians. Year 5 pupils had been retelling the story of Moses as a modern day adaptation and had drawn parallels with Moses' mother, leaving the baby in the river for an Egyptian to find, to a baby in war torn Syria, being found by an enemy soldier, but released to freedom in the West. In the external areas pupils are working on 'stations of the cross' in the form of planters, each depicting part of the Easter story. This is a two year project, which will enable pupils to worship and reflect at these 'stations' across the year. Worship is well planned, using diocesan materials, and the vicar shares her expertise on a regular basis with the worship leader. A recent pupil survey shows how much they enjoy learning about Bible stories and relish opportunities to engage in role-play activities. The school uses this feedback to increase the range and use of Bible stories within worship. Classroom 'prayer trees' and 'class worship books' enable pupils to write their own prayers,

frequently reflecting on the core values. They have an age appropriate understanding of the Trinity. One pupil wrote, 'The Holy Spirit is always around to help us make better choices and reduce the amount of mistakes we make. We must reflect on our actions, whether they were right or wrong, good or bad and the Holy Spirit is always there to help'. Links with the church community and the vicar are strong. Although the church is a distance from the school, it has become a tradition to walk cross country to celebrate the major festivals, through the changing seasons of the year. The school choir supports a weekend flower festival event and the annual labyrinth project gives pupils powerful and profound opportunities to reflect on their lives and remember those that they have lost. Village events centred around Remembrance Day and carols on the green are all enriched by the school's contribution. At present worship in school is led by senior leaders, with classroom worship led by teaching staff. The vicar comes in fortnightly and a member of a local charitable trust leads worship once a half term. There is no worship leader involvement from other Christian traditions. Monitoring and evaluation by governors lacks rigour. It is too informal with insufficient evidence of how this leads to improving future provision.

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

Leaders are currently revisiting the vision, mission and values of the school in order to ensure that the Christian distinctiveness is explicit and communicated effectively to all stakeholders. This process is moving forward with stakeholder consultation groups, but is not yet in a finalised format. The present 'Sarratt Way' is understood and appreciated by parents and pupils as a code for living which values and develops the whole child, with all the individual talents and attributes that each brings. The present governing body is just under a year old, having replaced an interim executive board of governors. They are ambitious for the pupils, tracking pupil outcomes carefully and ensuring that support mechanisms are put into place to enable all vulnerable pupils in particular to overcome the barriers to learning and achievement. Self-evaluation judgements are accurate and supported by good quality diocesan training opportunities for senior leaders, including diocesan consultancy support. As yet there have been no governor training opportunities taken up to support leadership of church schools. The school development plan identifies, from the SIAMS self-evaluation outcomes, where further improvements are needed and these form a significant part of the future identified priorities. A governor and staff working group was established in the autumn term of 2016 to look at ways to further the church school distinctiveness, such as through the 'stations of the cross' project. However, the ensuing discussions and actions have not been fed back into the main governing body meetings. The result is a lack of clarity about the direction of the school in these areas on the part of the other, non-involved governors. Governing body meetings do not regularly include SIAMS related issues and discussions that do take place, for example, those around the revision of the vision and mission statement, are not recorded. Of the parents surveyed in December 2016, two thirds of the respondents felt that the church school status was obvious and half said that being a church school was an important factor for them. Leadership of both RE and collective worship has passed to the deputy headteacher, following the absence of the headteacher early in the autumn term 2016. She has led both areas very well within the school, using training opportunities, local church school networking and diocesan consultancy support very effectively to move practice on. Christian values have become further embedded through the links with pupils' personal behaviours and well-being. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, linking in to both RE and collective worship themes. Teaching staff have benefitted considerably through diocesan training on the 'Understanding Christianity' project. This has renewed and refreshed their teaching within the school, leading to some creative and innovative work through the RE 'immersive days'. Leadership provided by the vicar is a strength of the school. She has formed close links with the deputy headteacher and provided support for both RE and collective worship. She is an important member of the governing body and, along with the other foundation governor, ensures that the Christian distinctiveness of the school continues to be valued and developed. Staff appreciate her support with the theological aspects of RE teaching, which she gives willingly. Links with the diocese are good. A diocesan representative attends governing body meetings to provide advice and support. The choir has sung in the cathedral and Year 2 pupils have visited as part of their educational studies.

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