

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Ruishton Church of England Primary School

Newlands Road, Ruishton, Taunton, Somerset TA3 5JZ

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Bath and Wells
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Somerset
Name of multi-academy trust/federation	N/A
Date of inspection	5 December 2016
Date of last inspection	5 December 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled Primary 123822
Headteacher	Chris Kamin
Inspector's name and number	Rupert Kaye Quality assurance: Jo Fageant 104

This is a smaller than average primary school situated in the semi-rural parish of Ruishton, Thornfalcon and Henlade, near Taunton. The majority of pupils are of White British origin. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average. The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is below average. The school is part of the Taunton Learning Partnership and is currently in the process of forming a multi-academy trust with four other schools in the locality. There have been a number of staffing changes since the last SIAMS inspection.

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

- Relationships within school are strong and respectful, being modelled and lived out by the headteacher and staff so that all pupils understand what it means to follow the 'Ruishton Way', which is underpinned by the core Christian values.
- The close and mutually beneficial relationship with the church, and the participation of clergy in school collective worship, makes an important contribution to pupils' biblical knowledge and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.
- Pupils demonstrate an understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith and show high levels of respect for diversity and difference within other faith communities.

Areas to improve

- Establish a clear, distinctively Christian vision for the school that is understood, articulated and promoted by all school leaders and governors, and which is made explicit in school development plans and policies.
- Ensure leaders and governors pay close attention to the grade descriptors set out in the SIAMS evaluation schedule when conducting future monitoring and self-evaluation.
- Extend the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship beyond the reflection books, to involve regular rigorous evaluation by governors, staff and pupils of the impact of worship on the life of the school community so that it leads directly to improvement.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to plan, lead and evaluate acts of collective worship in order to enrich their understanding of and participation in worship.

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

The school's four core Christian values of respect, trust, honesty and compassion are prominently displayed around the school building. Some pupils are able to talk about these values, or other values covered in times of collective worship, in terms of how they have affected their own choices and achievements. Pupils are able to relate these values to Bible stories: 'I think the story of The Good Samaritan is about compassion.' All pupils can talk in general terms about how Christian values 'make the school feel friendly' and 'like a family'. Pupils agree that the headteacher models 'respect, fun and happiness'. One parent said: 'The school has a family feel, where the Reception children and the Year 6's know each other by name.' Members of staff feel safe and cared for at Ruishton because all of the staff model positive behaviours and values.

Religious education (RE) makes a positive contribution to pupils' SMSC development, and to the Christian character and values of the school. Pupils of all ages are able to relate what they have learned in RE to their lives. On the day of the inspection, Key Stage 2 children in one class were discussing and evaluating whether TV advertisements contained any Christian values and then relating this to their own understanding of the true meaning of Christmas.

Pupil behaviour is generally good and well managed, and parents attribute this to the school's distinctive Christian ethos and character. However, the school's behaviour policy does not include any explicit references to Christian values or approaches to resolving conflict, seeking justice, encouraging forgiveness and restoring relationships.

School leaders link Ruishton's sensitive and supportive pastoral care for pupils with attendance issues or at risk of exclusion to the school's Christian character, 'going the extra mile' to make sure every child is in school.

Play figures representing racial diversity and including people with a disability are used by Reception children, as are story books from around the world. Upper Key Stage 2 pupils visit a synagogue and mosque in Exeter and there are ongoing well-developed whole-school links with Parikma School in Bangalore, India. Fortnightly Skype video calls between the two schools mean that Ruishton pupils enjoy talking about similarities and differences between the two school communities. From Reception onwards children are taught about the importance of race equality, tolerance and mutual respect for the beliefs of others. This enables children to demonstrate understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith and show high levels of respect for diversity and difference within other faith communities.

Parents, governors, staff and pupils talk enthusiastically about the 'Ruishton Way' of being and doing. They understand how this is underpinned by Christian values and shapes the 'Ruishton Child' – a rounded, respectful, compassionate, honest young person who leaves Year 6 with a well-developed moral compass and the confidence to succeed at secondary school. The school community does not yet have a similar degree of clarity and agreement when it comes to articulating a clear definition of spirituality. Pupils are provided with opportunities to pause, reflect and explore their own thoughts. However, there is a lack of consistency between classes in terms of how this works or what expected outcomes should be. Spirituality and SMSC are not meaningfully monitored and evaluated by school leaders.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is a strength of the school. Staff, parents and pupils alike see the importance of worship in the life of the school. Pupils respond positively and participate willingly in worship times, talking enthusiastically about what it means to them. Staff and clergy plan and lead worship using the 'Values for Life' scheme, ensuring that themes are based on a Christian value and regularly include biblical material. Pupils are able to relate what they have heard to the school's core values and their own lives, and have sometimes responded to worship themes by undertaking service of others. In response to the value 'courage', pupils were prompted to approach school leaders for permission to organise a toy sale to raise funds to help pay for a child in India to receive a primary school education.

Planning provides a structure that enables learners to encounter Christian beliefs. Worship is related to significant moments in the life of the school and the seasons of the Church. Most of the key elements of worship are present, though some are less developed than others. Most Christian festivals are celebrated or acknowledged in the context of worship. Pupils explain how each act of school worship begins with the lighting of a candle to symbolise the presence of Jesus. The participation of clergy in school collective worship is valued by pupils and makes a significant contribution to their SMSC development. However, pupils' understanding of and participation in worship does not yet include many opportunities for them to plan, lead and evaluate acts of worship.

Some pupils ascribe significance to different seasons such as Advent and Lent, and demonstrate an awareness of the

important place that Jesus holds for Christians. Pupils of all ages are aware of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in worship and they are able to talk about this with some measure of understanding. Key Stage 2 pupils are able to explain the Trinity succinctly as 'one God but three parts: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit'. Children have a good understanding of Christianity and some Anglican practices, and a growing awareness of other Christian denominations thanks to the involvement of other Christian denominations in the locality in the life of the school.

Pupils enjoy contributing prayers in collective worship and talk with understanding about the meaning and importance of The Lord's Prayer. Pupils understand the purpose of prayer and reflection for people of different faiths in both formal and informal contexts. Some make use of prayer in their own lives.

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

Leadership and management at Ruishton is satisfactory. There is evidence of individual strong contributions to the leadership of the school. However, there is not yet a clearly developed Christian vision that is shared and articulated by all governors and senior leaders.

RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements. Christian values underpin worship, RE and other aspects of the curriculum. However, leaders do not have clear evidence of the impact the school's Christian character has on the academic achievement and personal development of the whole school community. RE and collective worship are not monitored in sufficient depth to bring about sustained improvement. Pupils recognise the school as a church school and talk enthusiastically about God, Jesus and the Bible. Pupils are not, however, able to link their own SMSC development or personal well-being to the person and teachings of Jesus.

Parents are very supportive of the school's Christian foundation. Parents speak warmly about Ruishton as a 'nurturing, caring, supporting school' and praise the staff's 'joyful and enthusiastic' work to ensure the welfare and happiness of each and every child. Leaders talk about the school's ethos in terms of the 'Ruishton Way', which is underpinned by the core Christian values. However, leaders make implicit rather than explicit links between the school's core Christian values and outcomes. Leaders are not able to explain how specific Christian values influence pupil behaviour, learning and relationships. Formal systems to monitor the effectiveness of the Christian distinctiveness of the school using the current SIAMS evaluation schedule and self-evaluation tools are not sufficiently robust.

The involvement, commitment and support of Anglican clergy within the parish has had a positive impact on the worship life of the school. The school has a well-established, regular and influential partnership with St George's Church and ongoing links with local Baptist and Methodist congregations. There is a weekly parent-led lunchtime Shine Club in which pupils learn about Bible stories. Some pupils who attend Shine Club but have no family links to local churches, have been prompted to attend Messy Church and church-led holiday clubs.

The school's SMSC committee has encouraged staff continuing professional development and played a valuable role in stimulating innovation in school. Members of the SMSC committee acknowledge a need to plan strategically and ensure developments, such as the use of the 'Understanding Christianity' RE scheme in school in 2017, are properly embedded, monitored and evaluated.

SIAMS report December 2016, Ruishton C of E VC Primary School, Newlands Road, Ruishton, Taunton TA3 5JZ