



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

<b>Christ Church Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School</b>	Sheinton Road Cressage Shrewsbury Shropshire SY5 6DH
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese/Methodist District</b>	<b>Hereford</b>
Previous SIAS inspection grade:	Satisfactory
Local authority	Shropshire
Date of inspection	5 October 2016
Date of last inspection	21 September 2011
School's unique reference number	123471
Headteacher	Kim Stokes
Inspector's name and number	Angela Daniel 757

### School context

Christ Church Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School has 73 pupils on roll who are taught in 3 classes. It serves the village of Cressage and surrounding hamlets with some pupils from a further distance. The present headteacher joined the school in a co-headship role in September 2015. She was appointed sole headteacher last term. The school has experienced an unsettled 2 years, with various staffing issues. There is a rector with responsibility for 14 parishes and a recently appointed team vicar, who will serve as a foundation governor.

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

- The school community has established core Christian values that are clearly expressed and are lived out in relationships and behaviour.
- The school's honest and perceptive self-evaluation, aspirational improvement plans and committed staff are key to significant progress in terms of developing the school's Christian character.
- A creative and vibrant curriculum which includes religious education (RE) contributes to the children's achievements and spiritual development.
- Collective worship is planned creatively and ensures that pupils have an excellent understanding of Bible stories.

### Areas to improve

- Develop a group of committed school leaders, foundation governors and other members of the school community to be creative and enthusiastic about evaluating, monitoring and joyously improving Christ Church as a Church of England school.
- Ensure that children have a secure knowledge and understanding of faiths other than Christianity and can appreciate the diversity and difference within Christian traditions so that they are prepared for life in a wider world.

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

The school's Christian values are creatively displayed as sculptures in the entrance foyers. Children, parents, staff and governors were involved in designing and making them to convey the school's Christian character and to serve as teaching aids. The symbols and complementary displays demonstrate the level of biblical understanding that underpinned this project. For example, forgiveness is depicted by a drop of water and respect by an image of the world. The other Christian values that have been thoughtfully selected by the school are compassion, courage, friendship, peace, perseverance, responsibility, thankfulness, trust and truthfulness. Children of all ages are able to link the monthly Christian value with a well-chosen core Bible story such as responsibility and 'The Good Samaritan'. Christian values are brought to life. The children live what they have learned in their relationships and choices. They are given responsibilities and fulfil them with commitment and kindness. All members of the school community appreciate the deep sense of trust that unites them. It is the result of Christian values lived out through the changes and challenges that the school has experienced in recent years. Peer mentors have been trained through a 'Peacemakers' approach with responsibility for resolving any playtime conflict. There is a wonderfully calm and mutually supportive atmosphere throughout the school which contributes to positive and supportive relationships and learning behaviour. The children are enthusiastic about learning and standards of achievement are generally improving with particularly impressive KS2 data in 2016. This is a welcoming school in which every child feels that they belong. The headteacher greets every child at the beginning of the day and new children soon make friends. Parents are made welcome and appreciate the reassurance and support that is given generously by all staff. The school meets the needs of all children and believes passionately in recognising every pupil as a unique individual, each with their own gifts and talents. The belief that every child is made in the image of God is evident in practice and policy. The school's motto, 'Learning, Listening, Living', is the vision behind the key Christian values and emphasis on spiritual development. The creative curriculum provides many opportunities for the children to grow spiritually. The children appreciate learning outdoors and the school has identified the need to create an area specifically designed to encourage reflection. Pupil councils are indicative of the importance that is placed on children having responsibility and being involved in decision making processes. Experience of a wider world and opportunities to meet with people of other faiths and cultures is limited. Children do not have enough knowledge, and therefore understanding, about faiths other than Christianity. Long-term planning for RE has recently been creatively designed to ensure that the local RE curriculum is taught within the context of topics. A topic on food was the springboard for children to learn from Bible stories that include food such as bread and fish. A lesson on communion ensured that children were being taught meaningfully about the importance of this meal for Christians of different traditions. Creative activities in RE provide opportunities for personal reflection and spiritual growth. The school's Christian character impacts on the lives of members of the school community. Parents recognise that children put into practise what they have experienced about Christian living at school and at home too.

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

Collective worship themes are thoughtfully and skilfully planned to reinforce key Christian values. The collective worship leader applies her theological understanding creatively and selects inspirational resources for worship. A core Bible story is chosen to illustrate the monthly value such as Joseph and truthfulness. The repetition ensures that children have a clear understanding of how Christian belief influences their choices of behaviour. Other age-appropriate stories are well-chosen so that even the youngest children can articulate and live out Christian values. The enthusiastic 'Open the Book' team has been a constant factor in recent years, leading worship for the whole school every week. The impact of their input to the Christian character of the school is considerable. The oldest children can confidently re-tell many Bible stories in detail and explain how the story impacts on their lives. Parents recognise this Bible knowledge as a positive hallmark of the school. Christian songs and music are well chosen to complement the worship themes and are sung with enthusiasm. There is often opportunity for children to reflect on worship in a creative way. A worship time based on remembering was followed by an activity in which the smell of rosemary was used for each child to recall something precious that they would choose to remember. A special

posy was made to go home with the rosemary and the memory inside written on paper in the shape of a chalice. Such careful planning and an awareness of the connections between RE and worship have a powerful impact on the children's learning and spiritual development. They can discuss the Christian belief of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Various members of the school community contribute to treasured journals of reflections about such worship times. At the present time the children have a limited understanding of worship in different Christian traditions. The school worship council has recently been given the responsibility of planning and leading worship once a week. Their understanding of religious issues and confidence as worship leaders is evident. School leaders do not have a system for monitoring worship to ensure consistency and inform improvement. Children choose to write and share their own prayers as well as learning familiar Christian prayers. They value opportunities to pray in school and at home. The main Christian festivals are celebrated with special worship times in church which are appreciated by the many parents that attend. There is an intent to focus on the Christian heart of these festivals such as a clear re-telling of the nativity story. Children are comfortable to talk about life, death and heaven, having understood the Easter story. Such worship times contribute to the spiritual life of the school community who can talk sensitively about difficult times. They also share times of great joy together and appreciate doing so. There is a desire to translate Christian understanding into practical action in the service of others. The school chooses to support charities in response to particular concerns that relate to the school community.

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

Despite significant changes in school leadership, there has been a consistent drive to ensure that the school's Christian foundations have remained secure. The governing body has appointed headteachers who have been and are committed to developing the school's Christian character. A high level of mutual trust and sense of pulling in the same Christian direction has been maintained. This has been supported by the church even though it has been hard-pushed in terms of having a depleted ministerial team until very recently. The school has welcomed the services of the 'Open the Book' team, retired clergy and the diocese. The team rector has supported the school pastorally and prayerfully and his visits to the school to lead worship, although not often, have had a positive impact on all members of the school community. Children and staff have appreciated his joy and encouragement. Children have wanted to take their parents to church to hear the team rector. Whilst children have a deep appreciation of their local community, they have a limited understanding of national and global communities. The school is rejoicing in the recent appointment of a new team vicar who is committed to developing the school's spirituality through collective worship and RE. She was warmly welcomed by the headteacher and a child at a recent licensing service. Although the school has not been able to appoint foundation governors until recently, systems have been established for governors to work with the headteacher to improve the school as a church school. School governors have been involved in the creative process which has led to the development of the school's Christian values. The words of parents are endorsed, that the headteacher is 'so dedicated' and her main goal is wanting the very best for all children in the school. The headteacher is incredibly thorough, focussed and discerning. Through intelligent and honest reflection she has accurately identified key priorities for improvement. She includes staff, children and governors in the process of finding imaginative ways to make the school even better. Consequently everyone is committed and enthusiastic. There is rigour and clarity about how this school is improving in terms of its Christian character and in terms of attainment and progress across the curriculum. Curriculum drivers have been identified which are shaping a vibrant and challenging curriculum to inspire staff and children. The headteacher has great skills in terms of articulating and describing the school's Christian values especially in writing. The leader of worship and RE has been given support and encouragement in fulfilling her role and developing further as a leader in a church school. She is enthusiastic and experienced in Anglican church work especially with children. Excellent theological understanding enables her to create cohesive and exciting long-term plans for RE and collective worship. She leads by example to inspire other staff who in turn inspire children.

