

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Horton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Horton, Chipping Sodbury, Gloucestershire BS37 6QP

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Gloucester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Date/s of inspection	10 October 2017
Date of last inspection	18 September 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	VA Primary 109262
Headteacher	Isabel Stephens
Inspector's name and number	Cottia Howard 898

School context

Horton is a smaller than average primary school with 68 children on roll. Children are drawn from across a wide-spread area and come from varied socio-economic backgrounds. Nearly all children are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives extra support funding (pupil premium) has risen and is now broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of children with special educational needs is above the national average. Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in staff and a new headteacher has taken up post.

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

- The strong and committed leadership of the headteacher provides a clear Christian vision for the development of the school.
- Christian values, such as forgiveness, compassion and respect, are deeply embedded in all aspects of the school and impact positively on pupils' behaviour and wellbeing.
- **Collective worship is central to school life. It has a significant impact on pupils through its exploration of Christian values and its emphasis on prayer.**
- Religious education (RE) makes a highly effective contribution to the school's Christian character and has a high profile in the school.
- Thorough self-evaluation involving all staff and governors results in a clear understanding of the school's areas for development.

Areas to improve

- Improve further the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation of the school as a church school by drawing together the many different elements into a more cohesive plan.
- Continue to develop assessment procedures for the new RE curriculum including children's self-assessment.

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

The vision to be 'the best we can be in everything we do, following the teachings of Jesus Christ', guides all aspects of the work of this outstanding school. Christian values, such as forgiveness, compassion and respect, underpin this vision and make a significant impact on the daily lives of pupils and staff. Children explain that 'you make your own decisions, but you have to make sure they're good decisions by using values'. As a result, behaviour is exemplary and relationships at all levels are respectful. Children enjoy coming to school and Horton has a particular strength in integrating children who lack self-confidence. Attendance is therefore good. Pupils are supported very well in their learning and specific programmes are planned for those who require extra help. Consequently, progress is good, and children for whom the school receives additional funding achieve especially well. Opportunities for moral, social and cultural development are well-planned. Pupils are involved in decision-making through groups such as the ethos team and the school council. They take their responsibilities seriously and make a link with the school's vision saying they help to 'decide what's best for the school'. Spirituality is developed well through a rich curriculum and through worship. Children are encouraged to consider and discuss 'big questions' and they understand that these may not have a right or a wrong answer. Spaces for reflection and prayer in the classrooms, in the corridor and outside are used regularly. Pupils value their spiritual garden as a place to think quietly, especially when troubled, as 'you can have a special time with God'. Visitors from other faiths support 'Inside Out Week' and this event is effective in enabling pupils to think about life beyond their local community. The children are enthusiastic about their link with a schoolboy in Uganda. They know that they can make a difference to his life and excitedly explain, 'we're going to buy him a bike!' As a result of all these opportunities, children are thoughtful and considerate of others. They understand that their school has a distinctive ethos that affects behaviour and wellbeing and say, 'people change because they get treated well'. Parents appreciate the impact of the school's Christian ethos. They see evidence of the vision and values in their children's behaviour at home and are proud of the thoughtfulness that is so evident in the school. Religious education makes a highly effective contribution to the school's Christian character. Children enjoy learning about Christianity and show great respect for other beliefs. Their link with Uganda helps them to understand that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is central to school life. It is well planned, is based on the school's distinctively Christian values and is supported by references to Bible stories. Children enjoy worship and value it because it 'teaches me to be a better person'. They listen attentively, respond with enthusiasm and sing with conviction and joy. Time for reflection and prayer is signalled by the sound of a chime bar, and the resulting silence is reverent and peaceful. Members of staff also appreciate this 'moment to pause and reflect at the start of the day'. Worship very effectively develops the children's understanding of the importance of Jesus in the Christian faith. Pupils talk confidently about his life and resurrection, understand that he is a role model for them and describe his significance as God's son. Thought-provoking and relevant worship themes inspire children not only to 'be the best we can be' but also to take action to serve others, such as collecting for the local foodbank. Elements of Anglican worship, such as lighting candles and displaying different colours for the seasons of the church year are well-embedded in school practice. Prayer is important, not only in worship, but also in the everyday life of the school. Children volunteer with impressive self-assurance to lead spontaneous prayer in front of the whole school. They write their own prayers of intercession, using maps of the world to help them pray for specific places. Parents speak positively about the impact of a recent prayer day on their children, saying, 'they are very good at praying to God from the heart about what's important'. The rector leads worship each week. His support and teaching is very effective in helping the children develop their understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pupils know that the lighting of the three candles at the start of worship represents the Trinity and explain that 'the Holy Spirit is within you and guides you on your journey to get to God'. Representatives from other denominations also lead worship and this has widened the children's understanding of Christian traditions. Monitoring and evaluation takes place regularly and

effectively through governor visits, pupil voice interviews and questionnaires. As a result, changes have been made to increase the involvement of younger children in leading worship. Evaluations show that weekly house assemblies deepen children's understanding of worship through involvement in small group discussion. Special church services, for example celebrating harvest, Christmas and Easter are well attended by family members and by members of the local community.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE is explicitly underpinned by Christian values and is of high profile in the school. Good and outstanding teaching means that children engage well with the subject, recognise its relevance and understand the importance of learning about different faiths. The school's monitoring shows that the introduction of new resources (Understanding Christianity) has already had a positive impact on the quality of learning. Standards in RE are high and comparable with those in English and mathematics. Teachers' planning is thorough and ensures that lessons are thought-provoking and engaging. Older children enjoy the challenge of comparing the biblical account of the creation with a scientific theory and discussing whether these are conflicting or complementary. Younger children explain confidently what they understand about Islam and are able to make links with their knowledge of Christianity. Their excellent recall of prior learning and the quality of their discussions give a clear indication that outstanding teaching and learning has taken place over time. Children develop and apply skills of enquiry in the subject effectively. They ask and explore 'big questions' and know that reflection time 'helps us to think what we've been learning about'. They talk about stories from the Bible and can link them with the school's core values. The well-established use of learning walls in the classrooms supports learners' understanding of how to access deep learning, similar to that in mathematics and English. However, pupils are not yet involved in self-assessment. Opportunities to develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness are carefully planned. Visits to places of worship and from people of other faiths enrich the pupils' experience and promote respect for the beliefs of others. When describing a visit to a mosque, a child explained, 'we went during Ramadan and had to be especially respectful'. Parents appreciate their children's positive attitudes to RE and attribute this enjoyment to the use of creative approaches such as art and drama. The headteacher leads RE with enthusiasm and commitment. She has a purposeful vision to develop the subject in order that support might be provided to other local schools. Regular monitoring of lessons is very effective in ensuring high standards of teaching and learning. Assessment procedures have been revised in line with the introduction of the new syllabus and teachers regularly moderate their judgements in staff meetings. Professional development is given high priority, and a training day at the start of the school year ensured all members of staff have a good overview of the new teaching materials.

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

The very strong leadership of the headteacher drives a vision for the school as a place where everyone can be the best they can, following the teachings of Jesus Christ. The involvement of the whole school community in developing this vision has ensured that it inspires the work of everyone, including newly-appointed teachers. Christian values are embedded in all areas of school life and are evident in policies and in practice. Staff, children, governors and parents recognise the importance of the core values to learning and to personal development. Children who are more vulnerable are offered every chance to succeed. As a result, children feel 'secure, loved and prayed for'. Governors work hard to support the school. Since the last inspection, their ethos committee has worked effectively to monitor and evaluate the school's Christian distinctiveness. The committee has a clear understanding of the work of the school and of progress towards meeting the areas for development from the previous inspection. Self-evaluation involves all staff as well as governors. An extensive range of evidence is gathered and used effectively to identify strengths and areas to improve. However, there are many different elements to this, resulting in a number of documents which serve similar purposes and lack cohesion. Pupils' understanding of local, national and global issues is strengthened by the school's involvement in a variety of charity work. The school benefits from good links with the local church through the work of the rector whose theological expertise supports staff and pupils well. Links with other church schools, including a joint ethos committee, have been valuable in moving the school forward through the sharing of expertise and resources. Parents are very supportive of the school and say they are able to

contribute to its life. They speak positively of the Christian teaching while at the same time appreciating that 'children with another faith are respected'. They value the accessibility of the teachers and feel their own views are taken into account. The school makes good use of support from the diocese and local training providers. The governors ensure that the headteacher is given time for her own professional development as a leader of a church school. They understand that recently-qualified teachers may see this very small school as a stepping-stone in their career. However, they see this as benefiting other schools, and support teachers to be successful so that they can 'take our ethos with them when they move on'. The arrangements for RE and collective worship fully meet statutory requirements.

SIAMS report October 2017 Horton C of E (VA) Primary School, Chipping Sodbury BS37 6QP