

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Bishop Ian Ramsey Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

Manor Road, Medomsley, Consett, DH8 6QN

Current SIAMS inspection grade Satisfactory

Diocese Durham

Previous SIAMS inspection grade Satisfactory

Local authority Durham

Date/s of inspection 15 December 2017

Date of last inspection 3 December 2014

Type of school and unique reference number Primary 114254

Headteacher Sharon Rogan

Inspector's name and number David Tait 887

School context

Bishop Ian Ramsey is a smaller than average voluntary aided primary school situated in Medomsley, County Durham with 204 pupils on roll. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported through pupil premium funding is below average. The proportion of pupils with disabilities or special educational needs is above average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British background. Since the previous inspection a new head teacher has been appointed and the school has undergone significant changes in staffing. At the most recent Ofsted inspection in November 2014, the school was graded 'good'.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Medomsley as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- The school's values are based on distinctively Christian values. These are understood and valued by the whole community and impact on children's lives and achievements.
- Collective worship is central to the life of the school and all respond positively. Worship impacts on all aspects of school life including attitudes, behaviour and relationships.
- The recently appointed headteacher and religious education (RE) lead have implemented a range of initiatives and changes. These are beginning to impact positively on pupils.

Areas to improve

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in RE so that it is consistently good for all groups of pupils.
- Use assessment in RE in order to inform teaching and to track pupils' progress over time.
- Consolidate recent improvements in the leadership and management of the school as a church school.
- Develop pupils' understanding of Christianity as a world faith.
- Increase pupils' participation in collective worship by giving them more opportunities to plan, evaluate and lead worship.
- Develop pupils' understanding of the Holy Trinity.
- Strengthen links with the local parish in order that partnerships, that are of benefit to both church and school, flourish.

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

The recently appointed headteacher works closely with the subject leader for RE. Together they have worked at a sustained pace to ensure that the whole school community supports the school's distinctiveness as a Church of England school. The school has carefully considered the school's values in the context of Christian belief and understanding and in consultation with staff and pupils. This work ensures that the values effectively describe the core purpose of the school. The headteacher has worked hard to develop positive relationships where Christian values are shared and understood by the school community. The impact of the school's Christian values is evident in the way pupils treat one another and the attentiveness, nurture and care they show for others in the school and local community. Christian distinctiveness is supported by the environment of the school. Examples of this include the readily used 'prayer wall' and thoughtful reflection areas in each classroom which are highly valued by children. In order to develop the pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural worldwide faith, leaders ensure that the curriculum includes material reflecting Christianity's diverse nature. This is effective in ensuring a broad curriculum, but there has not been enough time yet to sufficiently embed this in order for it to have a significant impact on both the distinctiveness of the school as a church school and pupils' understanding of the multi-cultural nature of Christianity. The headteacher and RE subject leader have taken actions taken since the establishment of the new leadership team in January 2017 to ensure that RE makes a positive contribution to the Christian character of the school. The pupils readily see the importance of RE to their lives and personal situations. Pupils' enthusiasm for RE in which 'we learn about Jesus' and 'think about what people believe and then challenge yourself to do the same' demonstrate that the RE curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. The Christian vision supports pupils' eagerness to attend school and consequently attendance is above the national average. Similarly the school's own data on how well pupils are performing, indicates that standards of achievement are improving and leaders attribute this to the school's Christian vision and values. Survey responses and the parents spoken to during the inspection indicate that most understand and support the school's distinctiveness. The school works assiduously to support parents when appropriate and is beginning to attribute this to its Christian character.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is seen as an important part of the life of Medomsley by all members of the school community. Pupils value collective worship and, as a result, they respond positively and are eager to participate. As a consequence of this engagement with worship, an ethos in which children thrive, succeed and are joyful permeates the school. Children enjoy the growing opportunities they are afforded to lead collective worship, introduced by the headteacher and RE lead. There are limited, but developing, opportunities for pupils to plan and lead worship. Collective worship is carefully planned around the school's values, biblical material and units of work in RE. The headteacher and RE leader manage the planning and delivery of collective worship with some input from pupils. A range of appropriate materials and sources are used and these ensure that pupils have an understanding of Anglican practice and other Christian traditions. As a result, many children are able to relate worship to their own lives. Pupils have a good understanding of the person of Jesus Christ and understand His importance for Christians. This gives children a clear understanding of the Christian faith, which they are then able to relate to their own lives. Charitable endeavours are strong and a focus for pupils, who are eager to offer their time and talents in the service of others. Whilst a regular and growing feature of worship, pupils' understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is limited and the significance of the Trinity is not clear to some pupils. Prayer impacts strongly during class liturgies, where an intimate and reflective atmosphere for worship enables children to take meaning and significance for their own prayer and reflection. In this context pupils are confidently able to offer relevant and meaningful prayers. Class worship books capture many of the rich and positive experiences offered to pupils. As a direct result of the introduction of prayer spaces, prayer and reflection are given further prominence and importance in the daily life of the school. Pupils readily engage with prayer areas and use them to make sense of their own lives. After a prayer activity on forgiveness, using the themed class prayer space, one pupil commented, 'Jesus forgives and we must forgive and let people have new start.' Children and parents value the partnership with the church community and are enthusiastic about celebrating special services both at school and church. There is strong parental support for worship, with many attending as often as they are able. As one parent commented, 'we are always welcome and children talk about the worship and the values at home.' The headteacher and link governor carefully monitor the impact of collective worship on the whole life of the school and this is beginning to be shared with the governing body. However, staff and children currently have only limited

opportunities to evaluate worship and participate in this process of ongoing improvement. The provision for collective worship meets statutory requirements.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

The newly appointed RE lead, supported by the headteacher, has taken action to address the issues identified in the previous inspection report. The impact of these initiatives, however, is limited in scope as decisive action to tackle the areas for development only began with the appointment of a new headteacher earlier this year. Some aspects of teaching and learning in RE are good but this is not yet consistent across the school. Overall, standards are generally in line with national expectations. During some lessons, pupils are given the time to reflect on personal meaning and this enables them to develop their spirituality. Some pupils articulated how RE enabled them to reflect on their own lives, for example when making promises during the season of Advent. Whilst there is some evidence of differentiation, some tasks do not provide the challenge necessary to enable pupils to attain at greater depth. Work in books and the RE class books provide evidence that a broad and appropriate RE curriculum is being delivered in most classes with an age-appropriate development of skills. Assessment in religious education is not yet consistent across the school. As a result, leaders and governors do not have the information required to ensure that high standards and progress in all year groups are secured. Pupils are able to demonstrate an increasingly secure knowledge of some of the main beliefs of Christianity and are often able to answer questions related to purpose or meaning. As a result of work undertaken by the RE lead, the feedback given during the majority of lessons provides effective dialogue between the teacher and the pupils in order to address misconceptions. Procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment have recently introduced and refined. As a result, leaders have secured a strong foundation on which to strengthen the quality of RE in school. The school serves an overwhelmingly white British community. Visits to a local mosque and Buddhist temple give pupils a good understanding of other faiths. Self-evaluation is accurate and carefully identifies appropriate strengths and areas for action in order to secure improvements.

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

The school is developing an accurate understanding of its own effectiveness as a church school. The headteacher, who has been in post since January 2017, has worked diligently, together with the subject leader for RE, to implement changes to policy and practice. The positive impact of these actions is beginning to be felt throughout the school. It is evident that staff are being supported and encouraged to take greater responsibilities in leading school improvement, based on its Christian foundation and through the adoption of distinctive Christian values. Induction for new and temporary staff now includes a clear focus on, and explanation of, the school's developing Christian ethos. The governing body is effective in challenging and supporting the headteacher with regard to the development of the school's Christian character. The headteacher understands clearly the importance of RE and worship and has secured strong leadership in these areas. RE meets statutory requirements. The headteacher and RE lead have accessed support from the diocese, both for themselves and for staff and governors. School leaders and other adults in school have more awareness of how to develop their school to become more distinctively Christian. The leadership has improved communication with parents with regard to the school's distinctive Christian character. Parents are welcomed to attend worship regularly and school communications, including the website, make explicit reference to the school's distinctive Christian ethos and approaches. The parents' association is active and is working with the school to develop and sustain links between the school and the community. Links with the church are strong and the potential and will exists from both partners to see these strengthened. School leaders are being well supported by both the diocese and the local authority. Sustained work to address the foci for development from the previous denominational inspection commenced only in January 2017 and, as a consequence, there has been only limited sustained improvement in some of these areas. Leaders are working assiduously to continue to improve the quality of leadership in RE and have developed appropriate action plans to support this. The RE leader is highly committed to the delivery of effective religious education and is now given sufficient time to carry out this role. As yet however, not all of the school's written documentation reflects recent improvement in practice informed by the focus on the school's Christian values.