

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Much Marcle Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Much Marcle, Ledbury, Herefordshire HR8 2LY

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Hereford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Herefordshire
Date of inspection	05 July 2018
Date of last inspection	02 July 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 116904
Headteacher	Lorna Harrison
Inspector's name and number	William Tisdale 936
Quality Assurance	Allyson Taylor

School context

Much Marcle Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School serves mainly the local village. There are currently 98 pupils on roll which is smaller than the average size school nationally. There are 4 classes throughout the school. The number on roll has remained at a similar number in recent years. A large proportion of pupils are White British. The level of special educational needs and free school meal pupils within the school is significantly lower than national averages. The proportion of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium grant is also less than that nationally.

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

- Christian values are explicit and deeply embedded in this school and are fully lived out by the headteacher and her staff.
- Every child is cherished as a child of God.
- Behaviour of learners is of a high standard and the relationships within the school are testament to the schools values.
- Parents hold the view that all staff practice what they preach which reflects the mutually beneficial partnership between the school, families and the wider community.

Areas to improve

- Establish more formal systems of monitoring Christian character, worship and religious education (RE) by governors to ensure sustained improvement.
- Make provision to give pupils a wider understanding and experience of Anglican traditions of worship.
- Establish a consistent level of challenge in RE so that all learners can make good progress.

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

The Christian values of honesty, respect, love and hope are explicit and deeply embedded in Much Marcle Primary School and permeate every aspect of school life. There is a warm and welcoming atmosphere as you enter the school. The headteacher knows each individual child and nurtures their talents and supports them when faced with difficulties. It is the Christian support which is given to pupils when they are faced with disappointment that makes this school truly special. Pupils are frustrated when they have not been elected to represent the school council but show resilience in response to their disappointment. Staff, pupils and parents are able to identify how the Christian values are having an impact on their daily lives and the significant part that they play in creating a Christian ethos within the school. This is illustrated by pupils being able to explain how their values help support them in making good choices and how they know the difference between right and wrong. The values underpin the strong relationships in the school, with a member of staff stating, 'our values teach the pupils to be kind to each other'. The respect shown by pupils is a strength in this school and leaders attribute values as the bedrock of the behavior policy and the positive attitudes of the pupils. They contribute to outstanding behaviour, excellent manners and strong relationships across the school. Pupils and adults readily link the values with Christian teaching. Attendance in 2016/17 was in line with national figures and this can be attributed to the school's Christian character with pupils expressing a desire to be at school. Leaders are currently taking robust action in response to parents taking their pupils on holiday during term time.

Pupils are very thoughtful and have the opportunity to share thoughts and prayers in class reflection boxes. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to engage in high quality experiences which develop a personal spirituality. For example, pupils ask questions in RE lessons which sometimes nobody knows the answer to. This has a positive impact on their spiritual development and understanding of themselves, others and the world around them. Forest School provides an opportunity for pupils to develop spiritually and to be creative in nature. A school trip to a beach supported this further. Leaders are not currently monitoring the progression of opportunities for spiritual awareness across year groups in order to evaluate their impact on pupils' growing spirituality. Religious education consistently promotes Christian values and makes a significant contribution to the Christian distinctiveness of the school. Pupils have a limited understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith with leaders now planning opportunities to draw upon the experiences of pupils within the school who have arrived from different parts of the world. Opportunities to explore RE in creative ways such as art projects mean that pupils enjoy their RE lessons. This makes an important contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development through enriching experiences that allow them to be inquisitive and express themselves creatively. This is richly demonstrated by an RE display in Class 4. A child enthusiastically discussed his creation of a cross and stated that he chose the colour red because 'it reminds me of Jesus dying on the cross.' He also described the sadness that he felt when working on his piece of art work. Clearly, RE plays an important role in determining the Christian character of the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils see the importance of collective worship and particularly enjoy volunteering to take part in 'Open the Book' on a Wednesday. Older pupils have responded well to leading worship and feel a sense of importance. They feel proud to have been given this responsibility. Worship takes place in a range of settings, including regular services in St. Bartholomew's Church. Worship is varied and is led by staff on a rota system, the local incumbent, the 'Open the Book' team from the local church, visitors to the school and Class 4 pupils. Pupils are very thoughtful in worship and respond well to the opportunities for reflection that they are provided with. Collective worship often includes biblical material with learners able to make links between this and the school's values of honesty, respect, love and hope. Moreover, it shapes their lives and informs the choices that they make. Pupils have an understanding of different Christian traditions in worship but they cannot identify them clearly. Leaders are now planning to use Christian traditions in worship such as lighting a candle and placing a cross on the altar. Themes are clearly relevant and teachers respond promptly to the needs of pupils and address their concerns, which in turn, develops their spiritual and moral development. Class 4 pupils lead worship once a week and have risen to the challenge of taking responsibility for it. Younger pupils contribute to worship and participate when they are given the opportunity to. Pupils write prayers and share them in reflection boxes in classrooms but not all pupils have the opportunity to regularly share their prayers in worship times. Learners have an awareness of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in worship but it is not a strong focus of collective worship. The pupils enjoy worshipping in a range of different settings and particularly enjoy end of term services in church. Parents and carers support collective worship and their attendance at end of term services is encouraged by the invitation to go back to school and look at pupils' work afterwards. Parents appreciate this invitation and leaders use it to monitor and evaluate collective worship by gaining informal feedback. Leaders also observe acts of worship which identifies where improvement is needed.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Pupils are engaged in their learning and the majority of them feel excited by their RE lessons. Good progress is made by learners. Attainment for the majority of pupils is in line with national expectations with external moderation used to confirm judgements. The pupils understand the importance of RE and are given opportunities in their learning to develop their enquiry, evaluation and reflection skills. They particularly enjoy the opportunities for discussion and creative activities. A pupil had created a piece of art work and had asked the question, 'what colour is God?' Clearly, pupils are creative in applying their knowledge within their RE lessons and are able to ask questions which demonstrate originality. Teaching and learning is good and planning is informed by assessment. The feedback to pupils in their books is consistently in line with the learning objective in RE, which in turn, supports the assessment process. The school follows the Herefordshire's agreed syllabus with teachers planning lessons which build upon previous learning.

Leaders within the school place a high level of importance on differentiation in RE and have adopted a 'ready, steady, go' approach when presenting tasks. Pupils are provided with activities which have three different levels of challenge. Lower ability pupils sometimes select a more manageable task with higher attaining pupils enjoying the freedom to move to the question presenting them with the highest level of challenge. Pupils are challenged by the range of tasks on offer and this approach ensures that the needs of different groups of learners are met. Pupils have a good knowledge of other faiths and were clearly excited when they recalled memories from their multi-faith day which took place in January. They were able to talk confidently about the main practices of other faiths and this has clearly been enhanced by the offering of special events. Learners also have a secure knowledge of Christianity and the Bible with a pupil in an RE lesson stating that 'reading the Bible is important because it helps me to draw closer to God.' It is clear that RE contributes to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to the Christian values which are of fundamental importance in this school. Leaders attended a recent SACRE conference and then used a staff meeting to share an assessment initiative with other teachers. Not only are leaders able to demonstrate an awareness of current developments in religious education, but also the improvements that have been made in response to their attendance on subject specific courses. Monitoring of the subject by leaders has led to a variable level of improvement by pupils with pupils in different classes occasionally receiving similar tasks. This does not allow them to make appropriate levels of progress in RE. The subject lacks rigorous and extensive monitoring and evaluation directly leading to improvement.

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

Leaders promote a vision which is deeply underpinned by distinctively Christian values but they are not able to confidently articulate this. Strong, purposeful leadership by the headteacher is fully supported by Christian values. Leaders are able to articulate the impact of Christian values on the lives of learners and on whole life of this school. The value of respect is fully understood by the entire school community and the impact of this is significant, with staff, pupils and parents showing a high degree of respect for each other. Staff comment on how they feel respected and valued by the headteacher which leads to a willingness to go beyond their individual roles which benefits the school. The partnership between school and home is strong and parents appreciate how the school makes their pupils feel valued. Informal self-evaluation involves most stakeholders within the school community but it is not always accurate. Governors are not supporting this process and are not yet monitoring Christian character, worship and RE to ensure sustained change. Leaders have a good understanding of the school's performance and external moderation of writing in Year 6 cements the view that standards this year will be above those nationally. The headteacher knows each of her pupils individually and they are cherished as a child of God.

Behaviour and attitudes are outstanding and this is a result of a distinctive Christian vision which informs all areas of the curriculum. Staff members are proud that pupils who have left this school continue to behave in a respectful and thoughtful manner many years later. The impact on learners is long lasting and serves the pupils well in their futures. The wider community contributes to school life and the frequent visits of the incumbent bring the school and the community closer together. The school has a high profile in the local community and is well thought of. Parents also support the school enthusiastically and say that are prepared to 'go the extra mile' to help the school raise money. The RE and worship leader has recently attended the SACRE conference and continues to develop her role. She is on the school leadership team which gives RE a status of importance. She receives additional release time to fulfil her management position. It is clear that worship and RE have a high priority and this is leading to improving practice in both areas.