

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

### Charlton Horethorne Church of England VA Primary School

Charlton Horethorne, Sherborne, Dorset, DT9 4NL

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Bath and Wells</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Somerset
Date/s of inspection	4 July 2017
Date of last inspection	29 June 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided Primary School 123901
Headteacher	Joanne Williams
Inspector's name and number	Rupert Kaye (906)

#### School context

Charlton Horethorne Church of England Primary School is a small rural school of 66 pupils. Children work within three mixed-aged classes. Almost all of the children are of White British heritage. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than the national average, as is the figure for children who are supported by pupil premium grant funding. Three quarters of children attending the school come from outside the catchment area. The headteacher has been head in post since September 2015. The school recently celebrated its 130<sup>th</sup> birthday. Ofsted judged the school to be 'good' in February 2017.

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

- The headteacher's purposeful leadership, ably supported by committed governors and staff and inspired by Christian values, is raising standards and improving outcomes for all children.
- Children's exemplary behaviour and care and concern for one another is clearly attributed to the Christian character of the school.
- Collective worship has developed significantly since the last inspection and is now a strength of the school inspiring children and adults in developing their personal spirituality as well as deepening their understanding of Jesus and the Church.

#### Areas to improve

- Ensure governors work together to create a culture of critical self-review in the expectation that their monitoring and evaluation will lead directly and convincingly to effective strategies for school improvement.
- Deepen children's understanding of and respect for religious diversity and difference within the Christian church and other faith communities by organising opportunities for first hand encounters with people from a variety of faith communities.
- Review religious education (RE) assessments, taking into consideration both the school's phased introduction of Understanding Christianity resources and age-related mastery approaches to assessing children's higher order thinking skills and comprehension of key concepts.

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

Charlton Horethorne lives up to its mission to 'nurture, develop and educate children in a happy, secure, caring Christian community'. The school is a happy place with a strong sense of community that is underpinned by seven key Christian values: love, forgiveness, respect, honesty, perseverance, courage and fairness. Children have a good understanding of each of these values and most can explain what they look like in everyday life. Similarly, most children can relate these values to stories from the Bible, notably linking them to stories about, or stories told by, Jesus. Children and parents alike talk about the school as 'one big family' where 'children of all ages play together as a whole school' and 'know each other by name'. This is of particular relevance given that the majority of children attending Charlton Horethorne live outside the village. Older children see themselves as leaders and role models for younger children, and younger children respect and trust older children 'because they take care of us at playtimes' and 'they always listen to our ideas'. The school's family feel is manifest in whole school collective worship times where children sit in a horse-shoe configuration in mixed-age groups with their own family and friends. The headteacher 'lives and breathes' the school's Christian ethos, ensuring that all children acquire both 'head knowledge' and 'heart knowledge' so that they grow in character and wisdom. Data shows that academic attainment for the school was above the national average in 2016 and 2017. School leaders attribute this to the school's distinctive Christian ethos, which creates a supportive learning environment in which all children feel secure and able to try new things and take risks. Children take pride in their work and talk with confidence about what they are doing well and what they need to improve upon. Children say their efforts are noticed and celebrated. Consequently, children want to be in school and their attendance is above the national average. Staff and governors have a common understanding of spirituality and a shared commitment to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. As a result, behaviour is excellent and, when conflicts arise, children are often able to settle disputes with a minimum of adult mediation because they can confidently express their thoughts and feelings. Children learn to empathise with other people by applying the Christian values of courage, love and compassion to each situation. They reflect on how they themselves can help fairly resolve the situation, which may involve apology and/or forgiveness which leads to reconciliation and friendship. School leaders ensure that religious education helps children to develop an understanding of Christianity as a worldwide faith. Children talk respectfully and age-appropriately about diversity and difference within Christianity and other faith communities both within the UK and overseas. Older children make appropriate links between respect and tolerance, and the teachings of Jesus, British values and their own school's inclusive ethos.

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

Collective worship has developed significantly since the last inspection and is now a strength of the school. This is because regular monitoring and evaluation, undertaken by a range of adults and children over the last two years, has encouraged review, innovation and significant improvement. Collective worship now has a positive impact on the life of the school, inspiring children and adults in developing their personal spirituality as well as deepening their understanding of Jesus and the Church. Children enjoy attending collective worship and can make links with their own lives and the school's core Christian values. Younger children say they like 'listening to Bible stories' and 'saying prayers' because this helps them 'know the right thing to do'. Older children appreciate the chance to 'be quiet and reflect' and 'learn more about God' because 'we need to live by our school values'. Collective worship has a strong focus on the person of Jesus and children see charitable giving as a way of 'doing what Jesus would want us to do for others'. Consequently, the school has responded to the needs of others by supporting a range of charities working with people in the UK and around the world. Children show respect during collective worship through their attentiveness, good behaviour and willingness to share their own thoughts when invited to do so. The school is well supported by the rector, who is a governor and regular visitor to the school. The rector delivers collective worship, provides pastoral support for the whole school community and plans, with the headteacher, the school's collective worship themes. Worship planning is linked to Bible stories and 'Roots and Fruits' activities, which focus on one Christian value each half term. Acts of worship are of a broadly Christian nature, based on the church year and include Anglican practice. Children share the peace, hear readings from the Bible and learn traditional prayers. On Thursdays, two parishioners lead collective worship through singing. This means children know a variety of traditional and contemporary worship songs. Innovative collective worship provides opportunities for children to explore the Christian concept of the Trinity and many children can explain that the lighting of three candles represents God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Parents and governors appreciate the opportunities to attend and participate in worship at the school and at the church. An increasing number of parents attend weekly 'Church Tuesday' school collective worship which is led by the rector in the parish church building. Parents also attend Friday collective worship in school to see 'Stars of the Week' values awards presented to children. Parents say that children talk enthusiastically at home about 'writing and saying their own prayers' and 'dressing up and acting out Bible stories' in collective worship times. Interactive worship helps them to 'think about

deep questions about God and life'. Children especially look forward to weekly 'Wednesday Worship' which is led by Key Stage 2 children who take it in turns to plan and lead one act of worship each term. This has given the older children a sense of ownership as well as helping them develop and deepen their own spirituality and theological understanding. There are, however, no designated sacred spaces in the school grounds set aside for children to pause in awe and wonder, prayer or quiet reflection, or engage in spontaneous outdoor worship.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

Children clearly enjoy RE lessons and are encouraged to reflect and think about their learning. Children make links between new learning and prior knowledge about religious beliefs and customs. For example, on the day of the inspection, Key Stage 1 children made links between Hanukkah as a festival of light for Jews and the Christian claim that Jesus is the Light of the World. In Key Stage 2 children compared and contrasted fasting and self-denial for Muslims during Ramadan and Christians during Lent. RE teaching is generally good, assessments are used to inform teacher planning and children progress well. Children of all ages are aware of their targets, and say that marking and feedback helps them to improve their work. Monitoring and tracking by school leaders indicate that RE attainment is in line with both age-related expectations and attainment in other subjects. However, no use is made of strategies such as external moderation or portfolio collections of work exemplifying 'age-related' and 'greater depth' attainment to secure judgements over time. Where high quality religious artefacts are used in combination with challenging questions about faith and life, children's learning is enriched and outcomes are greater. School leaders are aware that such practice is not consistent across the school. Consequently, the school has prioritised investment in more artefacts and ongoing professional development for teachers, especially as they begin to use 'Understanding Christianity' to deepen children's theological literacy and extend their higher order thinking skills. Beautiful RE displays around the school premises celebrate what children have learnt and provide respectful examples of multi-cultural diversity and difference. Through RE children develop respect for people of other faiths and none. However, Charlton Horethorne children are currently limited to 'virtual' tours of a mosque and a synagogue via the Internet because the school does not organise real visits and real visitors which would allow children to go to places of worship and engage with worshippers from the full range of religions studied.

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

Parents are supportive of the school's caring, nurturing Christian ethos and feel welcomed, appreciated and listened to. One parent noted: 'Children have ownership of the school's values and get excited about sharing them and putting them into action at home.' Another parent said: 'The school has always been a caring, loving family but it now encourages children to try new things and push themselves further in their learning.' Parents, staff and governors link this change in emphasis to arrival of the new headteacher and the mission statement and core Christian values which were agreed by the whole school community at a 'Vision and Values Day' in September 2015. The headteacher's clear and unequivocal ambition is for academic standards at Charlton Horethorne to improve so that every girl and boy can flourish in every way and achieve their God-given potential. The headteacher talks passionately about the need for a broad, rich, stimulating curriculum that will develop 'head knowledge' and 'heart knowledge' so that when children move on to secondary school they are ready to make the most of the next stage of their education. Foundation governors are fully committed to the school's Christian character and supportive of staff, parents and children. Collectively, governors ask challenging questions of the headteacher and monitor day-to-day school life and educational outcomes. For example, governors are involved in monitoring and evaluating the extent to which collective worship and RE are informed by the school's Christian values and impact on children's SMSC development. However, monitoring and evaluation is not yet outstanding at Charlton Horethorne because it does not always lead directly and convincingly to effective strategies for school improvement. The rector is a governor and provides support to the school in planning and leading collective worship as well as supporting school staff in the teaching of RE. The school meets statutory requirements for collective worship and RE. The school has good links with the diocese and benefits from its training and advice. All staff are given opportunities for continuing professional development, attending diocesan and local authority courses, valuing the networking and training on offer. The parish church and its congregation are an integral part of school life. Similarly, the school is cherished by the church and the wider village and parish as a focal point for community activity. Members of the parish church congregation run Christian holiday club 'experience days' at the village hall to which all Charlton Horethorne pupils are invited. Recent examples – which were attended by a number of children whose families do not have regular church links – included a 'Harvest Experience', an 'Easter Experience' and a 'Pentecost Experience'. The latter memorably included a popcorn maker and fireworks! Since the previous SIAMS inspection the school has made good progress in addressing all three areas for development. Firstly, collective worship is now well-planned and based on Christian values. Secondly, the school improvement plan explicitly refers to developing church school distinctiveness. Thirdly, religious education schemes of work have been developed and embedded.