

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Leckhampton Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Hall Road, Leckhampton, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL53 0HP

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Gloucester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Date of inspection	6 February 2018
Date of last inspection	1 February 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled Primary School 115667
Headteacher	Sam Porter
Inspector's name and number	Margaret James (698)

School context

Leckhampton Church of England Primary School is a large school with 439 pupils currently on roll. In 2015, the school temporarily increased its published admissions number from 60 to 75 to accommodate extra demand for places and organised this cohort into 3 classes. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The numbers of pupils in receipt of free school meals or for whom the school receives pupil premium funding are significantly lower than the national average as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs. The school has a very low deprivation indicator. The headteacher and governors led a review of the school's Christian vision and values in September 2017.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Leckhampton VC Primary as a Church of England school are outstanding

- This is an outstanding vision-led Christian learning community, characterised by an insightful focus on the needs of each individual for the benefit of the whole school family.
- All actions, policies, decisions, and strategic plans emanate from the belief that each person is a child of God and can live a life of fullness in Christ.
- Inspired by the school's Christian vision all members of staff work hard and with good effect, demonstrating their shared commitment to the flourishing of all children and adults in the school community. Consequently, children thrive. They know that they are loved and that they have the ability to make the world a better place for others.
- Staff are reflective and innovative. They relentlessly scrutinise all areas of provision to ensure that they are meeting children's needs to the best of their ability. One outcome of this is that children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a priority. This leads to their impressively mature emotional development and an easy acceptance of those who are different from themselves.

Areas to improve

- Enable pupil worship leaders to have greater independence to explore ways in which they can enhance worship in the school. This might include, but not be limited to, new ways of gaining feedback on worship and trialling innovative opportunities for worship for all members of the school family
- Review ways, and take action based on the findings, in which the excellent vision-based practice in the school can be shared with other Church of England schools both within and beyond the diocese.

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

Leckhampton VC Primary is an inspirational Christian learning community in which meeting the specific needs of each individual is effectively balanced with looking outwards to the needs of the whole school family. This is achieved because staff have a shared understanding of and commitment to education being at the heart of the Christian Gospel. They describe how the life of Jesus and the teachings of the Bible create a context for their work and explain that this enables them to remain true to their belief in the right of every person to thrive – academically, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. In this way, they regard themselves as being role models and they devote their energies to teasing out of each child his or her individual potential to flourish and grow. The outworking of the mission and purpose of the school through an uncompromising focus on deeply Christian values means that the school's motto of 'Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors' is a daily reality for all children and adults. Children have an impressively mature acceptance of those who are different from themselves in any way. They talk openly about differing abilities, cultures, faiths, and beliefs and discuss the freedom which they have in school to be themselves, to be 'the best we can be'. They use the analogy of a 'big family' when discussing their school and explain how people within a family can have many differences yet remain woven together by love. They are very clear that it is the shared commitment to living by the school's Christian values of respect, compassion, responsibility, and perseverance that enables the school family to stand strong together. They explain how their teachers' focus on Christian values, even with the youngest children, means that all children are equipped to build their lives upon these values. They believe that this enables them to make informed decisions when they are older, agreeing that 'this gives us a better chance in life'. Children of all ages have an impressive understanding of ways in which their values-driven actions, such as being kind, not only improve life for others but also improve their own life. They describe this as them being like a magnet – 'what you give out, you attract back'. They are clear, however, that this is not the incentive for such behaviour but that it happens to be a consequence.

The recent review of the curriculum and the resulting design of a new curriculum reflect the relentless drive for cohesion in vision and practice. This is an example of the way in which life and learning at the school are rooted in the Christian narrative for the flourishing of all. As part of this review, all subject leaders have clarified the vision for their own subject in the context of the wider school vision. This has resulted in the development of a curriculum which focuses in detail on the place of each topic and activity in manifesting the school's vision and values, and thereby deepens the connection between the values culture of the school and the learning experience for all children. Religious education (RE) is central to the school's curriculum and recent changes to content and approaches to teaching are inspiring developments in other subject areas. The subject also contributes to children's impressive knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other world religions and plays a significant part in developing their curiosity about the world, and about differences and similarities between people. In the Leckhampton curriculum, an understanding of spirituality and spiritual development is not regarded as being separate from, for example, learning in History or Science. The shared appreciation of spirituality as being an outpouring of self to God and an awareness that everyone is part of something bigger than oneself is a central feature of the school's work. As a result, superficial connections do not need to be made between curriculum provision and children's spiritual development because spirituality is at the heart of curriculum design itself. The spiritual maturity evident in all children is one consequence of this.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Inclusive, engaging, inspirational, and transformational Christian worship is at the very heart of Leckhampton Primary School. Leaders apply their own understanding of faith and worship to the continual development of a programme of worship which enables all who wish to be involved to grow spiritually. The purpose of worship at the school is to give worth to God and to bring the school family together. As a result, children and adults alike speak of their own spiritual development and their opinions on faith. They consider that being part of this school family plays a significant part in their individual journeys of faith and they identify ways in which experiences of school worship have helped them to grow as spiritual human beings. Children know that they are free to be as involved with worship as they want to be and speak of the respectful ways in which those who have no particular religious faith are also included in acts of worship. Children are secure in the knowledge that they are under no pressure to engage in worship or to express a personal faith and all freely share their own opinions. The role of pupil worship leader has a high status in the school and children eloquently explain why they want to be involved. They describe ways in which the role allows them to engage with their peers and to offer small pieces of appropriate advice to others who seek a deeper understanding of personal faith and worship. Children of all ages are involved in worship, including its leadership, on a regular basis. They regard it as a natural part of school life which allows them to show gratitude to God, whom they talk about freely and with ease. Teachers lead class worship every week and these are age-appropriate spiritual times of openness and sharing. Prayer is also a routine feature of life at the school. All adults and children are invited to pray at specially organised times and, more informally, to use the reflection areas which are in all classes and public spaces. Children make excellent use of these opportunities and appreciate the

freedom which their teachers afford them to engage in prayer and reflection. Parents, staff, and governors also have opportunities to pray together and those who make use of these times speak of their value in bringing the school family together. Pupil and adult worship leaders are eager to seek new and innovative ways in which they might deepen still further the experience of worship at Leckhampton. They have ideas for the development of new mechanisms for feedback on the impact which worship has on individuals' lives as well as for new and 'organic' opportunities for worship. Their purpose in this is to further deepen the spiritual life of the school family and to grow together through worship. Joint initiatives between the school and St Peter's church energise and enliven both communities. There is a shared vision for school and church to be a seamless unit for the benefit of children and their families and this is enabled through close and reflective working between the headteacher, school worship leaders, and the vicar. Acts of worship regularly include Christian teaching on, for example, God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and provide occasions for key stages, classes and the whole school to study Bible passages and the relevance of biblically rooted Christian values. As a result of the richness and breadth of this worship and teaching, children and adults demonstrate spiritual maturity which is one of the hallmarks of this outstanding church school.

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

The headteacher of Leckhampton Primary School leads from her understanding of, commitment to, and belief in a Christian education. As a result of her leadership, the school team has a clarity of vision and purpose which enables them to take decisions, to withstand unnecessary external pressure, and to focus exclusively on the flourishing of each person for the benefit of the whole school family. The school's vision, summed up in the motto and in the commitment to help children to prepare for life in a modern and changing world, is rooted in the biblical imperative that all should be enabled to live life in all its fullness in Christ. All planning, both strategic and operational, emerges from a shared commitment to this vision and all members of the school team understand how their specific areas of work and responsibility fit within it. Recruitment of staff routinely includes an exploration of the school's vision and purpose and, as a result, staff join the team with a clear understanding of the culture of the school. This is evident in the cohesive, supportive, committed, and innovative nature of the team and in their dedication to acting in such a way which enables the children in their care to flourish as individuals. Staff well-being is also an important aspect of school life. Leaders determinedly and creatively seek ways, in consultation with staff, which will enable all members of the team to flourish as unique individuals. Governors' comprehensive and meaningful monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of all areas of school life is rooted in their understanding of the school's Christian vision and their commitment to it drives them to ask insightful questions of school leaders. In this way, they fulfil their role as strategic school leaders and make an effective contribution to ongoing and reflective school review and development. Parents are welcomed as members of the school family and this enables them to be partners in their children's education. Partnerships are a key feature of this outward-looking Christian learning community. School leaders demonstrate an abundance of passion and continually seek new areas of challenge and development which are in line with their vision. Because they have such a clear sense of who they are, what they are doing as a school, and how they should live they are able to identify partners who will add value to the school. In this way leaders ensure that the school continues to develop and remain effective. This is a further feature of school life which emerges from the shared vision that all will be enabled to be the best that they can be. The parish church is a key partner with the school and the vicar is regarded and appreciated as part of the school team. RE and collective worship are considered by all to be important elements of school life and their leadership is given high priority. This is evident through their comprehensive resourcing, the training given to leaders and the regard in which they are held by the school family. This leads to inspirational provision which has a direct and positive impact on adults and children. School leaders demonstrate a commitment to growing leaders for other church schools and they put time, money, and effort into this task. As a team, they are characterised by their humility and they do not find it easy to promote their excellence. In many ways, this is commendable. However, other church schools have much to learn from the integrity of vision, purpose, and practice in this flourishing and highly effective Church of England school.

SIAMS report February 2018, Leckhampton VC Primary School, Cheltenham, GL53 0HP