

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Lawrence's Church of England Primary School

School Hill, Westbury sub Mendip, Wells, Somerset. BA5 1HL	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Bath and Wells
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Somerset
Name of federation	The Federation of Priddy and St Lawrence's
Date of inspection	19 September 2017
Date of last inspection	18 September 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 123779
Headteacher	Rosie Thorner
Inspector's name and number	Alison Appleyard 877

School context

St Lawrence's CofE Primary School is a smaller than average school with 63 children organised into two classes. The arrangement of classes can change as numbers of children are small. The school serves children from its own and other local villages. Pupils are mostly White British and the number of those with special educational needs and for whom the school receives additional Pupil Premium funding, is below national average. The school is federated with Priddy School (not a Church school), and shares a governing body and some staff and systems. The headteacher is new since the last inspection.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Lawrence's Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- Core values, understood by everyone, create a discernibly Christian ethos which informs the daily life of the school.
- Religious education (RE) and collective worship are highly valued and enjoyed by all stakeholders and they provide opportunities for good personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.
- Prayer and reflection are an important part of school life encouraging and supporting personal spiritual growth.
- The imaginative use of outdoor learning in the school's country setting encourages the experiencing of awe and wonder and offers ways for children and staff to get close to the person of Jesus and to his teachings.

Areas to improve

- Leaders should develop a clear Christian vision which they can articulate so that everyone understands how all policy and practice is informed by Christian teaching.
- The holding to account of the headteacher by governors for the school as a church school should be more thoroughly developed and recorded in order to support growth in this area.
- Children should be more involved in the planning, delivery and evaluation of whole school collective worship to allow them to play a full part in this important shared time of day.
- Opportunities should be taken to further develop the inclusion of Anglican liturgy in collective worship to enable children to become more familiar with Anglican traditions.

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

Distinctively Christian values are well embedded in the life of the school. They underpin school planning and development, and most children and adults are able to explain how these distinctively Christian values impact upon their personal lives. Children select which of the different Christian values the whole school will focus on each half term. These become the themes for collective worship and are also evident in classroom work. Displays based on Christian values are prominent in shared spaces and within the classrooms. They are largely made up of the children's own work and their responses to the values. For example, a hope prayer tree in the hall carries messages such as, 'I hope the terror attacks stop,' and 'I hope Lucy gets better soon.' To support the value of friendship each week the school runs a buddy playtime where the children play together in mixed age groups. This time is particularly enjoyed by children and is supportive of their well-being as they make new friends of different ages and can draw upon these extra friendships as and when they want to. The school is good at ensuring the academic progress and needs of all its pupils, whatever their ability, are addressed and makes the most of its mixed age teaching to do this. This is underpinned by the school's commitment to every child being created in the image of God and deserving of the best. The vicar is right to be proud of the fact that all children flourish and develop as resilient learners. The Christian character of the school supports the SMSC development of the children, whatever their backgrounds and beliefs. For example the children enjoy using the outside quiet spaces, contemplative garden and pond in their unstructured time. They reflect on the beauty of their surroundings which are, for some, evidence of God's wonderful creation. They speak openly about their contemplations and of valuing the peace that these areas afford them. Behaviour is good across the school. Children say that they think about the stories of Jesus, ask themselves what he would do in a situation and then try to do it themselves. Children have a developing awareness of their place in the world. The school runs a number of trips to enable the children to gain new experiences, for example to London. On this trip they identify different languages around them and develop an understanding of the difference between city and village life. The school has liaised with children in other countries and supported children in war-torn Iraq with ideas for games that required no equipment. Following facetime with a Sikh, Ravi Singh, the children wrote ideas for games to the children he was working with in Iraq and then raised money to buy games equipment to send out to them. Staff encourage children to put themselves in the shoes of other people and this work with the children of Iraq demonstrated their empathy with these disadvantaged children. Now the school is developing pen-pal links with children in an inner city Birmingham academy made up of children from a wide variety of ethnic groups. This is further developing the children's understanding and tolerance of ethnic diversity and their understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. Through the assurance that they are loved, children feel safe and happy in school and so attendance is good. Children say that they are proud of their school and are eager to tell visitors all about it. Religious education is important in the lives of the children, strongly contributing to their SMSC development and children relate what they learn in RE to their everyday world. When discussing the values of love and compassion the older children were told the parable of the ten lepers. On reflecting in class that all people are created equal by God they discussed the story and made a link with Princess Diana's fame for being compassionate and for shaking the hand of a person with leprosy. They concluded that this was a good thing to do.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is regarded by stakeholders to be of importance to the school community and children enjoy daily worship. Collective worship themes are based on Christian values and selected by the children who choose them for their relevance to their everyday lives. These values are then linked with RE and children say that they learn from the themes and Bible stories and apply what they have learned to their behaviour. For example, in the playground one boy said that he remembered the story of the lost boy (prodigal son) and it reminded him to share what he was doing and include a lonely child in his game. Learners have some understanding of the Christian year and some Anglican traditions, particularly Christian festivals, though these are not yet sufficiently explored in collective worship. Though staff and the local vicar work together to plan a programme for worship, children are not yet sufficiently involved in planning and delivering whole school worship. This is evident in their attentive but passive behaviour during collective worship.

They particularly enjoy weekly opportunities to celebrate together their achievements including the receipt of 'caring Christian awards'. However, there is insufficient regular evaluation of collective worship to inform future planning. Children have a well-developed understanding of the benefits of reflection and prayer. Opportunities for both are a regular feature of the school day and several children described how they use the beautiful quiet garden as a place to pray and think about things that are affecting them. There are also prayer crystals available which children and staff use to symbolize a prayer which they want to offer to God, such as a request for the recovery of a poorly friend or thanks for them living in a place where they have enough food to eat. There are prayer trees in both the hall and the classrooms and these are covered in personal communications with God. Children write

prayers and each class keeps a class book of these prayers to use during the school day. Parents confirmed that children say prayers and sing hymns at home. One parent said that it was noticeable how much scripture their children came home with. Collective worship often includes teaching about Jesus but children have not yet acquired a basic understanding of the significance of the Holy Trinity.

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

The school is led by a strong and visionary, church school headteacher. She models God's love in action and the distinctively Christian character of the school. She cares for both students and their families within the extended family of the school and federation. Leaders live out a distinctively Christian ethos though they are unable to express what defines this in shared language. This means other stakeholders are unable to talk with understanding about how Christian teaching drives the school. However, the strong Christian ethos continues to ensure that all children are cared for as children of God. Both academic achievement and spiritual development are nurtured to enable all children, whatever their strengths and abilities, to, as their strapline says, 'be the best that they can be.' Leaders know their school and their self-evaluation is thorough. This enables accurate planning and appropriate challenge academically. However, governors do not robustly hold the headteacher to account for the success of the school as a church school in order to move the school forward on this journey. Succession planning for church school leadership, is good. For example, to secure smooth transition, the new chair of governors (elect) has been trained in all areas of her new role prior to her taking up the post. Relationships are good between all stakeholders in this school including relationships with Priddy School with whom St Lawrence's is federated. This friendship and mutual trust means that often trips run jointly, for example to the theatre. The sharing of some staff and lessons is another illustration of the close and happy working relationship between the two schools led by the vision of their shared headteacher. The school enjoys excellent partnership working with the local church and with the village community. The regular presence of the vicar in school and the contribution that she makes to the Christian life of the school, provides pastoral care for pupils, their families and also for staff. The school celebrates Christian festivals with services in church to which parents and carers are invited. These services are also open to, and well attended by, the local village community from whom there is huge commitment and support. Parents feel involved in the school and say that it is a close knit, caring family to which they are proud to belong. They believe that communication is good and staff are accessible. Parents and community volunteers support the school in everyday tasks such as driving the minibus or clearing leaves from the playground as well as in school visits to church. Links with the Diocese are good. Children attend the Pilgrim Days held in Wells Cathedral each year and this helps to form part of their transition to the church secondary school in Wells. Religious education is given a high priority and is well-resourced. Expertise in RE has been developed in the staff and a commitment made to the RE leader's continued professional development. Arrangements for both religious education and collective worship meet statutory requirements.

SIAMS report September 2017 St Lawrence's Church of England Primary School, Westbury sub Mendip BA5 1HL