

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

### Ivington Voluntary Aided (VA) Church of England Primary School

Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 0JH

**Current SIAMS inspection grade**

**Outstanding**

**Diocese**

**Hereford**

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Local authority

Hereford

Date of inspection

13 February 2018

Date of last inspection

3 October 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

VA 116894

Headteacher

Melanie Smith

Inspector's name and number

Susan Blackburn 756

#### School context

Ivington Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is a smaller than average primary school with 116 pupils on roll, which has recently been extended to accommodate 5 classes. Pupils mainly come from Leominster and the local rural area. The head teacher has been in post for four years. More pupils are eligible for support through pupil premium funding (28%) compared to those nationally. The school has a higher percentage of pupils on the special educational needs register (27%) compared to those nationally. The school became responsible for the preschool provision in 2016. The school has strong links with the local church which is situated very near to the school.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ivington as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The Christian leadership and vision of the headteacher, which is confidently lived out and promoted by all leaders, is instrumental in the creation of the distinctively Christian school that is welcoming and harmonious.
- Exemplary pastoral support, based on the Christian values of care and trust, enable pupils to flourish within a safe Christian community.
- Behaviour is excellent and pupils show the utmost consideration, respect and courteousness.
- Collective worship lies at the heart of school life and contributes positively to pupils' exceptional spiritual and moral development.

#### Areas to improve

- Engage foundation governors in formally evaluating worship in order to establish the impact of the Christian ethos on personal development and wellbeing of all pupils.
- Make the distinctive Christian character of the school as explicit on the school website as it is throughout the school.
- Ensure monitoring of teaching and learning in religious education (RE) provides clear development points in order to raise standards even higher.

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

This is a safe, caring Christian school that fulfils its mission statement by enabling pupils of all abilities and needs to achieve well. This has been enhanced through the extension of the school building, which enabled the school to meet the needs of all learners in a more appropriate setting, contributing to the good progress achieved by all groups of pupils. The school provides exceptional care and support, engaging with outside agencies such as 'Connecting Communities', which enables all pupils to flourish. Attendance for all groups of pupils is high because pupils enjoy coming to school and because the school places great importance on pupils attending well, linking high attendance to the high achievement of all groups of pupils. All stakeholders promote the half termly values, rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ, which have a significant impact on pupils' lives. Pupils could readily identify the current value of friendship, bringing in responses from home to create a poster to exemplify how this value can be lived out in school. The distinctly Christian values are promoted in corridors, in weekly newsletters and classroom displays, as well as through positive relationships and pupils' exceptional attitudes to learning. The school actively promotes ways in which pupils can work together, sharing their God given talents, living out the school's vision statement 'Reaching together ...to provide a caring, Christian ethos for the school, which inspires and excites a shared enthusiasm for life and learning'. Pupils are confident in linking their exemplary behaviour to stories from the Bible such as 'Adam and Eve' pointing out that it is important not to break a promise. 'Always keep your promises like God kept his'. Parents comment that they choose to send their children to this Christian school because of the importance placed on the values of respect, kindness, and tolerance and that they feel the school values each individual. In many areas of school life pupils are given opportunities to develop their spirituality. Pupils place a high emphasis on the importance of prayer and value the special prayer spaces that have been created by a member of the church in each classroom. Pupils say that they 'pray to connect to God' and are clear as to what types of prayer they can choose to use such as to say sorry or thank you. This has a significant impact on pupils' spiritual development. The school provides opportunities for learners to develop their understanding of other faiths and cultures through RE. Visits to other places of worship such as a local mosque and the local churches in Leominster are appreciated and give pupils an opportunity to learn from first-hand experience. They spoke knowledgeably about the experience of visiting the mosque, sharing information such as 'Muslims pray five times a day' and recounting their experience with enthusiasm. Parents commented that the school 'promotes an acceptance that we are all different but that everyone is accepted and valued' linking this to the current value of friendship. The school has active links with other countries, particularly a school in Tanzania where members of staff have undergone exchange visits. Pupils have had the opportunity to question adults about life in this school, enhancing their understanding of life in another country. Pupils play well together across all year groups and say that everyone is kind. The incumbent leads school worship in church each week. The strong links with the church and the promotion of the Christian faith has encouraged children to make the personal choice to deepen their faith through attending St John's Church and in participating in the community choir.

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

Worship and prayer play a central part in the daily life of the school community and is valued by adults as well as pupils. The school visits St John's Church regularly every week to worship and pupils have a very secure understanding and experience of Anglican traditions and practice. Pupils enjoy worship and one pupil commented that 'Worship makes me feel part of a community; it is a special time when we all come together'. They look forward to the weekly 'Open the Book' services and are regularly encouraged to take part. Worship is well-planned, incorporating a focus on one of the school values, the person of Jesus Christ and on stories from the Bible. This enables pupils to relate the values seen in Jesus' life to the values in their own daily lives. Parents say their children pray at home and pupils were clear that prayer enables them to consider their actions and to thank God. Pupils are encouraged to use prayer for a variety of reasons including to say sorry when something goes wrong and asking for guidance to put things right. Pupils regularly compose prayers which form a part of worship both in school and in class. They pray at lunch time and the end of the school day, as well as during worship time. A prayer space and worship area in each classroom provides a central place for pupils to share their prayers and thoughts with God, Jesus and each other. Worship engages all pupils. They demonstrate respect and sing with enthusiasm. Pupils take their responsibilities in setting up and preparing for worship seriously. They lead seasonal services in church such as Harvest and a Remembrance Day service. They regularly lead celebration worship and class worship. Pupils lead the greeting in church and take an active part in the regular services. As a result, pupils have a deep understanding of many Anglican traditions. Recent monitoring has included seeking the views of pupils on worship however they have not, as yet, been invited to give their thoughts and ideas to improve worship. School services are attended by many parents who welcome the opportunity to worship together. Currently, the school does not have a system in place to capture their views on worship other than an annual questionnaire. Members of The Priory in Leominster were involved in developing the school Eucharist, further enhancing pupils' spiritual development. Pupils talked confidently about the representation of the bread and wine as the body and blood of Jesus Christ and said they enjoyed participating in the communion. Governors visit the school regularly and take their monitoring role seriously although

formal written monitoring is not yet in place. Outside visitors from other Christian denominations are welcomed into school to lead worship to further enhance pupils' understanding of broader Anglican traditions and the importance of worship to any believer. Pupils have many opportunities to visit other places of worship to deepen their understanding of aspects of worship such as the use of symbolism. These include a recent visit to Leominster to visit all of the local churches and visits to the Hereford Cathedral and York Minster.

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

The school has invested time and resources to increase the effectiveness of RE and its prominence as a subject within the school. Effective school leadership of RE by the headteacher leads to sustained high quality of teaching and learning. She has put in place regular monitoring based on the implementation of the new 'Understanding Christianity' resources to enhance the teaching of RE. The Herefordshire syllabus is currently used to support the teaching of the rest of the curriculum and planning is thorough. Pupils enjoy RE lessons and demonstrate a good understanding of key aspects of Christian and other world faiths studied. In the effective RE lessons seen, pupils were encouraged to reflect on probing questions focusing on 'What is the Trinity?' A variety of approaches such as drama, the use of hymns to provide a stimulus to encourage reflection, ensure pupils have a wide range of opportunities to think and respond during lessons. Pupils recognise the importance of being tolerant and know 'It is important to learn about other faiths so that we can understand other people's beliefs'. Parents say pupils regularly talk about stories from the Bible and how we can learn from them, relating to the importance of values such as honesty. Vibrant displays around the school, including tiles depicting school values and stories from the Bible such as 'Noah and his ark,' reflect current learning in RE. The school has invested in training to support the leadership of RE and the implementation of the 'Understanding Christianity' resources which have a main focus on biblical teaching. Teachers have begun to deliver some of the content which is having an impact on the quality of RE teaching. An assessment system has recently been put in place, led by the headteacher. The governors are engaged in monitoring RE and have identified the need to reduce the amount of worksheets being used to improve the quality of learning in RE. The school is now monitoring standards in RE alongside those in other subjects and standards of achievement are good, however the opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing in RE are not consistently provided. Currently, observations of teaching and learning lack reference to aspects of practice to improve. This limits strategies to raise the standards of teaching even higher and results in one of the previous points for development not being addressed consistently. Pupils are given opportunities, both within the RE curriculum and through attendance at church services to learn about and celebrate major Christian festivals such as harvest, Christmas and Easter.

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

The inclusive and compassionate leadership of the headteacher, supported by governors and other senior leaders, has ensured the school promotes a vision based on the distinctive Christian values that permeate the life of the school. The impact of her dedication and commitment, rooted in her personal faith, has created the strong family ethos running through the school community. Leadership at all levels ensures all pupils thrive in this caring school. Great importance is placed on belonging to the school community enhanced by strong links with the local church. The community choir is pivotal in combining members of the church, the headteacher, and both current and past pupils and promotes the exceptional relationships that exist. The incumbent is actively involved in the life of the school. The school's shared Christian vision is articulated by the school community who have been actively engaged in developing and promoting Christian values in school and at home. Parents believe the school is well managed and that their children are safe. Parents comment that pupils refer to values such as friendship and respect, promoting these values at home as well as at school. Pupils are engaged in leading the school as a distinctively Christian church school, which is a role they relish and take seriously. School council surveys and pupil questionnaires provide opportunities for pupils to contribute their ideas such as identifying the school's core Christian values. Together with a strong leadership team and effective governing body, there is a commitment to improve as a distinctive church school. Governors fulfil their duties and have been engaged in visiting the school regularly. They are proud of the many achievements of the school such as the excellent progress all groups of pupils make and the nurturing environment where the wellbeing of every individual is of paramount importance. The development points from the previous inspection have been largely met. Governors are eager to carry out their responsibilities well. They undertake learning walks, take part in work scrutiny and observe worship regularly. Formal monitoring of RE has recently been introduced. Governors are supportive of the school but are not afraid to ask searching questions, based on a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors engage in the self-evaluation process and have undertaken diocesan training in order to increase their effectiveness and subsequent impact. The headteacher serves as the RE lead and this reflects the high status of the subject and its importance in affirming the Christian character of the school.