

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St. Leonards Church of England Primary Academy	
Collingswood Drive, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex, TN38 0NX	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Chichester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	April 2015
Name of multi-academy trust	Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust
Date of inspection	13 March 2017
Date of last inspection	September 2010
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy 141868
Headteacher	Marie Burgess
Inspector's name and number	Pamela Draycott - 161

School context

Following a period of substantial difficulty the school became an academy in 2015 as part of the diocesan multi-academy trust (MAT). It serves a socially and economically deprived area which means that the percentage of pupils for whom the school receives extra funding due to social disadvantage is well above local authority and national averages. The percentage with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) is around national averages. Most pupils are White British with an increasing number from different ethnic backgrounds, mainly Eastern European. A very small percentage of families attend church regularly outside of their involvement through school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Leonards Church of England Primary Academy as a Church of England school are good

- A heightened awareness of the importance and influence of the school's Christian ethos and values impacts positively on school life, as reflected well in the supportive relationships and the focused climate for learning.
- The worship programme is of central importance to school life and contributes effectively to its spiritual life by exploring school values and biblical teaching appropriately.
- The provision of opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is good and well responded to by pupils.

Areas to improve

- Increase the regularity and rigour with which governing board members formally monitor and evaluate the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school so that their input drives forward developments and improvements more efficiently
- In order to improve the effectiveness of the worship programme engage pupils more actively in planning and leading the worship programme
- In the light of ongoing developments locally and nationally, review the school's vision statement, aims and values in order to ensure their ongoing effectiveness for the next stage of its development as a church school.

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

The school's vision statement is to provide a, 'safe, inspiring environment where a lifelong love of learning is nurtured and children are given the opportunity to achieve their full potential'. This is well expressed through its 'achieve, believe and care (ABC) values. These are well lived out by adults and pupils and are now, as an expression of the school's Christian foundation, appropriately linked to biblical teaching. They impact constructively on pupils' positive attitudes to learning, shape the very good behaviour evident and are reflected in the respectful relationships which characterise the school. This means that the school provides a supportive learning environment where pupils are encouraged to develop well both academically and personally. A high percentage of pupils enter with attainment that is below that expected for their age. Across the school most make good, and some very good, progress from their various starting points. The vast majority of pupils are happy in school, as reflected in overall improved attendance rates. A very small minority of parents choose to take children out of learning during term time. This means that the school attendance rates are slightly below the national average. On those few occasions where pupils fall short of the high standards of behaviour or attendance expected, the school works kindly, compassionately, and largely successfully, with pupils and their families to bring about improvements. Strong pastoral support for pupils and families across the school are a positive expression of its Christian ethos and underpinning. There is a broad and balanced curriculum which includes outdoor learning using a 'Forest Schools' approach. There is also a good programme of extra-curricular activities and clubs including breakfast and after school reading clubs. Such activities give pupils a suitable range of opportunities to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally, as well as enriching their academic development. Pupils respond well to these activities. Religious education (RE) and the worship programme enhance SMSC provision appropriately. Similarly a broad and balanced curricular, a range of activities to encourage deep thinking and reflection and the 'Spirit Days' which include staff, pupils and families, are clear indicators of the importance given to SMSC development. RE is delivered in line with the locally agreed syllabus. It provides a helpful balance of content which focuses on Christianity and on other world faiths, including Islam and Sikhism. This successfully helps pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of difference and diversity. For example, this includes, as part of the RE curriculum, a focus on how Christmas and Easter are celebrated in countries around the world represented within the school community. 'In RE we are learning about what people believe and learn to be respectful. That's important in today's world,' as a Year 6 pupil commented. Pupils enjoyment of RE has improved under the leadership of the current subject leader and most make at least satisfactory progress. However, assessment procedures are not rigorous enough in providing pupils with clear steps for improving their work further which slows the progress they make. The school is aware of this and there are firm plans in place to address it.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The daily worship programme is varied and plays an important role in school life. It underpins and expresses the school's Christian ethos and values well. Staff and pupils rightly recognise its impact on the community and also on themselves as individuals. As a Year 5 pupil said, 'It brings us altogether to celebrate and worship God. It gives you chance to think, reflect or pray depending on what you believe'. The worship programme is explicitly Christian, and Anglican, in nature but also inclusive of those within its community who are from other faiths or none. An expression of this inclusivity is the way in which pupils know the difference between, 'prayer to God and reflecting which helps you think'. Pupils have a developing understanding of prayer. They know that there are different types of prayer including when you 'thank God for the world or when you ask God for forgiveness or when you ask God to make something better,' as expressed by a Year 6 pupil. Prayer and reflection areas are in each classroom and their theme is changed termly, depending on the value focus for that particular time of the school year. These areas are well respected by pupils who report that they are used by 'some pupils regularly and by others just a bit'. The school, through its worship programme and in RE, are appropriately helping pupils to appreciate something of the significance of the Lord's Prayer for Christians. Worship is well planned, based around the school's Christian values, the Church's year and school priorities. An increased focus on Bible stories, especially from the Gospels, helps pupils develop their appreciation of Jesus and his importance for Christians. Through practices such as lighting three candles at the beginning of worship or having the Bible, a cross and a candle as a focal point for worship, pupils are also developing an age-appropriate understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As a Year 4 pupil reflected, 'God gave us the world and Jesus died at Easter time. The Holy Spirit helps us'. This understanding is well supported through appropriate teaching about the Trinity as part of the RE curriculum. The worship policy is detailed and lays out clearly its aims and purposes. Pupils take part in worship well: they show interest and enthusiasm during worship opportunities. Their opinions are taken seriously through leaders asking pupils their views and through the use of questionnaires. However, their formal role in planning and leading worship is less-well developed. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of different Anglican elements of worship such as lighting a candle to represent Jesus as

the light of the world and opening worship with a sentence followed by a response. The school is beginning to use different coloured cloths to signify different times of the Christian calendar in keeping with church practice.

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

The school has been through a significant period of instability and change from which it is emerging. It is now a much more stable institution. Becoming an academy and part of the diocesan MAT has been a significant contributory factor to this, alongside the stability brought about by the current leadership team. The headteacher is working in close collaboration with her governors and the MAT board of directors. She has put into place a wide range of effective initiatives to bring about improvements. These are beginning to bear fruit. They include, for example, a more rigorous focus on assessment and using data to support improvement. Since her appointment the school has refocused on and promoted well its Christian vision and values. This means that they are now more evident and celebrated across the school. However, as part of the ongoing development as part of the MAT and to address further the needs of the school community, the school has recognised the need to refresh its vision and values in the light of local and national developments. Some limited discussion of this has occurred but no firm plans are yet in place to take this forward. Leaders know the school well through accurate and thorough self-evaluation. This leads to effective action planning for improvement and targeted interventions to support pupil learning and progress. Governors are appropriately involved in school life. Their understanding of its Christian distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school is based on regular visits and reports to governors from the headteacher. However, governor monitoring and evaluation is not formalised or rigorous enough to ensure that the school's vision and values continue to drive forward developments. Governors ensure that RE and worship meet statutory requirements and they support the leadership of both areas well. Staff are well supported for working in a church school with effective recruitment and induction training as well as other periodic in-service training opportunities. In keeping with the school's Christian and inclusive ethos, parents are kept well informed of their children's progress. Parents recognise the Christian underpinning of the school. For example, the approachability and care of staff towards children, and indeed families, is rightly seen as an expression of the school's Christian ethos. The Christian ethos provides, 'a framework of morals' for children, as one parent said. Good links with St Leonard's and with St Ethelburga's churches support the school's Christian ethos well. St Leonard's church building is no longer open and the area dean is acting as interim priest-in-charge. He is also a director of the MAT. In these capacities his involvement is supporting the school well. Similarly, board members are appropriately involved in school life. The school draws appropriately on support provided by the education department at Chichester Diocese through, for example, attendance at RE subject leader meetings and support for senior leaders and governors, as well as expressly through the MAT.

SIAMS report March 2017 St Leonard's CEP Academy, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex, TN38 0NX