

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Down Ampney Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Down Ampney, Cirencester, Gloucestershire GL7 5QR	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Diocese	Gloucester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Date of inspection	17 January 2017
Date of last inspection	24 January 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Controlled 115664
Executive Head Teacher	Wendy Foster
Inspector's name and number	Alison Lock NS 605

School context

Down Ampney is a smaller than average rural primary school with 38 pupils. It is informally linked with a large town community school sharing an executive head teacher who has been in post for sixteen months. Most other members of staff have also changed within the last eighteen months. The Ofsted inspection (October 2016) graded the school's overall effectiveness as requiring improvement but recognised the positive impact of recent developments in teaching and learning. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is in line with the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Down Ampney as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- The leadership and teaching team is committed to raising standards in every aspect of school life in order that every child may fulfil their God given potential.
- The links between the church and school create a strong community that enriches the lives of all those who live and work together for the common good.
- The many changes within the school since the last inspection have had a negative impact on the development of the school's distinctive Christian character.

Areas to improve

- Clarify the school core values so that they are more explicitly linked to the Christian story and lead to a deeper understanding by the pupils.
- Develop the joint planning of collective worship so that there is more active involvement of pupils in the leadership and self-evaluation.
- Design a system for the monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education (RE) and Collective Worship by governors, staff and children in order to bring about sustained improvement.

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

Down Ampney School has identified a strong set of values through consultation with the whole school community. These have a positive effect on behaviour and interactions across the age range of pupils. This is demonstrated by the way in which pupils are now able to reflect on their behaviour and its impact, not just on themselves, but also on others. They also verify this through pupil-led and designed dramas in their Friday celebration acts of worship.

However, the links between these values and the Christian story are not explicitly planned and taught. As a result, not all children are able to articulate these links. The core values effectively underpin the regular work to develop the pupils' understanding of world affairs and the role that the children play in supporting others through charities. However, they only have a basic understanding of Christianity as a world religion and the diversity of other faiths. Levels of attendance are high. Pupils state how much they enjoy coming to school because they appreciate the quality of the learning experience and they know that they are valued as individuals. Levels of achievement are not meeting national standards, as confirmed by Ofsted, but this is now being addressed rigorously. Staff relate all teaching to the core values resulting in visible changes to the school environment and standards in learning. The Christian year is explicitly taught and celebrated both within the school and with the wider community. This leads to some understanding of spirituality by the pupils and staff but the pupils' ability to respond to these experiences is at an early stage of development. Pupils enjoy RE lessons because they challenge their thinking and widen their experiences. The lessons are well planned and taught with a good use of technological resources and active discussions that relate the teaching to their daily lives. The children have a growing knowledge of the wider world and the role of inspirational people who are led by faith. The vicar plays an active role within the school community and is very well respected by adults and children. He takes a personal interest in their lives and everyone feels that his Christian influence plays a crucial part in their spiritual development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Collective worship is recognised as an important part of the daily life of the school. The teaching staff recognise it has a vital role in teaching and reinforcing the values of the school. The school hall has a central worship table and one child lights the candle whilst a special prayer is said in order to create a peaceful ambience. Children know its significance as it relates to Jesus being the Light of the World. Planning has not been long term or systematic but based on the needs of the school at that time. This is due to the many changes experienced by the school community. Biblical material is used regularly and the pupils are able to make some links between the school's core values and Bible stories which they then relate to their own lives. This has resulted in some work with charities including Children in Need. The church community supports the school weekly through the vicar leading worship and also the Open the Book team. This active group of church members portray the Bible through drama and active questioning. The children say that this is their favourite act of worship as the Bible stories come alive and they can easily imagine them. The vicar prioritises his time with the school and everyone appreciates his input and recognises that he is delivering the Christian Story in a real and meaningful way. The pupils have a developing understanding of the importance of prayer and use it at different times throughout the school day. These prayers are usually created by the children as the staff believe it is one way to make them more meaningful. They explain that it is a means of communicating with God. Some of the younger pupils were able to explain that God is father of the world, that Jesus is the son of God and that the Holy Spirit is often shown as a picture of flames. During each Friday's celebration worship, there is recognition of those children whose behaviour has demonstrated the school's core values. This act of worship, which includes drama and prayers, is planned, written and led by pupils. The children sing well and this is supported by a music resource which was provided by the church. A pupil worship council has been created but the new members are not yet familiar with their role. The pupils vote in their class as to who should serve on the council, which enables them to feel that it is representative of them all. There is no formal system of monitoring and evaluating collective worship to inform development planning. The school uses the church on regular occasions to celebrate the Christian year. The whole school community values these occasions as being significant to both adults and children. High levels of attendance show that they are important to all age groups. The school's central role in the Remembrance Day service made a lasting impression on all those present, as the children read the role of honour for the village.

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

The dynamic staff leadership and teaching team provides a concerted approach to the distinctiveness and effectiveness of this school as a church school. This injection of positive new thinking is much respected by parents. However, it is not yet driven by a clearly developed Christian vision. The core Christian values of Love, Hope and Forgiveness have been identified but these are not explicitly planned into the curriculum. As a result, the leadership is not clear about the difference they make across the whole school community. The newly appointed staff team focuses strongly on the school development plan. This identifies raising standards as being a high priority and has resulted in targets being met across the school. The school also places high priority on training which has included the teaching of RE. School leaders have visited other schools which demonstrate good practice and are using those visits to both stimulate discussion and develop the Christian ethos of their school. The RE co-ordinator is new to her role. She is both positive and focussed about how she can bring sustained improvement to the teaching of RE. The Diocese has given both training and support, resulting in a clear vision for her role in the future. Planning has

been adapted recently so that both classes work on one topic at the same time. This helps to streamline the use of resources and the planning of visits and has a positive impact on children's learning. Governors visit the school regularly but do not systematically monitor and evaluate the Christian distinctiveness of the school. This means that the actions identified in the school development plan are limited in their effectiveness in delivering further improvement. The vicar is also a foundation governor and actively supports the staff team in delivering the Christian ethos, which results in children being able to recognise the school as a church school. However, they are not always able to identify the impact this has on their spiritual development. Parents feel that the values have a positive impact on the lives of the children. They demonstrate kindness and positive relationships both in school and in the wider community.

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