



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Syresham St James Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	High Street, Syresham, Brackley NN13 5HL
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese/Methodist District	Peterborough Diocese
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Good
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Date of inspection	29 September 2016
Date of last inspection	28 September 2011
School's unique reference number	121993
Headteacher	Katherine Clough
Inspector's name and number	The Revd Dr Jason Phillips 598

School context

Syresham St James is a small rural school of 77 pupils. Most pupils are White British. The school welcomes local Irish Traveller and Forces families and so pupil mobility can be high at times. The number of pupils attracting government pupil premium support is below the national average. The numbers of pupils with a special educational need is below the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Syresham St James as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The Christian leadership of the headteacher is exemplary resulting in a caring, inclusive community that lives out its stated Christian values.
- The Christian values of the school are actively encouraged resulting in high standards of behaviour and quality relationships at all levels of the school.
- The strategic leadership of the governors is highly effective in promoting the Christian vision and values of the school ensuring it is continually improving and planning for future success.
- The school's relationships with parents, St James' Church and the community are exemplary stemming from the school's Christian vision to promote the all-round development of each child.

Areas to improve

- Deepen pupils' appreciation of collective worship further by ensuring that they fully understand and lead the elements that comprise an act of worship.
- Enrich pupils' worship experience still further by utilising a wider range of creative and vibrant approaches to prayer and worship.
- Ensure that learning objectives and tasks in religious education (RE) are challenging for all pupils at Key Stage 1 (KS1).

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

The six core Christian values of this school are respect, generosity, love, fairness, forgiveness and courage. They are well embedded and central to the life of the school. Pupils demonstrate they understand the Christian basis of the values. An example of this is during values week where the Christian values were explored in relation to lived experience and represented in various sculptures. The active promotion of the Christian values shapes pupils' hopes and aspirations. It results in a caring Christian community where all are included. Pupils of all faiths and none feel safe, socially secure and are flourishing in a climate of trust and interdependence. The Christian values inform behaviour choices and develop relationships at all levels of the school that are exemplary. Pupils, including the youngest, are able to make thoughtful moral judgements about behaviour and relationships. This is reinforced by a strong focus on empathy and considering the impact of behaviour choices on others. Due to positive relations, bullying is rare at the school. When required, the anti-bullying policy is actioned sensitively and effectively to resolve bullying issues. This reflects best practice as detailed in the Church of England's guidance, 'Valuing All God's Children'. Attendance is now slightly above the national average because the school's Christian values inform a compassionate approach to supporting high attendance. The Christian environment establishes conditions for learning that result in progress that is good and attainment for most pupils that is good. The school's effective practice prepares pupils for the future by developing skills of empathy and respect for diverse and multi-cultural communities. RE has a good impact upon developing the core Christian values, upon pupils' multicultural understanding and developing pupils spiritually. Examples of this include recent studies of Jewish family life and symbols within churches as well as reflection time at Stowe Gardens. Strengths in RE are in enabling pupils to explore and confidently articulate puzzling ideas. An example of this is children considering ethics in the Christian creation accounts. However, the impact of RE is not yet outstanding because learning tasks at KS1 do not always sufficiently challenge all learners. The school is skilled at promoting pupils' spiritual development. It has a well-considered personal, social, health and moral education scheme underpinned by Christian values that promotes spiritual development. Time for reflection is a highly valued dimension of school life and contributes greatly to spiritual growth. This reflection time gives pupils and staff opportunity to consider themselves, their learning and the impact of their choices.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship plays an important part in expressing and supporting the school's Christian foundation because it is valued by the school leadership and is well-led. Planning for worship is taken seriously by all involved. As a result, the positive impact of collective worship is evident on children and adults alike. All members of the school appreciate acts of worship as a time of coming together to reflect upon God's presence. Pupils have some opportunities to lead collective worship and are generally even more engaged when they do. However, the impact of collective worship is not yet outstanding because planning and opportunities to lead do not enable children to understand the elements that comprise an act of worship. Further, planning does not provide sufficiently varied creative opportunities for prayer and worship. This means pupils, although positive, are not as inspired as they might be over time by collective worship provision. Through worship, pupils have a good understanding of the importance of Jesus for Christians as well as a satisfactory age-appropriate understanding of God as Trinity. Bible stories are sometimes used during worship. This helps children to appreciate the Bible's importance as 'the Word of God' for Christians. The worship programme reinforces the school's Christian values well. This is a key strength of collective worship. It results in pupils who are able to relate some biblical material to the values. For example, one child applied courage to the story of Saint Peter getting out of his boat to attempt to walk on water. The school carefully mirrors Anglican religious forms in symbol and word and benefits from the involvement of the popular rector. This secures the school's understanding of itself as an Anglican community. Further the school utilises the Christian liturgical calendar which develops pupils' understanding of key festivals such as Christmas and Pentecost. The successful Easter Experience that pupils led in Church is a good example of this. Their leadership of the experience deepened pupils' knowledge as well as their engagement. Through the worship programme, with appropriate links to RE, pupils have a developing understanding of the Lord's Prayer and the importance of prayer generally. They have opportunity for personal prayer across the school day. However, these opportunities are not as broad or creative as they might be to deepen pupils' appreciation of prayer. Collective worship is appropriately monitored ensuring it meets statutory requirements and has a positive impact upon the whole school community.

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

The steadfast dedication and commitment of the governing body ensures the highly distinctive and effective Christian character of Syresham St James. The exemplary Christian leadership of the headteacher creates a very caring community which enables all to flourish. Governors successfully challenge and support the leadership to consolidate and develop the church school aspect. Consequently, they secure good standards of teaching and good pupil progress and attainment arising from a clear Christian ethos. The governors and headteacher make sure the curriculum is broad, interesting and underpinned by Christian values thus developing the whole child. This provision is supported by wider pupil opportunities such as piano lessons and residential courses further developing pupils' abilities. The strategic skills of the governors are a key strength of the school helping secure effective succession planning. The school is most effective at developing the leadership capacity of its staff because it proactively invests in professional development opportunities. The school's self-review document combines the church school dimension with wider school aspects. This demonstrates a clear understanding by governors and staff of the centrality of the church school ethos to the all-round flourishing of its children. As a result of the leadership of governors and the headteacher the issues from the last inspection have been responded to appropriately. Arising from consistently effective and evaluative leadership and management, collective worship and RE and their committed leaders are well supported. Consequently, they have a good impact on the school's distinctive Christian and spiritually reflective character. Collective worship and RE meet statutory requirements. The governors prosper Syresham St James as an outward looking institution with an ethos of service. This has a mutually beneficial impact on the school, parish and community of Syresham. Examples of this include the school-led 'Parish Praise' and the random acts of generosity day. The outreach and collaborative work in the community includes extremely productive relationships with other church schools and the local churches benefitting the children. The hardworking rector makes a positive contribution in strengthening these links and the identity of the school as part of the Anglican family. The links with the Methodist chapel and Wolverton Mission Church develop awareness of the diverse and multicultural nature of Christianity by the pupils. One parent rightly commented that, 'the school is a very strong part of the church and the community and not separate, joining us up together.' These positive relationships enable the school to make a strong impact upon community cohesion and to see itself at the forefront of the mission of the Diocese of Peterborough.