

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Nicholas Church of England Voluntary Controlled Infant School	
London Road, Strood, Rochester, Kent. ME2 3HU	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Rochester
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Medway
Date of inspection	27 March 2018
Date of last inspection	31 January 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Infant 118643
Headteacher	Gisele Johnson
Inspector's name and number	Melanie Williams 911

School context

St Nicholas is a small infant school of 120 pupils in Strood, near Rochester. It has well-established links with the parish church. The headteacher was appointed four years ago from within the school. Ofsted visited the school in 2013 and judged it to be outstanding. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities is similar to the national average. The intake is mainly of White British heritage with an increasing proportion of pupils from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Nicholas Infant as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Religious education (RE) is led with passion and commitment. This has resulted in highly effective practice that supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development and the Christian distinctiveness of the school.
- The school goes to impressive lengths to adapt provision to meet the needs of each new intake. Pupils are treated as individuals and the curriculum is tailored accordingly.
- Collective worship is valued by the whole community. Parents warmly welcome invitations to join worship and appreciate the positive impact that promoting pupil leadership has had on their children's confidence.
- Leaders have ensured that the whole curriculum is informed by a distinctive Christian ethos and values. It provides rich, creative experiences that are highly appropriate for these young pupils and enable them to flourish in their learning and relationships.

Areas to improve

- Further enrich the curriculum to increase pupils' understanding of other faith communities so that they are well-prepared for life in the modern world.
- Develop pupils' knowledge of the Lord's prayer and of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit so that they can all express their understanding with confidence.

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

The school's Christian values of friendship, forgiveness, compassion, thankfulness and respect are fully woven into the daily life of the school. They are regularly reviewed, in consultation with the whole community, to ensure their relevance and to garner ideas on how they are expressed and communicated. Pupils talk readily about Bible stories that illustrate them. For example, the story of the good Samaritan teaches them about compassion and respect. The distinctively Christian approach is much appreciated by parents who feel that their children are nurtured and supported in every way. Pupils make very good progress from their starting points, so that attainment is broadly in line with national averages. There are thorough support systems in place to support vulnerable pupils. The school values high attendance and goes to considerable lengths to reach out to families in difficult circumstances, helping them to engage with school life. Behaviour is generally excellent. The school manages and secures appropriate provision for pupils with any difficulties. The spiritual development of pupils is given high priority. A lovely garden area has been developed in the playground that stimulates and provides space for quiet thought and reflection. This project was funded by the local community through a supermarket token scheme. Religious education and collective worship include many opportunities to think about the deeper aspects of life. There is a rich, creative approach to learning that helps pupils to express themselves using a wide range of media. Family projects on themes, such as thankfulness, extend this into pupils' homes. Experiences of art, crafts, music and drama are particularly strong. Pupils have a well-developed sense of right and wrong. They ask themselves, 'What would Jesus do?' They know how to enlist adult support to mediate in any problems and are quick to forgive and restore friendships. Relationships throughout the community are strong and supportive. As one parent put it, 'The school lives and breathes its values and sees any issue as an opportunity'. In collaboration with the local community, there are growing links with schools in Uganda and Zimbabwe. Pupils' knowledge of similarities and differences in cultures has grown. Good progress has been made in supporting pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. The school curriculum regularly includes work on other faiths, but pupils are less confident in talking about this. An enquiry-based approach has been adopted in RE. Staff skilfully challenge and extend pupils' thinking through talk and questioning. Lively experiences lead to a high degree of pupil engagement.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship takes place at the end of each day. It draws all members of the community together in a positive, shared experience. As a member of staff put it, 'We all go out singing at the end of the day'. Governors comment that the themes are thought-provoking for adults and pupils. Parents enjoy being invited to attend when they have been volunteering in the school. Planning draws on the Diocesan scheme for worship. It has been adapted by leaders to be relevant to these young pupils and uses a broad range of approaches. Bible stories are regularly included and pupils relate these to the school's values. Parents say that pupils speak freely of what they learn and experience in worship on the way home. One pupil said that she tries to be thankful and compassionate to her family and that they appreciate it. Pupils are familiar with annual Christian festivals, such as Christmas, Easter and Mothering Sunday. The youngest pupils can talk about the Easter story in impressive detail. They know that colours are associated with seasons of the church year; for example, that Lent is represented by purple. Pupils are outward looking and enjoy contributing to charitable events. There are opportunities for prayer throughout the day. Pupils choose to write prayers in their break times which are then used in worship. Pupils are learning to recite the Lord's prayer but are not fluent. They know many stories from the life and teaching of Jesus. Pupils are familiar with the idea of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit but cannot yet talk about this with confidence. Pupils are regularly involved in leading worship. They invite the school to worship, using sentences such as 'This is the day that the Lord has made'. They read prayers and Bible passages and are keen to take part in drama. Pupils sing a wide range of songs with enthusiasm. The weekly programme of worship is led by clergy, staff and visitors from the local church and other Christian groups such as the Family Trust. This successfully enables pupils to experience a variety of approaches. Special services take place several times a year in the local church and pupils also visit Rochester Cathedral. Occasionally, worship takes place in the school grounds. The school gathers feedback about worship from parents and pupils. This helps the school to understand which approaches are most effective. Governors regularly monitor worship and have noted the increasingly Christian nature of worship at key festivals.

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

School leaders are clear in their commitment to the distinctively Christian values of the school. They are lived out all day, every day throughout the school. This has created an environment in which every pupil is nurtured and treasured as a child of God. The school runs numerous workshops and supplies resource packs to equip parents to support their children's learning. There are robust self-evaluation systems to review school performance. The school was quick to identify the weaker attainment of some boys in the early years and has developed engaging and motivating activities with positive results. Work on improving pupils' grasp of phonics has led to almost every pupil

reaching the required standard by the end of Year 2. Leaders actively seek out and weigh up new ideas to develop the Christian distinctiveness of the school. For example, a new RE syllabus is being reviewed and tailored to best meet the needs and interests of the pupils. The school regularly requests and listens to feedback from all groups in the community. As a result, a new app (computer application) has greatly improved communication with parents. This reminds them of events and, consequently, supports pupils' learning and emotional security. The whole curriculum is imaginatively designed to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Topics actively promote the arts and global awareness. Pupils who have transferred from other schools make good progress in adopting the school values, resulting in much improved behaviour. The school draws on diversity among its families wherever possible. For example, one parent taught Chinese dancing to pupils. Other parents volunteer to support with reading or special events, like den building. They appreciate the opportunity to be involved in school life saying, 'You feel part of something good'. The school works closely with the Diocese to access training and resources. There is a mutually supportive link with St Nicholas church. The school and church work well together to find new ways to build relationships and encourage faith in pupils and their families. The governing body is well informed and has much expertise within its ranks to share with the team. The RE leader attends national and local training events. She has successfully led and supported staff in the introduction of new teaching resources recently. The school meets statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report March 2018 St Nicholas Infant, London Road, Strood, Rochester, Kent. ME2 3 HU