

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Francis Catholic and Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Newport Road, Ventnor, Isle of Wight PO38 1BQ

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Dioceses	Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth Church of England Diocese of Portsmouth
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Isle of Wight
Date of inspection	22 June 2017
Date of last inspection	25 June 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 136011
Interim Headteacher	Rebecca Chessell
Inspector's name and number	Andrew Rickett (201) and Ursula Clarke

School context

St Francis is an average size primary school with 264 children in roll. It has a falling roll. The majority of children are from a White British heritage and come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds with above average levels of deprivation. Pupil mobility is high. The number of children with special learning needs and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average and the number entitled to receive the pupil premium is higher than expectations. Attendance is slightly below national averages and is low for some groups of children. The school has moved to a new site since the previous inspection. The school has had four interim headteachers since 2015. Many of the governors are recent appointments. The school is due to become an academy on 1 July 2017 sponsored by the Portsmouth and Winchester Diocesan Academy Trust. The inspection was carried out by a joint Catholic/Church of England team of inspectors.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Francis Primary School as a Catholic and Church of England school are satisfactory

- Christian values make a good impact on the children's personal development and the quality of relationships throughout the school community. They make less of an impact on children's academic performance and progress in their learning.
- Acts of worship reflect the Christian character of the school. Children comment positively on worship, especially those done within the classroom which provides them with opportunities to reflect on a theme. At times children find it difficult to articulate their personal faith as they need to deepen their understanding of faith and belief.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in religious education is not consistent as the level of challenge is not always high enough. Some groups of children do not make the progress they are capable of.
- School leaders and managers, including governors, are committed to the inclusive ethos and in driving forward a vision that has clarity for all members of the school community.

Areas to improve

Provide opportunities for children to explore their ideas and thoughts on faith and belief in greater depth by:

- Children to lead a review the school's vision and values so that it has greater clarity for all members of the school community.
- Develop a shared understanding of spirituality so that more explicit opportunities to explore a personal spirituality can be identified throughout the whole curriculum.
- Involve children to a greater extent in deciding how themes in collective worship are explored.
- Review the religious education (RE) curriculum so that it has greater challenge to the children's learning.

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

Children have a good understanding that the core values of love, hope, peace and justice are an important part of what makes them distinct as a church school. Younger children in particular talk freely and with excitement about how these values are an integral part of the school day and help them deal with everyday concerns both in school and outside of it. Older children also appreciate the importance of the core values and are sometimes impressive in their views but at other times discuss them with more hesitancy. Regardless of their age, all children are comfortable to talk about matters of faith and belief openly and share their views with each other and adults in school. At times, children find it more difficult to express their views when they discuss them at a deeper level because they do not yet have the vocabulary to support them in articulating their opinions. The core values reflect the good quality of relationships throughout the school community which, as children say, is based on love through care and kindness for others. Children treat each other with respect and an appreciation of the needs of others. They have a good understanding that everyone should be treated equally regardless of background. They are very aware of moral and social concerns and the need to treat others with compassion and dignity. Children are clear that by doing this; they follow the teaching of Jesus. The values make less of an impact on the children's learning and academic progress. Standards are improving and children are making better progress in their learning so that a greater number are achieving at age related expectations. Not all groups of children are yet making sufficient progress and there is still some inconsistency of performance in different subjects. Children have adequate opportunities to reflect in the school day both through formal times such as worship and informally in their classrooms. They have opportunities to develop their cultural appreciation and moral and social sense through RE and personal development. The introduction of collective worship response books is an example of where children are given opportunities to record their thoughts and reflections. There are less clearly defined opportunities for children to explore a personal spirituality as an integral aspect of their learning through the whole curriculum. The school has worked hard to improve the children's attendance in school and has effective systems in place to support families to help them get their children to school on time. Similarly, through the school's emphasis on love as their most important value, children who require particular support within school are nurtured within an environment that respects them as individuals and provides individual help for their specific needs. Children are developing their appreciation of Christianity as a world faith.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Children enjoy worship and recognise coming together in prayer as an important part of the day. Younger children comment positively on and with excitement about class worship, especially when time is given to explore themes creatively which provides them with a chance to reflect on their own faith journey.

There is a clear plan of worship for the year which ensures all worship reflects the school's distinctive Christian character and Scripture is shared with children. Some children, in particular older ones, are not always able to confidently discuss how Bible stories influence their lives today, as they do not have the religious vocabulary to explore their thoughts and personal faith at a greater depth. Staff have been supported to develop confidence in leading class acts of worship through training from a Diocesan Advisor and planning support led by the RE Leader; ideas and strategies are being developed across the school. Some monitoring and evaluation of worship takes place; this has not been fully developed to ensure all worship is of the highest quality and leads to children exploring their personal spirituality at a deeper level. Support from local clergy, from both Catholic and Anglican traditions, and the "Youth for Christ" Youth Worker, enriches the worship in the school. It is a good example of the local church communities' active involvement in and support for the school. Children have a growing appreciation of the nature of the Trinity and know God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is helped by the three coloured candles used in class and whole school worship. At times, children find it more difficult to articulate the role of the Holy Spirit because insufficient opportunities are provided to deepen their understanding. Recent initiatives, including child-led worship and the collective worship response books provide some opportunities for children to express their thoughts and personal faith. These have been trialed in some classes and are good examples of the determination of senior leaders to enhance the worshipping life of the school.

The effectiveness of religious education is satisfactory

Teaching and learning in religious education (RE) is not yet good because of the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Tasks do not provide sufficient challenge for children in some classes, hindering them in the development of their personal faith and the progress they are capable of. In the best lessons, children demonstrate positive attitudes and are fully engaged because teachers have secure subject knowledge and use questions to help children develop their understanding of the theme or lesson. Resources are used creatively to interest children and learning develops from their personal experience. One child's Christening Album was used effectively to lead the learning and fully engaged very young children. Curriculum planning provides an outline of what needs to be taught. It is not always clear how learning will be developed to deepen the children's thinking and provide greater challenge. Often there is too much emphasis on the imparting of religious knowledge rather than on developing an appreciation and application of belief and an exploration of difficult concepts. The inconsistent level of challenge is reflected in some of the work produced in books and children lack confidence in expressing a response about their learning in RE. Assessment procedures for tracking the progress of children in RE are not fully embedded and are not used to inform planning. This, along with inconsistencies in marking, means that there is a lack of clarity about what the next steps in learning should be and how these can develop from children's personal experience. The RE Leader offers effective support to staff. More recently she has been given time to carry out her role and has worked with external Diocesan support to begin to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning in RE. Where she has worked with teachers, through planning together and team teaching, there is a clear impact with greater challenge for children and an improvement in the work produced.

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

The school has had four interim headteachers since April 2015 and the school has experienced much turbulence since then. The current interim headteacher has been in post since January 2017 and is committed to maintaining the distinctive Christian ethos as the school continues to go through its many changes. She has developed her own appreciation of the purpose of being a church school and has been very ably supported by the deputy headteacher who has provided stability as far as maintaining the Christian ethos. Indeed, despite its many challenges, school leaders, including governors have managed to improve some aspects of being a church school. This is a reflection of the commitment to the Christian ethos and the school's passion to see it work for the benefit of the children. They recognize that much still needs to be done to create a vision that has clarity and can be shared by all members of the school community. The headteacher and her staff are supported by governors who are similarly developing their understanding of what being distinctively Christian means. The leadership of the chair of governors is excellent. She is astute and has a clear grasp of the school and what needs to be done to develop as a church school. Self-evaluation as a church school is accurate because leaders and managers understand the criteria against which they judge themselves. The establishment of the Christian Distinctiveness Group in September 2016, which includes local clergy and senior leaders, has given a structure through which governors can regularly monitor the impact of the vision. The work of this group is proving to be valuable and increasingly so as they develop their skills and understanding of the purpose of being a church school. The extent to which local clergy will continue to make a formal contribution to the future direction of the school, both through the work of the Christian Distinctiveness Group and through local pastoral support, as it becomes an academy, is not clear. Children and their parents have less direct involvement in evaluation as a church school. The deputy headteacher is the RE leader and has responsibility for collective worship. She works closely with clergy and has been instrumental in creating an action plan that identifies priorities to move the school forward. The school has good links with local churches and their congregations and their clergy regularly lead acts of worship. Parents appreciate that the school's Christian ethos provides opportunities for their children to talk about faith and belief in an environment that encourages them to reflect. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

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