

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Castor Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Stocks Hill, Castor, Peterborough, PE5 7AY	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Peterborough
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Peterborough
Date of inspection	15 November 2016
Date of last inspection	October 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	voluntary controlled 110824
Headteacher	Mark Ratchford
Inspector's name and number	John Weaver 402

School context

The school is smaller than the average primary school, with a roll of 171. The number of pupils in receipt of free school meals is lower than the national average, as is the number from ethnic minorities. A very small proportion of pupils have English as an additional language. The number of pupils with special educational needs, whilst below the national average, is unevenly distributed through the year groups. There has been significant mobility in some cohorts. This has affected overall achievement in some years. The head teacher has been in post since 2013.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Castor Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Distinctively Christian values form the core of the school's life and have a deep impact on all pupils and adults, resulting in the gospel being lived out daily.
- The headteacher has created a Christian ethos within which he, staff and governors work together exceptionally well to move the school forward as a church school.
- The school and the adjacent parish church work very effectively together, enhancing spiritual development for all members the community.
- Outstanding worship, both in school and in church, ensures that all, Christian or non-Christian, regularly gain a sense of joy, wonder and praise.

Areas to improve

- Extend the range of opportunities for the pupils to plan and lead collective worship regularly, so they gain greater understanding of the contribution of the different elements of worship.
- Develop occasional forms of worship in small, all-age groups to create more intimate settings and increase even further the spiritual development of all participants.

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

Distinctive Christian values are firmly embedded throughout this school. They have a very strong impact on the pupils, staff and parents. Pupils and adults know the way in which each value reflects biblical teaching, and they live out the values daily. The care members of staff have for all the pupils, because of the overriding values of love, fellowship and forgiveness, is demonstrated daily. Parents confirm that staff go 'above and beyond' to ensure that any problems are immediately addressed. This means that the pupils are secure, happy, and ready to learn. They know that they are allowed to make mistakes, so long as they learn from them. As a result of this, they develop the confidence to gain richly from the investigative approach used in teaching and learning. Currently their academic achievement is above the national average. The governors demonstrate their Christian love and care for all by employing a pastoral and mentoring support manager. This strengthens the school's impact on pupils experiencing difficulties. Records show that individual work on self-esteem, pastoral and behavioural issues enables pupils to move forward significantly. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is excellent. This is due to the many opportunities they have for prayer, reflection, discussion and teaching about different cultures. They are encouraged to ask lots of questions, and do so readily. This impacts well on their ability to discuss issues of beliefs and values in depth. The high quality of relationships within the school is directly attributable to the school's Christian values, as are the excellent standards of behaviour. The headteacher's strong and overt Christian faith strongly impacts on everyone in the school. This ensures that all adults are secure in the fact that they are highly valued. Because of this they work tirelessly to ensure the very best for the pupils. A number of the pupils come from outside the school's catchment area because of its clear Christian ethos. Due to the school population being predominantly White British, regular visits to places of worship of non-Christian faiths have been established. Visitors from other cultures and communities regularly visit the school to share first-hand experiences. This programme has been successful in ensuring that the pupils' understanding of and respect for diverse communities is good. High-quality religious education (RE) teaching and learning has made a significant contribution to the Christian character of the school. 'Big question days', in which the pupils explore aspects of RE and worship in depth, are a good example. One such day, 'Christianity around the World', ensured that the pupils are fully aware of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. The school organises a day visit to Walsingham every two years. A child commented, 'I felt that the spirit of God and Jesus was there. It made me want to be a better Christian.'

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

High-quality worship is the norm in this school and in the adjacent St. Kyneburgha's Church. In the words of a parent, 'The children expect something special when they worship and it usually is'. Another parent said, 'The children think the church is theirs'. Parents and visitors value the invitation to many acts of worship, not only achievement assemblies and church services. The pupils are totally engaged. They sing enthusiastically and remain still and silent in times of prayer and reflection. All staff attend worship, and they too find it a source of inspiration, joy and comfort. School Eucharist is held termly in the church. This enables the pupils to begin to understand the church's sacramental tradition. Worship planning takes one of the school's Christian values as the week's theme. This ensures that the pupils know the links between the school's Christian values and biblical texts well. The Gospel reading for the Sunday preceding the week is also used, making the link between the church's year and school worship explicit. Worship planning is predominantly based on the New Testament. Through this the pupils have developed a clear understanding of the person of Jesus Christ, who he is, and what he taught on earth. They know the words of the Gloria, the Lord's Prayer and various greetings and dismissals used in Anglican worship. They are able to explain their understanding of God and Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They do this both by using analogies and by referencing Bible stories. The older pupils have experience of leading some acts of collective worship. However, they do not have enough of these opportunities to develop to the full their understanding of the elements of an act of worship. Prayer and reflection are key elements of worship. These extend beyond the daily act of collective worship. Prayer areas in the classrooms and corridors are areas where the pupils focus and reflect. Books of the children's own prayers illustrate the quality of their understanding of prayer. They are encouraged to ask questions. This leads to them discussing spiritual matters with adults at a high level. The pupils benefit from a wide variety of worship leaders from both the school and the village churches. This enables them to appreciate different styles of worship within the Anglican and Methodist traditions. Evaluation of the impact of collective worship is regularly collected from a number of sources, including pupils. This feedback is used well by governors and worship leaders to ensure that standards are maintained and improvements made. The school has identified a need to develop occasional worship in smaller, all-age groups. This appears to be a good extension of current practice.

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

The headteacher and staff lead by example in the ways in which they live out their Christian vision for the school on a daily basis. Uppermost in this vision is the belief that we should 'love one another as Jesus loves us'. This is

exemplified by the concern for well-being and achievement of the whole school community, pupils, staff and parents/carers. Parents value very highly the school's emphasis on the development of the whole child. Governors hold the school leaders to account and give them full support. As a result, distinctive Christian values have a positive impact on achievement across a wide range of areas. These include attainment, progress, self-confidence, morale and resilience. Leaders, including governors, have made outstanding progress in addressing the areas for improvement in the previous inspection. This has been very successful because they have used strategically-targeted evaluation to ensure that progress is continuous. They use 'Key Performance Indicators' by which all the governors' committees judge the effectiveness of their actions. This means that all leaders know their school very well, and are able to target future developments to areas where improvements can be made. The leadership of RE and collective worship is given high priority. Good use is made of expertise among the staff and the parents. This enables high standards to be achieved. The RE leader is given opportunities to develop her skills by using her experience to help other schools. The budget allocated to RE and collective worship ensures continuous development and improvement. Arrangements for RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements. There is good provision for continuing professional development for potential future leaders of church schools. The current deputy head is 'on loan' to a nearby church school as acting head teacher. This is enabling her to gain practical experience of the role. Members of the teaching staff have been able to expand their experience by filling her various roles whilst she is away. There is a very strong partnership between the school, St. Kyneburgha's Church and the parents. This contributes well to the pupils' and parents' experience and understanding of the Anglican church. A number of parents have been drawn into membership of the church community through their children's experiences at the school.

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