

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Margaret's Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School

Collier Street, Near Marden, Kent TN12 9RR

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Rochester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Kent
Date of inspection	4 July 2018
Date of last inspection	26 June 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled Primary 118636
Headteacher	Paul Ryan
Inspector's name and number	Elizabeth Pettersen 557

School context

St Margaret's, Collier Street is a smaller than average primary school set within a village community. The 116 pupils are mainly White British and come from a broad range of social and economic backgrounds. Pupils are drawn from Collier Street and other surrounding villages. The number of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding and who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is below the national average. Attainment and progress at Key Stage 2 is above the national average. The school's Ofsted inspection in March 2017 concluded that St Margaret's continues to be a good school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Margaret's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The Christian values of friendship, fairness, respect and helpfulness provide the foundation for, and are embedded within, all school activities. They impact on positive relationships between all stakeholders.
- All pupils are seen as individuals, precious to God and with God-given gifts. As such, pupils develop self-confidence and a positive view of themselves and of others. They have a deep spiritual understanding. This supports them in making good progress across the school.
- Collective worship is a central and focal part of each day. The focus on Christian values and how these impact on daily life results in a community that cares for each other and for the wider world.
- The school has a strong and mutually beneficial link with the local church and the local community, which is highly valued by all stakeholders.

Areas to improve

- Make the church ethos and values explicit on the school website and within the behaviour policy, so that stakeholders are aware of the school's foundation and values.
- Build on the range of inspirational activities that occur in worship to stimulate even greater levels of pupil engagement.
- Foster the development of future church school leadership by providing opportunities for professional development to drive forward the next stage of its life as a church school.

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

St Margaret's is a school where all pupils are valued and nurtured as children made in the image of God and precious in his sight. Parents express confidence that their children are valued as individuals, and that this impacts on kind behaviours amongst and between the children. A range of clubs and out of class trips and activities foster the talents of each pupil. Of particular merit are the artistic and musical activities that help nurture the creative development of each child. As a result, pupils are positive and happy and wellbeing is very good. Classroom learning is challenging and involves opportunities for high quality discussion and dialogue. Pupils show respect for each other by listening and responding well to their peers. Consequently, all pupils are achieving well and making good progress. Staff work hard to provide engaging learning experiences for pupils across the curriculum. As one pupil commented, the teachers are very 'versatile'. The Christian values of friendship, fairness, respect and helpfulness underpin all interactions, thus creating a safe and secure environment. Consequently, attendance is very good with no exclusions. There are positive relationships with all stakeholders. Parents feel welcome at the school, confident that they can approach any member of staff knowing that a problem or concern will be addressed promptly. Parents see the impact of the values in the way that their children talk about school at home and apply their faith in personal challenges demanding resilience and trust. Pupil behaviour is excellent at all times, founded on the understanding that they consider what Jesus would do in any situation. As a result, the peer mediators are rarely needed on the playground to resolve problems. The older pupils readily care for the younger ones including by taking time to hear them read during the day. This, in turn, creates a school characterised by tolerance and kindness. The values are central and are a natural part of pupil behaviour. As one pupil described it, 'If we follow these values they become traits, a part of our personality.' Pupils show a genuine warmth and kindness towards each other. This is demonstrated in the way that they readily celebrate any occasion when others display the values.

Pupils are encouraged to care and respect God's world through different projects. This includes a special seating area made of re-cycled items. The values are further reinforced through specific activities such as working in the garden area. Here, pupils are expected to take turns, help each other and share equipment, for example. Pupils are eager to raise funds for different causes recognising that, by giving to others, the giver is also blessed. The school participates in various national fund raising events as well as specific events such as collecting for Operation Christmas Child. At other times, pupils demonstrate the value of justice by running cake sales for charities of their own choice. Although the values are integral to the daily life of the school, they are not evident within the behaviour policy or explicitly expressed on the school website. The prayer life of pupils has been very effectively developed through a range of age appropriate activities within classrooms and in the shared areas. For younger pupils, these include holding crosses, word prompts and pebbles to hold while saying prayers. For older pupils, prayers have been written about world events as a result of watching news reports. The impact of this is that pupils write and say prayers that demonstrate a great depth of understanding about feelings and the consequences of actions. Pupils are confident that prayer helps them to be closer to God and gives them a connection to God. This trust in God, as a source of help, gives pupils a confidence and assurance in their conduct. A quiet garden area supports pupils' spirituality by enabling them to seek calm and manage their behaviours effectively. RE makes an effective contribution to the school's Christian foundation as well as supporting very well the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils. Pupils express great enjoyment and enthusiasm in learning about the major world faiths in religious education (RE). They state that this enables them to respect others. An empathy and understanding of different cultures is effectively developed through a range of curriculum topics and trips, including to places of worship.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is described by staff as being a wonderful way to start the day. All members of the school benefit from the time to be quiet, seek calm and spend time with God. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about the worship, particularly enjoying the interactive activities that enable them to talk to a partner or come to the front to help out. At times, pupils are involved in small group discussion, such as one about being sorry. For example, one group considered times when it was hard to accept the word sorry if someone does the same thing again soon after or if they say it was an accident. This activity enabled all pupils to talk together and to deepen their thinking. The school follows the diocesan plans for worship, adapting them as appropriate to meet the needs of the school or to link with national or international events. This ensures that themes are relevant and absorbing. Although there is flexibility in approach, the range of activities to illustrate stories and themes is a little narrow at present. This restricts opportunities to think more deeply about the ideas. The Anglican tradition is central to the worship. Pupils are involved in lighting a candle and saying the opening liturgy. Pupils know that all worship is linked to Jesus and how he sets us the example for their lives. The stories shared develop empathy and a growing spirituality. The nativity story made one pupil reflect, for example, that, 'It made me surprised how perfectly Mary acted. It made me

want to be like her.' Worship invariably concludes with a challenge for pupils to reflect on their behaviour. For example, one pupil considered that the worship had made him think that, 'If you work together you can do anything'. Music enhances the worship. At times, it provides an opportunity to be still and find inner peace. The singing of hymns and songs that develop the worship theme is confident and uplifting.

Visitors, such as the Family Trust enrich pupil understanding of the bible. Pupils are particularly enthused by their presentations as they consider that they explain their Christian values in a simple and fun way. A group of pupils, known as the leading lights, and supported very effectively by a parent, plan and lead worship on a regular basis. Pupils relish this worship, enjoying seeing the interpretations of the bible stories. The worship ends with questions that deepen pupil understanding of the stories. Prayers said by the children during this worship demonstrate a strong spirituality. Pupils enjoy class worship as this enables them to be involved and reflect together within a smaller group, often inspiring exemplary care for their friends and the wider world. Parents value being able to join worship at the end of each term held in the church. This helps them to feel part of the school community as they worship together. Pupils have a developing understanding of the Trinity. One pupil commenting that the Trinity helped him 'remember that God is there for you'. Pupils and governors carry out regular monitoring of worship which enables the school to consider the impact of worship and to agree on development points.

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

The headteacher leads the school with commitment, celebrating each child as a precious and unique child of God. This vision is shared by the school community. Calm and kindness transcends all interactions, with the wellbeing of all being a high priority. Governors carry out their monitoring carefully. They ask challenging questions about pupil provision and, as a result, they have a secure understanding of the school's strengths. Consequently, achievement is above national averages in Key Stage 2. In response to the development point from the previous denominational inspection, the school formed a committee to review self-evaluation documentation. This is now reviewed regularly and effectively with new developments being factored in to planning. The incumbent is a valued visitor to the school. He has supported the school in considering bible stories that link to the school's Christian values. This is helping to strengthen pupil understanding of the values and how they can be lived out. The incumbent also supports the staff in the development of their RE teaching within the new Understanding Christianity programme. The RE leader has attended training run by the diocese and also attended network meetings to develop her expertise. She has supported staff with enthusiasm, as they have embraced the new RE curriculum. Supportive links are in place with other local church primary schools. Through collaborative working, this has helped to verify and celebrate the high quality of work within RE books, as well as helping future planning for the development of RE. The headteacher demonstrates a strong leadership role within the group of schools. He is fostering their development by coaching and mentoring headteachers new to their role and he leads professional development within the group of schools. At present, the professional development of staff for leadership in church schools within St Margaret's is underdeveloped. There are close links with the local church and community which enhance and enrich school life. The pupils state that the church is central to their school. They enjoy visiting it for services and as part of their RE lessons, as well as using the grounds for nature trails, for example. Parents are very supportive of the school, visiting regularly to assist in class. They also raise considerable funds for the school to support building work and school activities such as the purchase of new playground equipment. Members of the local community support the school within lessons and as reading helpers. The school is invited to help the parish to complete surveys and to make a difference to the development of village life through activities such as tree planting. This means that there is a wide range of mutually beneficial partnerships in place for the school. The school meets the statutory requirements for worship and RE in a voluntary controlled school.

SIAMS report, July 2018, St Margaret's Collier Street VC Church of England Primary School, Kent TN12 9RR