

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Knight's Templar Church of England / Methodist Community School

Liddymore Road, Watchet, Somerset TA23 0EX

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Diocese / Methodist District

Bath & Wells / Plymouth & Exeter

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Local authority

Somerset

Name of multi-academy trust / federation [delete as appropriate]

N/A

Date/s of inspection

23 November 2017

Date of last inspection

September 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary aided first school 123860

Headteacher

David Frowde

Inspector's name and number

Lyn Field 151

School context

This slightly smaller than average-sized first school serves the coastal town of Watchet and surrounding rural areas. The vast majority of pupils are White British. The proportion with special educational needs is lower than average but the proportion of disadvantaged pupils is broadly in line with average. The headteacher took up his post at the beginning of term. The Little Vikings nursery came under the school's management in 2014. A short Ofsted inspection in February 2017 judged the school to be good.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Knights Templar as a Church of England & Methodist school are good

- The new headteacher has re-invigorated the school as a church school and gained the trust and confidence of the whole community. The scale of the impact he has achieved in a short space of time is impressive and indicates that the leadership team has the capacity to sustain the pace of improvement.
- The partnership with the churches in Watchet enriches the life of the school. It makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual development and motivates them to take an active role in their community.
- There is a renewed understanding of how the four core values of love, hope, belonging and commitment are rooted in Christian teaching. They are central to exemplary pastoral care and to the school's core purpose of raising the aspirations of its community.
- All staff and pupils now begin each morning together in worship. This gives a high profile to the school's Christian character and sets the tone for teaching and learning throughout the day.

Areas to improve

- Provide senior leaders with access to resources for Church of England and Methodist initiatives and training at both local and national levels to sustain the current momentum as a church school.
- Review and amend the curriculum for RE to ensure there are coherent links with other subjects and progression in what pupils experience as they move through the school.
- Governors to establish regular systems for the review and evaluation of religious education, collective worship and the Christian vision and values of the school to inform its strategic direction as a church school.
- Develop pupils' use of classroom reflection areas to deepen their spiritual and critical thinking by making connections between issues of faith and their own life experiences.

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

The four core Christian values of love, hope, belonging and commitment are central to how the school sets about overcoming barriers to pupils' learning and raising their aspirations. The new senior leadership team explicitly makes direct links between biblical teaching and these values so that they give clear direction in all aspects of school life. At the start of term, the RE leader expanded the RACER (resilient, adventurous, curious, empathetic, reflective) code so that in RE lessons it included explicitly Christian vocabulary. It soon became clear that this was relevant to all aspects of learning. In line with this fresh thinking, the style of displays around the school is changing. Their rather static nature is being replaced with a more interactive and enquiry based approach to learning. Typical of this are the reflection areas in classrooms and in Ash class pupils have explored themes of 'peace' and 'belonging' with a curiosity for how others see things. The development of these areas is at an early stage. Although the monitoring of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not rigorous enough, what happens in practice is strong. Pupils derive huge benefit from the use of the school grounds for forest school sessions. They are developing a rich vocabulary for talking about Christian values because this is strongly promoted in worship. The staff are all present in worship and this means that, in every class, key messages are consistently followed up through the day. This creates a strong work ethic in lessons. Pupils' make sustained improvement despite starting school with skills below what is expected for their age. By the end of Year 4, their achievement is broadly in line with national expectations although too few reach the higher standards.

Communication lines have opened up and a high level of trust is quickly emerging in relationships across the whole community. These relationships fully express the teachings of Jesus in the depth of love and care shown for pupils. Bible stories are taught in depth and help shape the school's character because pupils confidently draw on them to explain how to treat others. A typical example was pupils describing how the Good Samaritan resisted prevailing attitudes about different cultures and put the needs of the injured man first. This is reflected in the huge empathy with which pupils talk about the difficulties some face in their learning and in getting on with each other. Pupils talk with great maturity about their experience of working with churches and groups in the local community especially the Archie Dementia project, as part of the school's creative approach to RE. This helps shape the school's Christian character and pupils' involvement in the community of Watchet is outstanding. As a result of their positive and sensitive attitudes to diversity and difference gained at first hand, behaviour is exemplary and any form of bullying extremely rare.

There is widespread approval of the changes made by the new headteacher. The sense of calm that pervades the whole site is the result of clear systems to help pupils manage their own behaviour using the language of the Christian values. Pupils are responding well to a cultural change of sharing their concerns with adults and this is providing staff with better information to make sure pupils have exactly the support they need. In particular, the school is able to tackle issues of poor attendance through early intervention programmes planned collaboratively with the West Somerset Education Partnership.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Changes made to collective worship this term have instilled a palpable sense of joy in worship that has been noted by parents and visiting members of local churches. There is no systematic monitoring of worship in place but the Methodist link governor has observed what pupils are now experiencing over a whole week and the outcomes demonstrate a significant improvement in the impact of worship on the whole community.

The headteacher, with strong support from senior leaders, has made changes to the pattern and structure of worship that embody the core value of 'belonging'. The first fundamental steps of changing the timing to the start of the day and including all members of staff has secured the place of collective worship at the heart of school life. This brings everyone to the same starting point each morning irrespective of the challenges that exist in the lives of individuals. It sets the tone for teaching and learning because staff reinforce the Christian values taught in worship in their lessons throughout the day. A typical comment from pupils was: 'I like the change, it helps me start the day off well.' The developments represent only a beginning in what leaders know is needed. However, staff welcome the changes as a timely move and action planning demonstrates an understanding of priorities required to sustain this early impact.

Worship is distinctively Christian and regularly draws on biblical teaching. As a result, pupils have a sound knowledge of the life of Jesus and how Christians refer to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They have a rich experience of the diversity of Christian denominations, although they do not recognise the distinctive features of each. This is because the school's partnership with the range of Christian churches in Watchet (Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Roman Catholic & Salvation Army) gives pupils a powerful view of the Christian faith in action in the community. It provides them with an excellent model of social action, contributes to their spiritual, moral and social development and motivates them in their own community work. The partnership also brings a range of worship leaders into school including the 'Open the Book' team. Pupils have a well-established role in leading prayers and the opening responses for worship. They do this very competently and with great enthusiasm but have

not developed in their roles despite being well equipped to do so.

The key messages of Bible stories are delivered step by step through skilled story telling and with visual prompts that are totally appropriate to the ages of pupils. They listen intently and take the messages very seriously. There are some telling instances of where pupils have applied them later in the day for their own benefit and for the wellbeing of others. Singing is receiving a new impetus as befits the Methodist tradition. Pupils have regularly been receiving awards for kindness but the focus has now become the particular theme or value for each week. These individual changes bring an immediacy and relevance to worship that are having a rapid and cumulative impact on the whole community.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Pupils think their RE lessons are important and are immensely proud of their whole class RE portfolios. The contents reveal a wide range of creative activities that engage pupils directly with community groups through links with local churches. This means they have a particularly strong appreciation of Christianity as a living faith and how religion makes an impact on believers. Local churches have led initiatives such as Bible days and Peace Mala that have captured pupils' interest and raised the profile of RE.

RE follows the locally agreed syllabus and regular liaison with the middle school avoids repetition of what pupils cover across their years in Key Stage 2. The majority of teaching is good as a result of strong support from the RE leader and pupils have a secure knowledge of key Christian beliefs appropriate to their age. They show a genuine interest and respect for other world faiths and are developing the skills to tackle deeper questions such as the meaning and significance of religious festivals. Teachers use a straightforward and manageable system for assessing pupils' progress and this indicates that although the majority reach the expectations for their age, too few are exceeding these.

The RE leader is ambitious for the subject but has had limited access to training beyond network meetings about the syllabus. However, her leadership remit has expanded under the new headteacher and the RE action plan reveals her understanding of exactly where improvement is needed. It recognises that although pupils enjoy the topics they cover, not enough attention has been paid to how well the curriculum offers them a series of steps to develop as individuals in their religious thinking over their time in school. The action plan also recognises the wider role of RE in shaping spiritual development across the school. This aligns well with the thinking of the senior leadership team and is therefore helping to create cohesion in how the school is developing as a church school.

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

The new headteacher has built on the foundations laid by the previous post-holder. He has brought fresh insight into the school's identity as a church school and has quickly set about developing a more distributed approach to leadership. His early actions have made a significant and sustainable impact that has re-energised staff and created a calm and purposeful environment for pupils structured around the existing four Christian values.

The school's core purpose is motivated by the teachings of Jesus and its character is clearly ecumenical. This is about more than the presence of Anglicans and Methodists at governor level and is the result of the active involvement of all the churches in Watchet in the school. Governors are totally committed to serving and raising the aspirations of the local community and this ensures that their decisions fully reflect the school's Christian foundation. The school is the largest employer in Watchet and governors take the wellbeing of staff, as well as pupils and their families, very seriously.

Governors and school leaders live out the principles of Methodism and the Church of England vision for education in their daily practice. However, they are not up to date with recent church school initiatives and have not accessed training in the leadership of church schools so these do not inform the school's strategic planning. The new headteacher is keen to address this. He valued the day spent with the national Methodist adviser and is forging new links with Methodist schools. RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements and the leadership of these areas now has a high profile with their inclusion in school development planning. The link governor for RE and collective worship is in regular contact with school leaders and this is a vital channel for the church links. Although this liaison is reported to the governing body, there is no formal regular review of either the RE curriculum or the provision for collective worship to ensure that these meet pupils' needs.

Local churches invest heavily in the school and the massive impact of their joint working and prayerful support does much to outweigh the shortcomings of training and documentation. The core Christian values that underpin the relationship with local churches run deep. Pupils experience love in the school's care for them and hope in the future. They constantly observe Christian skills in action and this inspires their own responses to serving the community. Parents are keen to maintain the school's connection with community activities and have complete confidence in the direction in which the new leadership team is moving.