

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St. George's CE Voluntary Aided Primary School

Coleman Road Camberwell London SE5 7TF

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Diocese

Southwark

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Satisfactory

Local authority

Southwark

Date of inspection

4 October 2017

Date of last inspection

7 November 2014

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Aided 100827

Headteacher

Andrew Rojas

Inspector's name and number

Jenny Earp 288

School context

St. George's Church of England Primary is an urban school, serving Camberwell and Peckham. Its 136 pupils reflect the diversity of the immediate area, with pupils mainly from Black African and Caribbean backgrounds. The proportion of children with special educational needs and those in receipt of additional government funding is above the national average. A large percentage of pupils speak English as a second language. Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in staffing and senior leadership. The deputy head was appointed as interim headteacher in September 2017 and an interim chair of governors was also appointed this term.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. George's Primary as a Church of England school are good

- The inspiring Christian leadership of the headteacher, enhanced by supportive senior leaders, provides good, clear direction that is bringing about rapid and sustained improvement.
- The school's distinctively Christian values have a highly positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The new leadership team have brought a clearer understanding of what it means to be a church school.
- Collective worship is central to the school's Christian character and has a memorable impact on all those who take part.

Areas to improve

- Governors to develop an explicit cycle of evaluation of the impact of the school's Christian distinctiveness, learning and teaching in religious education and collective worship, in order to support the school's continuing effectiveness.
- Plan differentiated writing tasks, which consistently challenge, reinforce and deepen learning experiences in religious education (RE) for all pupils in Key Stage 2.
- Develop opportunities for global studies so that pupils increase their awareness of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith.

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

This is a rapidly improving school, which has undergone many changes in recent years. The school's values, firmly rooted in Christian principles, are understood by the whole school community and are embodied in the work of the school. The whole school community has been involved in the shaping of the school's vision, identifying respect, achievement, valour and community as core values that best reflect their interpretation of the Christian ethos. Although several Christian values were explored, it was decided that the four chosen were at the centre of everything the school did, underpinned by the biblical principles of 'Love God' and 'Love Thy Neighbour'. The school policies and practice are moulded around these values and are reflected in the learning environment. This ensures that most members of the school recognise the distinctive characteristics of the school's values and identify how they affect their daily lives and achievements. The new headteacher, senior leaders and governors are all committed to raising standards at the school, as well as promoting the Christian ethos and nurturing the children. The actions taken by senior leaders have meant that pupils' behaviour, attitudes to learning and achievement have all improved. Rigorous tracking systems identify rates of progress and the need for intervention strategies to ensure every child has the best opportunities to learn. Learners' outcomes are good and the school demonstrates a strong determination to ensure further improvement. As a result, achievement in reading and maths in Key Stage 2 are now above both Southwark and national averages. Pupils have a very good understanding of the school's values and talk positively about the way in which they influence their lives. One child described valour as, 'being scared to do something, but doing it anyway, like starting new maths'. Pupils feel valued and are confident in expressing their thoughts and beliefs, knowing that they will be respected. Members of staff model the core values in their relationships with children, encouraging them and treating them with care and respect. This makes a valuable contribution to the quality of behaviour and learning, which is good across the school. The Christian ethos enables effective strategies to maintain high levels of attendance. It also ensures that staff know the needs of each individual child, providing challenge and support to enable all to progress. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of the school is promoted well through a rich curriculum, including religious education, after-school clubs, visitors and visits to places of interest. Pupils gain a growing understanding of their role in local and national communities, for example through the school's long-standing connection with Trinity College, Cambridge and local schools. The school's faith group, made up of a cross-section of children across the different age ranges, provides opportunities for learners to explore spirituality. The school environment reflects the Christian ethos and values of the school, with the Friendship Garden providing a place of quiet reflection for the school community. The headteacher has an open door policy and his warm, Christian approach is much appreciated by parents and carers.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship makes a strong contribution to the life of the school, and its impact on the attitudes, behaviour and relationships of both pupils and adults is obvious. Many reflect on how a particular act of worship has made a difference to their thinking or helped them in their lives. The worship programme is well planned and monitored, with a focus on the Christian calendar and festivals, including biblical links and teaching about Jesus Christ. Themes are relevant and there is a cohesive approach to the leadership of worship, which ensures a sense of belonging for all members of the school community. Christian values are strongly promoted and clearly understood by pupils. This was seen on the day of the inspection when children were encouraged to reflect on the words of the hymn 'Here I am Lord' and how each one of them could answer God's call to serve others. This also demonstrates how everyone is developing an understanding of values from a Christian perspective. The music used while pupils enter the hall creates a beautiful, calm atmosphere as worship begins and there is an air of prayerfulness. Every act of worship reflects the Anglican patterns of greeting, engagement, response and reflection. This enables children to develop an understanding of church tradition, as well as God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pupils respond positively to worship and are able to sit and reflect, increasingly taking responsibility for different elements of worship and as a result their SMSC development is good. For instance, older pupils help in the call to worship by laying out the worship table with a Bible, a cross and lighting the candles. This provides a clear and positive focus, enabling pupils to come into the presence of God respectfully. Children are fully engaged in worship, contribute eagerly and sing with great enthusiasm and joy. All staff attend worship, thus demonstrating its importance within the life of the school. Worship is held in St. George's Church at key times during the Christian year, and clergy from nearby churches also make a positive contribution to worship. Pupils understand Bible stories and can link these effectively to the current value being explored or past values. One younger pupil remarked, 'God loves us with all of his heart'. Prayer is central to the life at school, as can be seen in the way that pupils recite the Lord's prayer and the call to morning worship prayer with confidence. Every classroom has a reflection and prayer area and because of this, learners understand the purpose of prayer in both formal and informal contexts. Worship is related to significant moments in the life of the school and the seasons of the church. For instance, pupils spoke about how they had enjoyed taking part in the harvest festival a few days before the day of the inspection.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious education (RE) is led effectively by the headteacher, who maintains his awareness of current developments in RE by attending training and sharing this with colleagues. Following the previous inspection, a Religious Education Action Improvement Group was set up to work collaboratively with management, staff and diocese advisers. Its purpose was to plan strategic actions specifically to raise standards in religious education. These actions have proved to be very successful and achievement is now generally in line with national expectations and comparable to other core subjects. The senior leadership and RE leaders have worked hard to drive improvement and raise attainment in RE and as a result, pupils make good progress in the subject. Religious education portfolios, class RE books, lesson observations and work scrutiny, all indicate that the majority of pupils make good progress over time. Pupils enjoy religious education and exhibit positive attitudes to studying the subject. They particularly like the wider variety of activities, which have more recently been introduced into lessons, for example opportunities for deep thinking, time for reflection or investigating religious artefacts. These lessons illustrate how the enquiry-based approach has helped to raise expectations and standards across the school and challenges children's thinking through thought-provoking questions. Visits to places of religious worship help to deepen pupils' understanding and appreciation of other faiths and different practices. Pupils demonstrate a sound knowledge of the facts about religions and can recall events in the life of Jesus or Old Testament stories. Lessons include inspiring examples of significant biblical teachings, Christian values and SMSC experiences, while pupils talk confidently with respect about their beliefs and those of other faiths. Teaching is good because of staff knowledge, enthusiasm and questioning skills. Teachers' marking is consistent and thorough, offering pupils useful feedback in order to improve their work further. Pupils are given opportunities through their 'green pen' comments to self-evaluate and reflect on their work. Although pupils' books reflect a range of activities and progression can be seen, there is little differentiation for more able pupils in Key Stage 2. The planning of religious education is detailed and systematic, using the new revised Southwark Diocese RE scheme of work, which has been tailored well to fit the school's requirements. Children can now elicit a response to 'I wonder?' and next step questions. Although, the religious education syllabus and a range of visits to other places of worship support pupils' awareness of the diversity of faith and culture, there are limited opportunities for learning about Christianity as a world faith. All staff work together across year groups to assess religious education effectively.

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

The new headteacher's clear Christian vision is supported by the whole school community, articulated and lived out in action. In a relatively short period of time, the leadership has brought the school to a position where it has the capacity to build on its Christian character. Because of this, children at St. George's are able to fulfil their personal and academic potential. Governors are actively involved in the life of the school and as a result of undertaking extensive training, have recently been awarded the Bishop's Certificate of Governance. The school recognises the benefits of the input of the diocese for support and training. The senior leaders are determined to continue improving the school and developing it as a church school. Decisions about the future of the school are made with these principles in mind. Consequently, many changes have been made, which have already resulted in a stronger Christian character and improved performance. New staff at the school undertake appropriate induction training, stressing the importance of Christian distinctiveness. They say they feel happy, valued and supported by the senior staff, with clear benefits for future leadership in church schools. Opportunities to visit and learn from other schools are embraced and ideas implemented swiftly. All of this means that the school is improving rapidly and is well placed to improve further. Governors are increasingly involved in the monitoring, evaluating, action and strategic planning of the school. However, this does not yet include formalised processes for governors to monitor Christian distinctiveness. Self-assessment is accurate and the development points from the previous inspection have all been addressed. Parents are unanimous in their praise of the school and are grateful for the dedication of the headteacher and staff who have implemented many changes, such as the school's values, new school uniform, stronger discipline and a focus on raising standards. They say they have noticed a favourable difference in their children's attitude and behaviour since the changes have been made at school. The local church, diocese and the wider community make a good contribution to school life, with clear benefit for pupils. The senior leadership team are working hard to involve parents more in their children's learning and are currently setting up a parents' and teachers' association. The views of stakeholders are sought in order to improve the provision at the school. One Year 6 pupil wrote succinctly in a questionnaire, 'I think this school is a wonderful and welcoming place. Everyone respects the school's values and mottos. Everyone loves St. George's.'

The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship and religious education.