

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### Surrey Hills Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

School Lane,  
Westcott,  
Dorking,  
Surrey RH4 3QF

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Guildford</b>
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Surrey
Date of inspection	26 January 2017
Date of last inspection	11 January 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 135953
Headteacher	Jennie Ratcliff
Inspector's name and number	Andrew Rickett 201

#### School context

Surrey Hills is larger than the average size primary school with 298 children in roll. The school operates over two sites three miles apart. The majority of children are of White British heritage. Children come from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. The number of children with special learning needs and/or disabilities is above the national average while the number entitled to receive the pupil premium is below. Attendance is above the national average. There have been significant changes in staffing and the governing body in the last two years.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Surrey Hills CE Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- Children have a good understanding of how values make a contribution to their lives and help them in their relationships.
- Acts of worship make an important contribution to the spiritual life of the school and children's appreciation of prayer.
- Religious education (RE) helps children to develop a moral and social awareness of the contribution that faith makes to a person's life.
- Leaders and managers are committed to the development of the Christian ethos and how it has meaning and purpose for children.

#### Areas to improve

- Develop opportunities for children to reflect so that they are able to make clearer links between the school's values and its vision.
- Empower children to take greater ownership of how themes in collective worship are explored so that they have a deeper understanding of them.
- Raise attainment in religious education by developing creative opportunities that challenge children's thinking in greater depth.

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

The school adopted four core values when it amalgamated in 2010. They are collectively referred to by all members of the school community as the 'CARE' values and are well embedded in the life of the school through the high quality of relationships that underpins the school's ethos. Care, achieve, respect and enjoy (CARE) are used to help children make sense of their actions and support them understand the consequences of them. CARE also supports the children's learning and contributes to the rising academic standards. Twelve values have been used to support CARE through a more explicitly Christian interpretation and these are now in the process of being reviewed to identify a smaller number so that links between CARE and Christian values become simpler and more effective. The identification of this as a next step in the school's development of a distinctive Christian ethos is a sign of strength and confidence to continually review its effectiveness as a church school community. Whether the school has eighteen values or a smaller number, care and respect as well as other values are an integral part of the school ethos. Children understand that stories from the Bible help them to appreciate values such as forgiveness and truthfulness and how they should try and follow them in their own lives. Christian values are used to support children when relationships occasionally go wrong, through encouraging them to reflect on their actions and empathise with others. This approach also contributes to the children's well developed sense of fairness and justice and therefore impacts on their moral and social education. Children generally have good opportunities to reflect during the school day both in lessons and at other times. The Forest School experience gives younger children the chance to be out in the open and explore nature and the world around them. Older children are beginning to develop a greater ability to explore questions of meaning and purpose through the introduction of 'Philosophy 4 Children'. They respond with enthusiasm and eagerness when challenged with 'big questions' and are acquiring a richer vocabulary through which they express their views in greater depth. The potential for this to be embedded has not yet been fully explored. Children are aware of the need to contribute through charitable giving to the needs of others both locally and wider afield. They have a strong sense of social justice that everyone deserves to be treated with dignity no matter their background.

## **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Collective worship is good because it inspires children to reflect on how Christian values as told through Bible stories, have meaning in their own lives and relevance in today's world. Acts of worship also help children to appreciate the place that prayer has in the lives of those who have a faith. The introduction of reflection areas in every classroom in the summer of 2015 has given children greater opportunities to think about the impact that values have and develop a clearer understanding of what makes the school distinctively Christian. Collective worship planning clearly identifies how values link to Bible stories in a programme that is delivered over a two year cycle. Themes are explored throughout the week in a variety of worship styles that are similar across the two school sites and children's responses are being increasingly captured in creative ways using the class reflection areas. These areas have been developed with the support and encouragement of the Children and Families Worker who makes a valuable contribution to the worshipping life of the school. Planning has improved with more opportunities to explore events in the Christian calendar which are then linked to values. Where appropriate, further links are made to British values which helps give children an understanding of British society and its foundations in Christianity as well as in modern multi-cultural diversity. The introduction of a worship group in September 2016 is giving children more opportunity to be involved in the regular planning and evaluation of worship. Children from each class in Key Stage 2 are currently trialling how this group can most effectively enhance worship for them and have engaged in this with enthusiasm and a keen interest. A good example of their growing leadership in worship is the recently introduced evaluations that children undertake to get feedback about the impact of worship messages. These evaluations focus on how values make a difference to their own lives and the lives of others and inform the school about how successfully worship messages have been put across. Some monitoring of worship has also taken place by staff and governors. Acts of worship are distinct times in the school day on both sites and include opportunities for prayer, reflection, the singing of hymns and listening to Bible stories. The use of symbols such as crosses and candles contribute to the creation of an atmosphere in which children say they have time to be still and quiet in the school day. Children have a good understanding of the place of prayer in the life of the school and its meaning for those with a faith. They are adamant that God listens to everyone's prayers regardless of who they are because He treats everyone equally and considers every individual to have worth. They are developing their appreciation of the nature of the Trinity and are acquiring a language to help them explore God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### **The effectiveness of religious education is good**

Religious education is a vibrant subject in the curriculum. It makes an important contribution to the children's moral and cultural development through the exploration of issues relating to social justice and fairness and by helping them to appreciate the traditions of a range of world faiths. Children respond with enthusiasm and interest to these experiences and enjoy sharing their views and opinions in a learning environment that encourages openness and respect for the views of others. The best quality work comes from these discussions when children are challenged to think at a deeper level and relish being questioned by their teachers. The opportunities for children to think at a critical level have yet to be fully explored as an integral part of their learning so that the potential for more children to achieve at a higher level can be attained. However, where this is happening, the outcomes reflect the children's abilities. This is evident in the class RE 'scrapbooks' which very effectively record progress in the understanding that children have of each unit of work they study. Children are making progress in RE and standards are at least in line with national expectations for the subject. Teachers are developing their skills to implement the expectations from the Diocesan Guidelines for RE and this is making a positive difference to the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers are confident to be creative in the delivery of the syllabus and learning activities are equally stimulating. Children are engaged and relationships in the classroom are strong. Children possess a secure knowledge of RE and have a good subject vocabulary that supports them when they express their views and opinions. Some make connections between their learning of Christianity and other religions that enhance their understanding of concepts such as 'what makes an event special?' Assessment of RE follows the same format as other subjects and is therefore familiar to teachers. The school is aware that this may need refining to ensure that it reflects more closely the expectations of the RE syllabus. Some moderation of standards has taken place to ensure that assessment is consistent across the school, although more could be done to look more closely at differences in outcomes between class groups. However, the RE subject leader has an excellent grasp of the subject and has carried out extensive analysis of assessment data, which as this data increases, will allow progress to be tracked as children move through the school. The RE leader is dedicated to the subject and has ensured that it is an important part of the curriculum and has the potential to drive whole school standards.

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

The headteacher has ensured that the school has made good progress since the previous inspection in developing its Christian ethos so that it has even greater meaning and purpose for all members of the school community. She has done this at the same time that the school has been meeting other priorities including raising children's attainment. The fact that the headteacher, fully supported by her senior team and governors, has put the development of the Christian ethos as a priority at this testing time, is a reflection of the importance given to it by leaders and managers. The headteacher has been proactive in visiting other church schools to look at examples of good practice and adapting them to reflect the context of children at Surrey Hills. This means that initiatives such as the creation of the children's worship team and classroom reflection areas have been tailored to support the school's distinctive Christian vision and values. Self-evaluation as a church school is accurate and careful monitoring has correctly identified further areas for development. For example, an understanding of how a smaller core set of Christian values would link more clearly to the CARE values. The headteacher's commitment and enthusiasm is shared by her team who together have a good capacity to continue to develop the school as a church school. Governors share in this commitment and have a good grasp of the school's strengths and areas to improve. The well-established school/church committee makes a valuable contribution to the evaluation of the school as a church school and is highly effective in asking challenging questions and raising actions to improve provision. The two vicars are an integral part of the life of the school and well known to children and their parents. They make a valuable contribution to the life of the school through their pastoral support and leadership in acts of worship. They are supported by the Children and Families Worker, whose commitment to the school/church committee together with other members of the church community, is testimony to the depth of support from local churches. Children speak highly of the regular 'Open the Book' acts of worship which church members deliver. The school benefits from support and advice from the diocese particularly with regard to the development of RE and the implementation of Diocesan guidelines for RE. Regular staff training and attendance at courses and meetings ensures that staff are aware of latest development in RE and receive professional support as future leaders of church schools. Parents say that they are 'delighted' with how the school helps their children appreciate values and an understanding of Christianity and other world religions. They say that the school allows their children to grow in their understanding of faith in a gentle way that encourages them to ask questions and to make connections between Bible stories and their own lives. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.