

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Powerstock Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Powerstock Bridport Dorset DT6 3TB	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Salisbury
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Dorset
Date of inspection	1 December 2016
Date of last inspection	12 October 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 113812
Headteacher	Louise Greenham
Inspector's name and number	Andrew Rickett 201

School context

Powerstock is smaller than the average size primary school with 60 children in roll. They are arranged into three class groups. It is situated in a rural setting. The majority of children are of White British heritage and come from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. The number of children with additional learning needs and/or disabilities is well above the national average while the number entitled to receive the pupil premium is average. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. The headteacher was appointed in January 2016.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Powerstock CE VA Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- Christian values make a difference to the lives of children and are becoming increasingly incorporated into their learning as well as their personal development.
- Children have high quality opportunities to develop a personal spirituality and are acquiring a language through which they explore their responses to these experiences in greater depth.
- Leadership by the headteacher and religious education leader is excellent and ensures that all children are cared for and nurtured within a Christian environment.

Areas to improve

- Develop the children's ability to express their views and opinions on how core Christian values impact on their growing spirituality by equipping them with strategies to explore their thoughts in greater depth and acquire a language to express them.
- Ensure that children have consistently high quality opportunities to deepen their learning in religious education (RE), and across the whole curriculum, by responding to challenging questions, having time to respond to them and tracking their progress as they move through the school.
- Develop the skills of leaders and managers to implement robust procedures to identify how well the school is providing opportunities for children to grow spiritually and the extent to which this impacts on their wellbeing and learning.

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

The school has had a set of six core values for a number of years and these have been an important part of how the school expresses its distinctive Christian ethos. A pivotal time in the recent history of the school has been a values week held in May 2016 in which children and adults revisited the core values to rejuvenate them and bring greater meaning and purpose to them as a school community. At the same time, adults in school have developed their understanding of spirituality so that there is a clearer understanding of how to provide opportunities for children to explore their own responses to spiritual experiences. Together, the work on values and spirituality is becoming more firmly established at the centre of the school's Christian ethos and their impact on learning and wellbeing is becoming more overt. There is one particular aspect of the school's context in which connections between values and spirituality is already making an excellent contribution. This is the extent to which the Christian vision influences the way that the school supports the needs of individual children. The school has a high number of children who need additional learning support and the quality of care and nurture for them, and for all children regardless of background, is excellent. Values such as perseverance and friendship have been central to the vision to provide the best experiences to enable all children to do well in their academic work. Children articulate this and have an awareness that this is because it is a Christian school. Most children make good progress from their starting points to achieve outcomes that are generally in line with national expectations. Lessons are specifically planned to meet the learning needs of all groups of children so that all abilities make progress. Links between the core values and explicit Christian teaching is largely delivered through acts of worship where links to specific Bible stories is an integral part of worship planning. Some links are made in lessons such as religious education. Children have a sound appreciation of the meaning of core values and how they have relevance in their daily lives. They are beginning to acquire a personal language to explore these values in greater depth and connect them to their growing awareness of a personal spirituality. This is not fully developed as children have yet to acquire the skills and strategies to support them explore values in depth. However, the school has made impressive progress in putting in place opportunities for children to respond and record their thoughts and ideas. These include good quality reflection journals that capture the children's thoughts and 'passports' in RE that provide an innovative way for children to respond to their learning about global cultures. Similarly, weekly reviews from teachers show that they are developing their own language to express how they see spirituality grow among children. These are frequently linked to other aspects of school life such as class charters and the 'golden rule' which reflects the teaching of Jesus to treat each other as we would want to be treated. Relationships in the school are therefore of high quality because the values are modelled by teachers and lived out by children. Children know right from wrong and appreciate the need to treat others with respect. They have a good awareness that the world has a range of cultures and beliefs and that they have a personal responsibility to respect them.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Acts of worship are important times in the school day and provide children and adults with opportunities to come together to be still, share stories from the Bible and learn how their core values teach them how to lead their lives. Worship is a special time that is distinctively Anglican through the use of simple words of liturgy when the candle is lit and in the Lord's Prayer. Children understand that collective worship is a key aspect of being a church school and that it is the same, whether in church or in the school, because 'God is everywhere'. Collective worship is planned around themes which focus on the core values and, following a review of the worship policy in June 2016, they are delivered in a more structured way through a new format. This ensures that elements are included that make them explicitly worship. For example, there is a clear time for welcome, teaching and reflection and sending out with a clear message. Links with the Christian year, through the celebration of key festivals, and the 'Rights Respecting Schools' programme, gives children a broad range of experiences which all connect strongly to Bible stories. Most children recall these stories and explain the message behind them which they then relate to how they should treat each other. Children are developing their understanding of God and Jesus. They know that Jesus is the light of the world and say that this means He is 'special' because 'He is God's Son'. They talk about light and the Sun but find it more difficult to articulate their understanding of why Jesus is the light of the world. Similarly, children understand that prayer is a time to talk with God and Jesus but are less sure about the purpose of prayer and what they think it does. Some children do have a deeper understanding of faith and prayer saying that they 'hear God talking to them' helping at times which can 'calm me down'. Children's views have been sought on collective worship in September 2016 which has informed what the school can do in future to continue to develop its impact and some governors have undertaken useful monitoring of worship. Children contribute to worship and actively participate in them with enthusiasm when asked to volunteer or respond to questions. They have less opportunity to plan and lead collective worship on a regular basis.

The effectiveness of religious education is good

Children make good progress in RE from a range of different starting points so that the majority attain standards that are broadly in line with national expectations with fewer achieving higher levels. A success of the teaching and learning of RE is the extent to which they meet the needs of children with a range of learning difficulties. Teachers give children opportunities to explore their learning in a variety of ways so that they express their thoughts by responding to stimuli such as art. Children are challenged through good questioning techniques to explain their answers by justifying their views and give reason for them. An important aspect of this is that children are given time to think of how they are going to express their views in response to difficult challenges. This is done within an environment where children feel confident to explain their opinions knowing that their views will be listened to with respect by others. Children do not always have the vocabulary or skills to be able to explore these views in depth. Religious education makes a significant contribution to the development of the children's understanding of core values and their spirituality. Links are made to values as they occur naturally from teaching and learning and connect with the school's interpretation of spirituality. For example, when learning about the meaning of Christmas, one class explored giving presents through generosity and thinking of others before self. One children explained this when they said that 'presents aren't the important thing about Christmas; the meaning behind the present is the gift'. Children generally are attentive in lessons and are engaged in their learning when doing practical tasks. They have positive attitudes towards the subject and recognise that it is an important part of being a church school. The school uses 'Discovery RE' to deliver the RE syllabus and this encourages teaching and learning to be based on enquiry. This ensures that children learn about Christianity and other major world religions although an audit has not been carried out to ensure that an appropriate amount of time is given to the study of Christianity. The school is developing assessment in RE. The RE leader has a good understanding of what needs to be done to embed a consistent system across both Key Stages and carry out more moderation to ensure the assessment is reliable. The tracking of children's progress across the school in RE has still to be introduced. Religious education is a vibrant subject in the school curriculum because the subject leader has a commitment and passion for RE.

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

The headteacher has ensured that the school's Christian ethos has grown over the last year and that it has greater depth and meaning than at the time of the previous inspection. She has put the needs of the children at the forefront of every action that the school has taken to move them forward both academically and to support and nurture their wellbeing. Her commitment to delivering a church school ethos is making a difference to the lives of children throughout the school community. Her understanding of what it means to be a church school is growing and she has a very clear grasp of what needs to be done to continue to develop. The school's Christian ethos has a firm foundation upon which leaders and managers are excited to build. The headteacher is well supported by her staff and particularly through the significant contribution of the RE leader. Working together, they are an excellent team with the capacity to lead the school forward as a church school. The RE leader ensures that the subject has a high profile within the school curriculum and that it makes a significant contribution to the promotion of the Christian ethos. Under her leadership, RE has moved forward since the previous inspection and she keeps the subject abreast of latest developments. Governors are equally committed to the school's church ethos and are proud of its status within the local community as a school that lives out its values. Governors articulate their views of their expectations of what it means to them to be a church school and how they would like to see it develop. There are systems in place that effectively monitor aspects of the church ethos mainly through observations of collective worship and RE lessons. These are supported by a range of evidence that includes children's comments and feedback. This contributes to overall self-evaluation as a church school which is of a good quality although some aspects of monitoring, such as formal meetings, are not always carried out on a regular basis. As the school continues to develop its understanding of spirituality, and how it impacts on all aspects of learning, the headteacher is aware that the skills of leaders and managers to evaluate its impact need to develop. The vicar is a valued member of the school community and is committed in her support for collective worship and the Christian life of the school. Children, whether from the village or further afield, regard the church as 'theirs' because of the close links through the weekly celebration of worship in the church. She contributes to self-evaluation and has observed some RE lessons. A few parents were spoken to during the inspection and they expressed their views that the school's Christian ethos supports their children's moral and spiritual development through its values and the 'centrality of them' in the life of the school. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

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