



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Carlton Voluntary Controlled Primary School

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| The Moor, Carlton, Bedfordshire, MK43 7JR | |
| Current SIAMS inspection grade | Outstanding |
| Diocese / Methodist District | St Albans |
| Previous SIAMS inspection grade | Outstanding |
| Local authority | Bedfordshire |
| Name of multi-academy trust / federation | N/A |
| Date/s of inspection | 5 December 2017 |
| Date of last inspection | 27 November 2012 |
| Type of school and unique reference number | Voluntary controlled 109610 |
| Headteacher | Sue Burt |
| Inspector's name and number | Rachel Peddie 934 |

School context

Carlton VC Primary School is a small rural school in the Borough of Bedford. The school has 80 pupils on roll organised into 5 classes, some with mixed age groups.

The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and there are no pupils with English as an additional language. There are small numbers of children with special educational needs, and the proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for additional funding known as the pupil premium is below average. The school is currently in a period of transition from a lower school to a primary school and since September 2017 has Year 5 pupils on roll for the first time. The school sits in extensive grounds and the school building is used as the local community hall in the village.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Carlton Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Christian values are deeply embedded at the heart of the school's practice, which result in high standards of academic achievement, behaviour and personal well-being for all pupils.
- The dedication, care and nurture provided by the headteacher and staff ensures that all pupils thrive in an environment underpinned by a strong Christian ethos, where every individual is valued.
- The strong partnership between the school and local clergy supports the pupils' understanding of the Christian faith.

Areas to improve

- Ensure the recorded tasks pupils undertake in religious education (RE) enable them to demonstrate fully their understanding of what they have learned.
- Develop the school's website and other written documentation to fully reflect the school's outstanding Christian character.

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

Distinctive Christian values lie at the heart of Carlton school and are lived out daily by all members of the school community. They underpin all that the school does and are explicitly articulated by children, staff and parents. These values are clearly evident in all areas of the school building through displays that reflect the high standard of children's learning experiences. This is further enhanced by the use of the school's extensive outdoor environment, utilising the school garden and woodland through which children learn about the stewardship of God's world. The school's curriculum is vibrant and engaging with a wide range of opportunities which develops children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC).

The school's mission statement 'Work hard, reach for the stars and you will go far. For with God, all things are possible' is central to all that the school does. Pupils can explain the school's motto confidently; as one child explained, 'it means always try your hardest in everything you do and that if you trust God he will always help you'. Pupils achieve highly across the curriculum and make excellent progress during their time in school because of the commitment of all staff to knowing and valuing each child as an individual. Outcomes for pupils are consistently above national expectations and pupils thrive in a supportive, inclusive environment. The high levels of care and attention for pupils with additional needs and for those considered to be disadvantaged ensures that all children feel supported to 'reach for the stars'. Pupils are able to talk with confidence about how values affect their lives 'our values will always help us to make the right choices' and 'they help you to be a kind person and that helps you to be happy'. Relationships at all levels across the school are excellent and standards of attendance and behaviour are high. This is because all staff and children model the school's values on a daily basis and children feel secure. One child described the best thing about the school by saying 'nobody gets left out here, everyone is included'. Parents are highly supportive of the school and value the information and guidance they receive from teachers enabling them to support their child's development at home. Parents feel welcome in the school community and can readily articulate how the school's Christian ethos and values programme has impacted on their children, for example by their support for charities. One parent described the school's values as the key reason the children grow up to be 'socially and environmentally conscious'.

Pupils have a strong awareness of Christianity as a worldwide faith through their active partnership with a school in Ghana and their sponsorship of a child there. Religious education (RE) makes a very positive contribution to the SMSC development of pupils. They are eager to learn and explore in practical ways, for example through 'Spirituality Day' and through the creative use of drama, debate and art in lessons. As a result, pupils are keen to embrace the challenge that RE provides and can confidently articulate the importance of the subject: 'RE helps us to learn about different religions so we can understand other people around the world'. The RE curriculum is enhanced through regular trips and visits such as the 'Three Faiths Tour' through which children develop a good understanding of and respect for diversity. School leaders rightly recognise that the tasks pupils are asked to record in their books do not enable them to demonstrate the high standard of their understanding in RE.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

Collective worship has a high profile and is a central part of the school day bringing the school community together in an atmosphere of reverence and praise. Worship is distinctively Christian with a strong focus on the life and teachings of Jesus and the Trinity. Pupils explain clearly the relevance of the lighting of three candles in collective worship and as one child described 'the spirit is all around us and inside us'.

Pupils talk confidently about key times in the Christian calendar, linking these with Biblical teachings. One child described why Lent is important: 'that's when you give up something because that's what Jesus did in the desert'. Worship includes key features of Anglican practice. As a result, children explain with understanding the colours of the church altar cloths, the candles on an advent wreath and the importance of the cross on the altar made out of three types of wood, reinforcing their understanding of the Trinity further. Older pupils refer to Bible stories to illustrate their school values and how these are relevant to their own lives. For example, 'The story of David and Goliath is about courage and that helps us to remember to be brave even if we are a bit scared' and 'Moses showed loyalty and that teaches us to be loyal to our friends'. Pupils engage with collective worship enthusiastically as a result of the range of approaches used to motivate and inspire such as through music, imagery, and drama. They describe it as a very important part of the school day because 'it's when we think about God and our values and we can be quiet to say a prayer'. Pupils speak very positively about worship and how they especially enjoy being able to take part: 'everyone gets to be involved'. Pupils embrace the opportunities for silence and reflection during worship and can explain how this is important to them because 'it gives us chance to think about what we are grateful for' and 'we can imagine what Jesus would do'.

Pupils show a mature depth to their understanding of prayer and spirituality. They frequently write prayers for use in worship and for governors meetings. Their spiritual understanding is further developed through the use of

reflection areas and prayer trees in classrooms and their prayer books show an impressive depth of understanding for their age. This is also evident in the way some children write or say prayers at home and the examples parents give of when this has supported their children through challenging times.

Since the last inspection, pupils of all ages have begun to plan and lead acts of worship independently and this has deepened their understanding of the Christian faith. Pupils take key responsibilities in all acts of worship, such as setting out the altar, lighting candles and choosing hymns. As a result, children have a strong understanding of the role worship plays within a faith community. Careful planning supports pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christian values, the liturgical church year and Biblical teachings. There are strong links with the local church and clergy who contribute to the planning and evaluation of worship in school. Feedback from pupils and parents also plays a key role in future planning. The pupils speak with enthusiasm about the weekly worship led by the vicar and the 'Open the Book' group. Contributions from the leaders of other Christian traditions widen pupils' understanding of Christian denominations. . . . Worship is enriched with highly enjoyable experiences such as a Palm Sunday re-enactment, Christingle, Remembrance Day, Spirituality Day, and 'Dress the Christmas Tree', to which parents are invited to attend and participate. These strengthen the status of the school as a church school and allow families to come together as a worshipping community. As the school is set to include Year 6 children from 2018, the vicar is currently considering a way to include a Eucharistic experience into worship for these older pupils.

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

Carlton has a strong Christian identity, which is tangible from the first moment of entering the school. The belief that 'with God all things are possible' means that the headteacher, governors and staff model and promote a culture of high expectations, inclusion and belonging. As a result, children feel valued and confident to 'have a go at new things even if you're wrong' from a very young age. This impacts significantly on the achievement of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, as evidenced in the high levels of attainment and progress of children across the curriculum. Self-evaluation and subsequent action planning is honest and accurate and includes the views of all members of the school community through the gathering of feedback to inform future developments. School leaders embrace training opportunities available including a recent diocesan SIAMS health check, the outcomes of which have been used directly to inform evaluations, actions and future plans. School leaders ensure that statutory requirements for collective worship and religious education are met.

There is currently some overlap between aspects of the school's Christian character and provision for religious education, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and collective worship in the school's self evaluation and school development plan. The headteacher and governors recognise the need for greater clarity between these areas in written documentation and for the school's outstanding Christian character to be more evident on the school website. School leaders have successfully implemented the transition from lower to primary school and have robust plans in place for the integration of Year 6 pupils from September 2018.

The school fosters strong partnerships within the local community, with the local church and clergy and through links with other schools locally and overseas. Members of the local church help in school, working alongside the children with reading and gardening. Parents and families are actively encouraged to join in with school events and the school building is also used as the local community hall. The school is highly regarded as being 'at the heart of the village community' and is widely recognised as a church school. Parents are proud of the school, the impact of Christian values, the dedication of the headteacher and staff and links with the church. They speak highly of the nurturing ethos which led them to choose the school for their children and readily embrace the school's Christian character.

The headteacher engenders a culture of shared leadership amongst the staff team and all are encouraged to 'reach for the stars' in their own professional journey. They speak highly of how the school's Christian character is 'woven into the fabric of the school' and how they are valued and supported 'as part of the school family'. Staff live out the Christian values of the school in their daily practice and as a result are rightly proud of the highly positive relationships across the school between all adults and children which leads to high aspirations for all. RE leadership is currently the responsibility of the headteacher due to some recent staffing changes. Commitment to professional development of teachers in RE is evident through the implementation of the new Understanding Christianity materials and the importance placed upon SMSC opportunities threaded throughout the curriculum. Children speak confidently of their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other world faiths but the quality of this is not yet fully reflected in the standard of work in their books.

'Work hard, reach for the stars and you will go far. For with God, all things are possible' encapsulates the daily life of all members of the school community at Carlton. As one parent said, 'it is a church school in much more than name only'.