

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

### **Kingsland Church of England VA Primary School**

Kingsland Leominster Herefordshire HR6 9QN

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Hereford</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Herefordshire
Date of inspection	21 March 2018
Date of last inspection	23 April 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided Primary 116891
Headteacher	Stewart Debenham
Inspector's name and number	Duncan Jones 813

#### **School context**

Kingsland CE VA Primary School is a smaller than average primary school with 147 children on roll. The school serves a wide community from the village and nearby Leominster. The vast majority of children are White British, with English as their first language. The percentage of disadvantaged children is below average, but the percentage of children receiving support for special educational needs is above average. The previous headteacher left in August 2017 and the deputy headteacher, after a period as acting head, has recently been appointed in her place. The school became a Teaching School in 2016, although this designation ceased as a result of the change of headship. The school is on a cramped site and accommodation is restricted.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Kingsland CE VA Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding**

- The deeply embedded Christian values of the school and its inclusive ethos have a significant impact on children's lives and actions.
- As a result of the school's Christian ethos, behaviour is of a very high standard and relationships are exemplary.
- Highly imaginative and effective teaching in religious education (RE) ensures that children have an excellent understanding of and respect for difference and diversity.
- Clear teaching in collective worship, reinforced by focused periods of reflection, ensures that children learn the deep meaning of stories from the Bible and are able to apply these when making choices in their lives.
- As a result of outstanding teaching and a rich curriculum, children develop an exceptional ability to analyse, interpret and reflect by the time they reach the end of Year 6, and have done so consistently over many years.
- The headteacher's principled, caring leadership empowers staff to develop their own leadership skills and creates excellent capacity for Kingsland to continue to grow as a church school in the future.

#### **Areas to improve**

- Develop the effectiveness of governors' monitoring of Christian distinctiveness to ensure the continuing impact of the school's vision on the whole school community.
- Continue to review the school's current policies and practice, to ensure that all areas of school life are clearly shaped by the school's Christian vision.

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

Kingsland CE Primary School has a highly developed, inclusive Christian vision based on valuing all people – children and adults – as children of God, and on ensuring that the whole school community experiences ‘life in all its fullness’ (John 10: 10). Stemming from this vision, the school has developed a set of distinctively Christian values, such as hope, respect, service and perseverance, and a shared understanding of spirituality. Together, vision, values and spirituality underpin all areas of school life. This deeply embedded Christian ethos and the clarity with which the school’s vision is expressed, has a significant impact on children. They constantly draw on the school’s Christian values to help them understand the world around them and to make decisions about how to lead their lives. This influence extends beyond the school. Parents describe how their children use the values at home to guide their choices, and how older children, who have moved on to secondary school, still refer back to the strong moral code they developed whilst at Kingsland. The desire to value everyone is seen clearly in the school’s careful individual attention to children’s academic and pastoral needs. The result is that standards are very high and all children, including those who are vulnerable or have special educational needs or disabilities, make excellent progress. The same inclusive approach is used in ensuring that attendance is good.

The school has developed a carefully considered definition of spirituality which is used as one of the key elements to plan the curriculum. This means that spirituality is at the heart of lessons and staff plan experiences which deepen children’s developing sense of their own spirituality. In this way, the Christian character of the school has an outstanding impact on children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Behaviour is excellent because children are taught Christian values such as respect, compassion and forgiveness, which stem from the Bible and are completely understood and embraced by all. This gives adults and children a shared vocabulary to discuss any disputes which may arise and to reach a loving and positive conclusion.

Leaders are conscious that Kingsland is a small, rural community without the wide range of cultures present in much of modern Britain. In order to enable children to experience ‘life in all its fullness’, the school carefully plans lessons which open children’s eyes to the wider world. This is done particularly effectively through RE, where children are eager to learn about people from a range of faiths. The recent inter faith day, where local faith leaders came into school to share their beliefs and customs, brought the importance of religion alive and had an outstanding impact on adults’ and children’s understanding of the relevance of faith in the world today. As a result, children have a high degree of understanding of and respect for difference and diversity. One child commented, ‘Even though we’re different, we’re all human beings and can be friends’.

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

Collective worship occupies a central place in the life of the school and is greatly valued by children and adults. It is carefully planned to focus on the school’s Christian values, making effective links with teaching in other areas of the curriculum and reinforcing children’s understanding of the values. Teaching from the Bible also has a very strong impact on children. This is because Bible stories frequently feature in collective worship where their meaning and relevance is explored. Worship is then followed by a period of reflection in classrooms where children are challenged to relate the message from the story to their own lives and to the school’s Christian values. When children join the school they are given a Bible, so the leader of an act of worship also refers them to the story in their own Bible to read again at home. All this results in children being able to draw on the teachings of Jesus and other Bible stories, make links with the school’s Christian values, and use this knowledge as a means of guiding their own lives and actions.

Through effective teaching in RE and collective worship, children have a very good knowledge of the church’s year and how this relates to the life of Jesus. Their understanding of the significance of Christian festivals is impressive. For example, children in Year 5 and 6 were keen to discuss in considerable detail the significance of Easter to Christians and why this festival is more important than Christmas, despite the secular dominance of Christmas. A programme of visits to local places of Christian worship ensures that children have a clear understanding of features of different Christian traditions such as Baptist and Roman Catholic, as well as strong familiarity with customs and traditions associated with Anglican practice. Through worship and teaching in RE, children are also acquiring a good understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The school makes excellent provision for developing children’s prayer lives. Quiet, reflective prayer is a central feature of collective worship and the classroom, where children often read out their own prayers before lunch. Good use is made of a quiet prayer area in the library and children confidently contribute spontaneous prayer to worship, demonstrating their growing understanding of the value of prayer and reflection.

Worship is enriched by the variety of leaders who come into school. This includes both the vicar and the local Baptist minister, so adding to children’s experience of different Christian traditions of worship. As part of the

worship team, children regularly plan, lead and evaluate collective worship. Although relatively new, the work of this team is already having an impact. As a result of older members of the worship team leading worship for the younger year groups, children in Reception and Years 1 and 2 can relate stories from this worship and the messages contained in them. Governors effectively monitor the impact of collective worship and this monitoring leads to improvements. For example, having felt that children's understanding of Holy Week was not as well developed as it should be, the church was asked to organise 'Experience Easter' to deepen their understanding. The result, combined with improved teaching in RE, is that children now have an excellent understanding of the events leading up to Easter.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding**

At Kingsland, RE creates a secure environment where children can express what they think and believe, safe in the knowledge that their opinions will be listened to with respect by others in the class. One child described this as 'thinking freely about what you want to think'. Add to this the excellent work the school does on philosophy and debating skills, and the result is that through RE, children develop and apply an exceptional range of higher level skills such as analysis and evaluation. This work grows from excellent foundations in Reception to Year 6 where, for example, children are able to discuss and interpret the events of Holy Week through the eyes of the different characters in the story and have discussions on challenging themes such as 'why did Jesus have to die?'

Through outstanding teaching and a rich and creative curriculum, children are developing an understanding of core theological concepts such as incarnation and salvation. Effective assessment enables teachers to plan activities which deepen children's understanding. They welcome the level of challenge and enjoy having to think for themselves. Consequently, standards in RE are very high and correspond with the high standards in other core subjects. Due to the focus on discussion and debating big ideas in RE lessons, the proportion of children working at higher levels in each year group increases as the children get older. This shows that the school's innovative approaches to RE enable children to make accelerated progress.

Teaching about a wide range of faiths is also highly effective and results in children gaining a good level of understanding and being able to make links between the different faiths. For example, children in Years 5 and 6 made comparisons between the use of Buddhist prayer beads and a Catholic rosary, and discussed the significance of water in many faiths. Teaching the school's Christian values is an intrinsic part of RE lessons and as a result RE has an outstanding impact on children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The highly effective and knowledgeable RE leader co-ordinates her subject with skill and enthusiasm and is successfully developing staff expertise as the school adopts Understanding Christianity. She rigorously monitors and evaluates RE and draws up action plans which lead to constant improvement.

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

The newly appointed headteacher and all leaders articulate a very clear vision of the school as an inclusive church school, resulting in an excellent shared understanding of Christian distinctiveness right across the school community. Parents are very clear about the school's vision because, from the Reception welcome service onwards, Christian values are explicitly shared with parents, and staff are seen to lead by example.

Leaders know their school extremely well and self-evaluation is precise and perceptive. This means that resulting action plans bring about improvement. Governors offer strong support, for example in ensuring that the school's Christian ethos has been maintained during the recent change of headteacher. However, although they carry out detailed monitoring, when focussing on Christian distinctiveness they do not evaluate the impact of the school's distinctiveness on the children. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

The Christian values which are such a strong part of the school, are reinforced at church and home resulting in an excellent partnership between these three areas of children's lives. This leads to a strong sense of community. Global links are also strong. Through the partnership with Moivaro School in Tanzania, children discover how different communities, 1000s of miles apart, can learn from one another. Their work to provide a pump to give Moivaro School running water went beyond charity to developing ideas of social justice.

The development of future leaders is a particular strength of the school. There is a rich range of talents amongst staff at Kingsland, some of which have been developed through the school's recent history as a teaching school. The headteacher's approach to leadership – part of his vision of a school where every individual matters - is to trust and empower his staff, meaning that leaders are growing in skill and confidence. The result is that Kingsland is extremely well placed to move into the future as a church school with a strong capacity for outstanding leadership and continuous improvement.