

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

### Lower Heath Church of England Voluntary Controlled (VC) Primary School

Lower Heath, Prees, Whitchurch SY13 2BT

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Lichfield</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Shropshire
Date of inspection	23 November 2017
Date of last inspection	19 September 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	VC Primary 123483
Headteacher	D Sadler
Inspector's name and number	R M Gale 337

#### School context

Lower Heath C of E VC Primary school is a smaller than average rural primary school serving the community of Lower Heath on the out skirts of Whitchurch. There are 93 pupils on roll. The vast majority of pupils are white British. The headteacher has been in post since September 2016. The school has close links with the parish church and the village community. The parish church is some distance away from the school.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Lower Heath Primary as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The positive interplay between the church community and school which is recognised and wholeheartedly appreciated by pupils and parents alike.
- Dedicated leaders at all levels who are passionate about making a difference to the pupils in their care through the promotion of its Christian values.
- The inclusive school culture where each pupil is nurtured, valued and supported as unique individuals.
- The delightful, confident and articulate pupils who are developing into thoughtful and reflective young people with an understanding of and respect for diverse communities.
- The effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural opportunities available to all pupils which guides their every action.

#### Areas to improve

- Increase opportunities for pupils in all key stages to plan, lead and evaluate worship.
- Promote further opportunities for all members of the governing board to engage in the formal monitoring and evaluation of the Christian distinctiveness of the school.
- Develop the existing links with Holy Immanuel Church to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of Eucharist and the Trinity.

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

Lower Heath Church of England school is a homely, happy and caring rural school where pupils are supported fully in all aspects of learning. This school 'stands out' because Christian values bind the school together and guides the actions of all within this school. The school motto of 'Let your light shine', is understood by all and lived out through the care, attention and opportunities given to pupils. This highly inclusive school community thrives within an atmosphere in which the development of the whole child is secured through a strong commitment to the school's Christian vision and values. Pupils have a highly developed understanding of how the values relate to their personal lives. One pupil explained, 'We are not just learning about Christian values but showing them through the way we are'. Clearly these values, the life and teaching of Jesus and positive behaviour strategies are having a positive impact on pupils by guiding their daily actions. All of this enables the pupils to become the best they can be and 'stay bright and keep on going' as one pupil commented. They are supported by outstanding pastoral care. The school's values are also evident within the outstanding relationships between school, its parents and the church community. Pupils are nurtured and encouraged by this Christian family and as a result, most pupils meet the national floor standards in reading, writing and mathematics, which are the minimum standards for the achievement of pupils by the end of Key Stage 2 set by the government. A dip in standards for the younger pupils, which occurred because of a period of instability in school organisation, is being addressed. Recent monitoring shows all pupils are now making good progress. Reward systems, linked to the school's Christian values enable a culture of praise and encouragement and serve as a reminder of the school's implicit Christian mission to develop the potential of all. This results in very good levels of attendance and punctuality. Pupil efforts are constantly acknowledged and celebrated; these pupils want to be in school. One pupil said, 'the teachers are kind, they listen to us and intervene when things go wrong, they set boundaries for us.' Pupils are encouraged to look after each other across age groups, just as Jesus cares for them. The behaviour of most pupils and their attitudes to learning are very positive because they enjoy and appreciate the innovative and flexible skills-based curriculum which prepares them to reach their full potential and for life in a diverse society. There is much to appreciate, as many of these experiences extend beyond the school day and contribute to a broad and rich curriculum which is creative, interactive and weaves across subject boundaries making learning wholesome and relevant. This supports the way pupils are encouraged to appreciate a sense of awe and wonder. All work together as one, effectively supporting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. Pupils are given the opportunity to expand their learning especially about the outdoors through experiences such as forest schools, looking after chickens and gardening activities. In addition, special areas such as the spiritual garden and the emphasis on activities in the outdoors provide outstanding opportunities to develop their spirituality through reflection on the wonder of the natural world. They say that these special places together with the class reflection areas give them the opportunity to read the Bible, write prayers and ask God for forgiveness and support with any worries they may have. This spiritual development is supported by quality experiences across the whole curriculum. Pupils talk positively about religious education (RE) and how this contributes to the Christian character of the school. The school has a strong commitment to Christian stewardship and supports charities including the Operation Christmas Child, Macmillan Cancer charity and Oxfam. These well supported fund-raising events, include a local, national and global focus and celebrate the school's Christian outreach. These events are enhanced by the work of the whole school within the community. In all these ways, pupils are committed daily to making a difference to the lives of others as well as their own families. All of this is supported by effective Christian moral teaching and guidance. Monitoring by the RE subject leader, (currently the headteacher) shows that the RE scheme of work impacts well upon the whole school community. Pupils have an understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith, and the difference and diversity that exists between faith communities. The school is currently exploring various resources to support and enhance these aspects including 'Understanding Christianity' and 'Roots and Fruits'. Pupils have a very good sense of self-belief and are being prepared well for their journey in life. Lower Heath CE VC Primary school fulfils its central aim by valuing every pupil as unique individuals enabling them to be able to demonstrate that they can, 'Let their light shine.'

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

Daily collective worship, sometimes referred to as assembly, is recognised, by the whole school community as being important to the life of this school and makes a positive impact on pupils' lives. It reinforces the school's values and helps pupils to develop an understanding of how the teachings of Jesus guides Christians in their daily lives. Bible stories support their understanding of key Christian aspects such as Harvest, Christmas and Easter. Whole school and class worship feature across the school each week. Pupils enjoy class worship which affords them the opportunity to experience worship in a smaller, more intimate setting. Worship is planned as a rolling programme utilising a variety of stimulus such as the Christian calendar, Anglican traditions, Bible stories and the school values. These aspects are beginning to deepen pupils' understanding of the Christian ethos of the school. Pupils are encouraged to apply what they have heard in worship to everyday situations. Through saying the Lord's Prayer pupils state that they have learnt to treat others as they would want to be treated themselves. They identify how the teachings of Jesus can

influence their own lives. Christian signs, symbols, music and role play are just some of the activities used to engage the pupils and enhance collective worship. Worship provides opportunities for pupils' spiritual development as well as informing their behaviour, attitudes and relationships. The emphasis on reflection time is a key part of worship. Key Stage 2 pupils are involved in, planning, leading and evaluating worship, younger pupils express a desire to do so also. Pupils understand that responses, prayer, reflection and song are central elements to the structure of worship. They express feelings of respect when they attend worship. 'We think about God and how he helps people in the world to cope in times of trouble', stated one pupil. Pupils of all ages understand the significance of the lighting of a candle in worship. One pupil stated, 'the candle reminds me of the light of the star that led the three kings to Jesus; he is our king!' Worship is led by teachers and members of the church community, the vicar is a regular contributor, she is also a foundation governor. This variety helps pupils to understand the nature of worship and gives them experiences of a range of worship styles. Pupils know the value of prayer in worship. Pupils are encouraged to write prayers and read them out for all to hear. They are supported in developing prayer through class discussions, they understand that people pray in different ways. These prayers are displayed on a prayer wall in the school hall, they are valued by the school community. The Lord's Prayer is known by most of the pupils as is the school prayer which is said weekly. Each class has access to a reflection/worship area which supports the spiritual development of pupils. They particularly enjoy the opportunity to reflect and worship in the recently developed spiritual garden area. The monitoring and evaluation of worship is beginning to be embedded in the school self-evaluation programme. The governing board as a whole evaluate worship informally. Pupils clearly articulate how collective worship impacts on their own personal spirituality and their developing relationship with God. Pupils and their parents visit the school and Fauls Holy Immanuel Church for the principal Christian festivals. Parents comment about being 'blown away' by the Harvest festival at the church and the Harvest tea that followed where the Parochial Church Council (PCC) engaged effectively with all the pupils and their families. These events are much appreciated and well attended by parents. Parents evidence that their children are applying the school's Christian messages to their home lives, for example in how they behave. They say that the lessons learnt in worship are carried with their children into the high school and beyond. Parents stated, "Everyone can tell which pupils come from Lower Heath; compassion shines through their actions and behaviour"

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

All leaders, including governors display great passion for this school and are effective in articulating and promoting the school's Christian values to support effective learning. This is recognised by parents. There is an emphasis on compassion, stewardship and respect for all within these values. The family environment promoted by the school is understood by all, it centres on the inclusive nature of the school, where all are equal. A clear direction is set by the effective headteacher and is closely adhered to by all staff. Staff and the headteacher consistently model and promote the school's values. There is an emphasis on enabling pupils to develop as unique individuals with an appreciation of shared values. The school is proud of its links with the local community and Fauls Holy Immanuel Church. Pupils take part in community events throughout the year, this support is valued by all. Pupils enjoy Maypole dancing at Fauls Summer fete, play hand bells for community concerts, make banners for the church flower festival, and perform drama at Pentecost events. The pupils show obvious delight in being so involved. Members of the church family such as the PCC are a key part of the school community and provide effective support. Pupils visit the church as part of their learning in RE as well as for worship during key Christian festivals. This gives pupils a developing experience of the Anglican tradition. The school is described as a welcoming place by pupils, parents and visitors. They all comment enthusiastically on the openness of the staff especially the headteacher resulting in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. They also emphasise how staff are highly sensitive to the needs of each family ensuring that social, emotional and spiritual needs are met. One parent said, 'the family and community atmosphere are unique'. Another stated 'Christian values promote a community which is heart-warming.' Parents are very supportive of the school in a variety of ways. They give readily of their time in taking part in fund raising events and supporting classes. Through targeted professional development and succession planning, leaders have strengthened the school's capacity to realise their plans enabling the Christian dimension to be further explored and developed and deepened. The headteacher is the RE and collective worship subject leader and is highly effective in her role. Governors understand the need to monitor and evaluate the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school as a church school so that they can further support the school in promoting its Christian ethos. The school has effective development plans for improving worship, RE, achievement and embedding understanding of the world wide Christian church which aim to enhance provision. The school still needs time for the full impact of these plans to be realised. The development points identified in the previous inspection have been addressed. There has been effective support from the Lichfield Diocese for the leadership team.

