

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Riseley Church of England Voluntary Aided Lower School

Church Lane, Riseley, Bedford MK44 1EL	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	St Albans
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Bedford Borough
Date of inspection	19 May 2017
Date of last inspection	May 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	VA Lower 109624
Headteacher	David Dyson
Inspector's name and number	Lizzie McWhirter 244

School context

Currently there are 174 pupils on roll, including 32 in the nursery in this growing average sized lower school which is becoming a straight through primary with pupils up to the age of eleven years old. The school is predominately White British, with pupils coming from the local villages as well as some coming from out of catchment. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding or who have special educational needs is below average. The school was judged to be good by Ofsted in its recent inspection.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Riseley as a Church of England school are outstanding

- There is excellent pastoral care from dedicated staff who serve the pupils and families within this supportive Christian family community. This enables all to learn from life and flourish, academically and personally, in this nurturing Christian environment.
- Strong Christian leadership and governance ensures the Christian character of this school, in learning from the life of Jesus, is upheld and is immensely valued.
- The strong partnership between church and school, through the headteacher, vicar and governors, enriches the worshipping life of this church school.
- Leaders make a commitment to ensuring religious education [RE] is strengthened throughout the school. With the development of deeper thinking skills in RE, the subject now makes a very significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural [SMSC] development.

Areas to improve

- Enrich the programme of visits and visitors to enable pupils to meet people of faith more frequently to enhance their spiritual and cultural development.
- Extend the process of deepening pupils' learning in RE as a rich contribution to the school's distinctive Christian character. This includes embedding the good work already begun by using a resource such as 'Understanding Christianity' to deepen learning in RE as part of the school's onward journey.

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

Exemplary relationships evident in excellent pastoral care by dedicated staff in this nurturing Christian family is a significant strength of this rural primary school. Here the team spirit permeates all school life, resulting in a culture of service to its pupils and families within a supportive Christian community. Governors help preserve the ethos of

the school. This enables all to learn from life and flourish, both academically and personally in this nurturing environment, enriched by its distinctive Christian vision and values. Pupils and adults alike, including parents can all readily articulate the school's vision of learning from life and Jesus' teaching in the Bible. Parents cite their children demonstrating the school's Christian values, such as honesty, at home. There is a commitment to the wellbeing of all within this community where all achievement in this inclusive school is valued and celebrated. This includes current Year 4 pupils demonstrating Christian values, such as perseverance, when completing the leap of faith' or using the zip wire on residential visits. Attendance is good because the school is a happy environment to be in. The school works very closely with parents of any vulnerable pupils, with successful interventions where needed within a spirit of encouragement. Consequently, all groups of pupils make good progress, with some making outstanding progress. Riseley has maintained its high standards. This is because its many values and the collective worship and RE it offers to its pupils makes a strong contribution to the school's Christian character and to pupils' SMSC development. Many pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding thrive and succeed. This is especially true in RE where such pupils often shine and achieve well. The school values its link with World Vision, supporting Laxmi in India as well as other charities, such as Samaritan's Purse. Such activities enrich pupils' global awareness of diverse communities and cultures and understanding of Christianity as a worldwide faith. Music from other Christian cultures, such as Taize, is used regularly in worship. It is extremely evident, as parents testify, that pupils live out kindness and generosity in respecting difference and valuing everyone for who they are.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Pupils lead worship regularly in church and school, showing how the school has moved on since the last inspection. Notable examples include worship for Remembrance-tide as well as Year 4 leading one on parables. They enjoy taking or leading reflections in worship, whether in school or in church which they view as 'God's house'. One young pupil said they 'can't wait until their class is in Year 4 so we can lead worship'. They enjoy a variety of Bible stories, citing the 'one where the Israelites attack' their enemies, defending good against evil or 'the story of the paralysed man which Year 4 helped us think about the value of friendship'. They believe that 'if you trust God, everything is possible'. Some pupils say they read their Bibles at home and this helps them in daily life. They go on to say that the most important aspect of worship for them is 'thinking about Jesus and praying to God and trying to show the fruits to make us a better person'. Riseley takes pride in being a church school where praying is important and recognised by parents. Reflection areas around school are well used by pupils. They record their evaluations of worship in reflection books, which are read and used by governors to inform future action in improving worship. The partnership between church and school, notably through the vicar and members of All Saints Church, enriches the worshipping life of this community. For example, the vicar and the chair of governors are welcome and regular visitors to school, leading worship. In addition, the church community runs a weekly Aslan club for the older pupils as they grow in their understanding of Christian tradition and practice. Pupils honestly say that they find the Holy Trinity confusing, but know they are all one person. In their own words they explain, 'when we sing Shine Jesus Shine, it shows Jesus is all around us, even if we can't see him. We know he is part of God and he helps people to know more about him and he's in charge'. Pupils say they do talk about the different parts of Trinity in RE as well as worship and are helped by teaching from the staff and their vicar. Parents speak highly of the worship experiences they too enjoy. For example, collecting for 'Help for Families' as part of the school's Harvest thanksgiving in church. In addition, collections at the Christmas and Easter services go towards supporting a child in India sponsored by the school council. Pupils attend worship at St Albans Abbey and the school has enjoyed visits from both the Bishop of Bedford and the Bishop of St Albans, enriching the school community's experience of worship with the wider diocesan family.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

RE at Riseley is seen as vital and important. Teaching and learning in RE are good and often outstanding. It makes a vibrant and creative contribution to school life. Pupils show a good level of religious understanding and can relate the Christian story of salvation in great detail, including the significance of Ascension and Pentecost. Year 4 pupils say they enjoy going deeper into Pentecost and giving their opinions on Bible passages. Some pupils can explain in their own words the importance of incarnation, Jesus' death and resurrection and how 'the Holy Spirit helps us to become courageous and stronger'. The RE subject leader has been in post for eighteen months. She knows the importance of pupils gaining deeper understanding and growing in their religious journey. Year 2 pupils grow in the knowledge that there are no right or wrong answers in RE, but always good answers. In studying the importance of Shabbat for Jews, pupils explore the symbolic meaning of the artefacts used. They grow in their understanding of the importance of this welcoming, treasuring and resting tradition. Year 4 pupils engage with the fruits of the spirit and can link these to the school's values of humility and faithfulness in Jesus. Pupils say they learn friendship in RE and how to be thoughtful. They would like more visits and visitors. The school acknowledges this as its pupils look forward to learning more about other faiths as they go through the school and stay for another two years. Termly

lesson observations and book scrutinies take place. This helps to ensure that SMSC and the school's values are tracked across pupils' learning. Assessment shows pupils achieve very highly in line with other core subjects. The RE action plan has already identified the need to support teachers so they are extending their thinking and all are confident in RE. Another objective in next steps is to incorporate 'Understanding Christianity' into upper Key Stage 2 to continue on the journey for pupils to grow in subject knowledge.

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

Strong Christian leadership and governance is a hallmark of Riseley School. Governors are very reflective in their practice, using Christian values arising from the life of Jesus to inform their thinking about strategic decisions. They challenge where needed for future improvement and discuss the impact of Christian values underpinning the school's life and distinctiveness. This has a strong focus on pupils and the curriculum and embraces academic and personal development. This has helped maintain their outstanding practice. For example, supporting the staff in the development of the school's Christian ethos as the school grows into a straight through primary school. They demonstrate a commitment to helping build confidence in staff and nurture their professional development. This includes the RE subject leader who has been in post since September 2015. She has benefitted greatly from attending diocesan courses and subsequently ensuring staff are well resourced in school. The school has also identified in its school development plan the importance of extending the range of worship leaders, which includes the older pupils as they grow in faith and maturity. There are excellent links with the diocese, with the school benefitting greatly from training and support, including conferences. For example, the headteacher recently attended the headteacher retreat in Canterbury with its focus on mission statements and values. As a result, the school has chosen to reduce its 23 values to a smaller number of truly biblical Christian values. Governors take their monitoring role seriously. They ensure that statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are met. They are aware of efforts being made to deepen pupils' religious knowledge. However, they do not have in place sufficient strategies to evaluate the impact of the significant new developments in RE including the introduction of the 'Understanding Christianity' resource. The partnership between church and school is immensely valued by its parent body. Parents speak highly of the vicar and how the school is part of the church and the church part of school. They cite the management of the school and the quality and breadth of learning their children receive. Pupils are happy and succeed, whatever their abilities. The whole community attributes this to enjoying and knowing this firm foundation is strongly rooted in Jesus' teaching in the Bible which everyone can relate. Staff value the teamwork they experience here and know that Riseley pupils become rounded individuals and are well prepared for modern life. The school is an integral part of the local community. The choir visits the local care home to sing carols at Christmas and senior citizens are invited into school for events, such as tea and cakes at Easter. This helps develop pupils' understanding of elderly people in their community and how they can contribute to their enjoyment of life.

SIAMS report May 2017 Riseley CE VA Lower School, Riseley, Bedford MK44 IEL