

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Croft Church of England Primary School

Brookes Avenue
Croft
Leicestershire
LE9 3GJ

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Leicester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Inadequate
Date of academy conversion	N/A
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	N/A
Date/s of inspection	17 April 2018
Date of last inspection	29 April 2015
Type of school and unique reference number	120125
Headteacher	Trudie Colotto
Inspector's name and number	Carol Price 869

School context

The school is smaller than average sized with 129 pupils on roll. It is situated in a village location and is served by the church of St Michael and All Angels. Pupils are mainly from a White British background. The percentage of pupils with special needs (SEN) and pupils receiving pupil premium funding are both just below national. Since the previous inspection, when the school was without a substantive headteacher, there have been significant changes in staff and leadership and the school has grown in size. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2015. The school is working towards becoming part of a multi academy trust.

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

- The inspirational leadership of the headteacher and her promotion of a deeply Christian vision has transformed the Christian character of the school over the last three years.
- Christian values are deeply embedded in all aspects of school life, resulting in learners having high standards of achievement, exemplary behaviour and positive relationships.
- Inclusive collective worship is of a very high quality, engaging all children in prayer and reflection.
- Collective worship has a strong focus on the Bible and the life of Christ and, as a consequence, learners have an excellent knowledge of biblical stories which they can relate to the school's Christian values and their own lives.
- The strong partnership between the school, the church and the local community has a very positive effect on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and wellbeing of the whole school community.

Areas to improve

- To measure the impact of the Christian character of the school on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of all learners by developing efficient systems for monitoring.
- To develop pupils' experiences of different Christian traditions both locally and globally in order for pupils to understand Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith.

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

Croft Church of England Primary is a warm, friendly and happy school with a strong family ethos. Changes in leadership over the last three years have had a significant impact on transforming the distinctive Christian character of the school and as a result, it is evident that all members of the school community proudly value the importance of being a church school. As a consequence, relationships between all members of the school community have strengthened and this is ensuring that the Christian ethos of the school has a high profile across the wider community.

Since the last inspection, the school's Christian values have been reviewed and re-shaped. Twenty Christian values are covered over a three year rolling programme with a different value being introduced and explored in depth each week. This year the school is focusing on the values of trust, peace, creation, koinonia, love, reverence and humility. These are displayed around school, talked about in worship and religious education (RE) lessons and promoted to parents via the weekly newsletter and Facebook. The school go to great lengths to ensure that the theological basis of each value is shared and as a result the distinctively Christian nature of the school's values are deeply embedded and well understood by all members of the school community. Consequently, pupils impressively relate the core values to both the Bible and their own lives. For example, pupils explained how the story of the Good Samaritan helped them to understand that 'God loves everyone' and that this in turn helped them to show compassion, love and friendship towards others.

Parents talk enthusiastically about the difference that the school's Christian values make to the lives of their children and the impact they have on both their academic achievement and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. As one parent commented, 'My child has grown and thrived in this environment.' This is reflected in the excellent provision for pupils of all abilities and the school's genuine love and care shown to each and every child in school. Staff are effectively deployed to provide individual focused support for pupils with additional needs, ensuring they have full access to the curriculum and are fully involved in the life of the school. Pupils therefore enjoy school and all groups of learners are well supported and challenged, with standards of achievement and attendance being above those nationally. As a result, children's behaviour and their attitudes towards learning are both outstanding.

There is extensive provision for spiritual, moral and social development within and beyond the curriculum.

Pupils work well together and confidently express their thoughts and views through the use of creative arts, film, literacy, outdoor learning and social actions. This is exemplified by the ability of learners to consider questions such as 'Is there a heaven?' and give answers such as, 'the thought of heaven with a garden gate to enter is not how I picture it, I feel that when you die your spirit is free'. Consequently, pupils are highly reflective learners who are able to share their views and opinions. They are interested and excited by RE, describing it as 'awesome' and they place great value on how it 'teaches you to learn about God in different religions and helps you to think out of the box'. It is evident from the high quality of pupil's work displayed around the school that RE challenges pupils' thinking and makes a significant contribution in determining the Christian character of the school. However, although pupils have a high level of respect for people of other abilities, faiths and cultures, opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith are not yet fully developed.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The well-planned programme of worship built around the school's Christian values and Diocesan themes indicates the significance and worth that the school places on Christian worship. As a result, adults and children talk about collective worship being a time to 'bring everybody together' and a 'key point of the school day' that enriches the lives of the whole school community. This is unmistakably demonstrated by the way pupils describe the impact that worship has on their own personal development. An example of this was when one pupil explained how a collective worship on the theme of determination helped her to 'not give up when things got difficult'. Parents say they feel included in school worship because they are invited to attend the Monday worship where the Christian value of the week is introduced and explored, as well as the weekly celebration assembly.

Worship has a strong focus on biblical teaching and the person of Jesus Christ. As a consequence, learners have a convincing knowledge of Bible stories and Christian teachings and they can eloquently link these to the school's Christian values, describing the relevance and importance they have in their own lives. This was illustrated during the inspection when one pupil explained how the story of Noah's Ark was important to him because it helped him understand that he can trust in God. Adults readily talk about how inspirational themes inspire a high level of spiritual and moral reflection and encourage learners to show compassion to others. As a result, learners are passionate about respecting and helping others, 'whoever they are' because this is 'what God would do'. Consequently, pupils are involved in a notable range of charitable and social actions. They regularly show their strength of feeling towards global issues by asking the school if they can fund raise to support charities such as Water Aid, Macmillan and the refugee crisis in Syria.

There is an agreed structure to worship and this enables all children to be fully involved and familiar with what is happening. Singing, prayer and reflection time form an integral part of worship and the use of modern, religious songs assists children and adults alike to engage fully in worship. Worship always begins with the lighting of a candle and a welcome that reminds worshippers of the Holy Trinity. This, along with focused teaching in RE, provides learners with

an impressive understanding of the Christian belief of God as the creator, Jesus the teacher who brought salvation and the Holy Spirit being 'God within us'. The regular involvement of the incumbent in supporting and leading collective worship is strengthening children's knowledge and understanding of Anglican practice and, as a consequence, pupils can clearly identify the distinctive features of different Christian festivals and seasons of the church's year. However, learners have few opportunities to meet with clergy and representatives from a wider range of other Christian traditions and as a result acts of worship are not providing pupils with a broad experience of Christianity.

Pupils are enthusiastic towards worship and welcome the many opportunities to lead singing, participate in role play and say prayers. Provision for pupils to plan and lead their own acts of worship are embedded in the weekly timetable and pupils do so with confidence.

Staff, pupils and governors are actively involved in evaluating collective worship and although this is securing improvement the impact that worship has on pupils and adults is not always explored. Since the last inspection opportunities for prayer and reflection have been greatly enhanced with the development of indoor and outdoor reflection spaces such as the Labyrinth, a popular quiet space for contemplation set in the school grounds.

Consequently, pupils value opportunities for prayer. A typical comment was, 'you can tell God your deepest thoughts and feelings and he will understand you'.

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

The determination of leaders to focus on improvement after the previous inspection has had a significant impact on developing the distinctively Christian character of the school. With the support of the Diocese, staff, governors, parents and pupils have resolutely worked together to develop a Christian vision rooted in the context of John 10:10. As a result, the school's vision to be 'A caring community where children thrive: enthusiasm and excellence lead to high aspirations and outstanding achievement' is clearly understood by all. It is a vision that informs the whole school curriculum and is reflected in the school motto 'Let your light shine' (Matthew 5:16). From the many activities to lead, support others and work together, it is clear that pupils have many opportunities to live out the school's vision through the school's explicit Christian values. The impact of this is readily explained by leaders and adults who provide many illustrations of how the school's Christian values influence the lives of learners. They speak proudly about pupils showing compassion to others and independently supporting charitable causes. Staff can clearly articulate the impact of the school's values on learning, describing how pupils are able to use the school's Christian value of Koinonia to show fellowship when working in chariot teams during a topic on the Romans.

Impressively, the promotion of the school's Christian vision to the wider community is actively encouraged by the inspirational leadership of the headteacher and her determined efforts to bring the school, church and village together. As a result, village and church groups such as the Happy Circle, a group of pensioners, use the school as a meeting place and contribute fully to school life by organising and supporting activities such as the Bible club, knitting club and gardening activities. This, along with the strong partnership with the incumbent and parents creates an environment where the whole community work together as a team for the mutual benefit of each other. Indeed, the highly effective joint practice of the school and church has a substantial benefit for school families and local residents, providing many opportunities to participate in church, school and village events. This leads to the development of strong, supportive relationships both within and beyond school. Consequently, pupils are well cared for and supported and there is a compelling desire by the whole community to meet the needs of all children and help them to thrive. Thus, behaviour, learning attitudes and academic standards are high and children who are vulnerable are given exceptional care and achieve well both socially and academically.

The establishment of a governor SIAMS working party to review and evaluate how well the school is performing as a church school reflects the status that leaders give to the school's Christian foundation. Regular monitoring and evaluation captures the views of all stakeholders and supports the rapid and sustained improvement since the previous inspection. As a result, all issues from the previous inspection have been addressed and the school's profile as a church school is high. Over the last three years there has been a significant improvement in the quality of provision both within and beyond the curriculum. This has resulted in more opportunities for reflection and prayer. Furthermore, it has ensured that RE and collective worship are given high priority, are led well and meet statutory requirements. As a consequence, RE and collective worship are highly effective in supporting the Christian character of the school. This is captured by the high standards in RE books across the school which provide evidence of the strong practice in RE teaching and its impact on the achievement of learners. However, although self-evaluation leads to the accurate identification of areas to improve it does not always evaluate the impact of actions and provision, particularly on the SMSC development of all learners.

Staff are extremely well supported in their professional development and are provided with training opportunities to fulfil their potential for future leadership across church schools, and as a result, the school is well placed to continue to thrive as a church school.

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