

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Marldon Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Marldon Cross Hill, Marldon, Paignton, Devon TQ3 1PD

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Exeter
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Devon
Date of inspection	9 November 2017
Date of previous inspection	17 October 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary voluntary aided 113465
Executive headteacher Head of school	Martin Harding Adrian Clements
Inspector's name and number	Andrew Rickett 201

School context

Marldon is a smaller than average size primary school with 200 children on roll. The majority of children are from a White British heritage and a range of socio-economic backgrounds. The number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average as is the number entitled to receive the pupil premium. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. The school joined the United Schools Federation in 2014. The federation, comprising of five primary schools, is led by an executive headteacher. A head of school has responsibility for the day to day management of the school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Marldon Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- The commitment of school leaders, with the support of the federation, has ensured that the impact of the school's Christian ethos has made significant improvements since the previous inspection.
- Children have a clear appreciation that Christian values make an important contribution to their wellbeing and help them in their learning.
- Acts of worship are important times in the school day when children and adults explore a deeper meaning to the core Christian values.
- Religious education makes a valuable contribution to the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Areas to improve

- Refine the school's shared definition of spirituality so that it more clearly supports teachers in identifying opportunities to explore spiritual development throughout the school day.
- Develop the skills of teachers to frame 'big questions' that challenge the children's thinking in religious education (RE) and contribute to their spiritual development.
- Develop the use of moderation in RE to enable teachers to more accurately track children's progress.

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

The school has made significant progress since the previous inspection in a number of key areas that have enhanced its overall Christian ethos. In particular, the extent to which its core values are understood by members of the school community to reflect an explicit Christian vision has developed and the extent to which children appreciate that these values impact on their personal development and quality relationships is excellent. Similarly, these values have improved the provision and impact of collective worship and contribute to the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development throughout the curriculum particularly through religious education. The school has also moved forward in its understanding of spirituality and has put in place a framework through which it is creating opportunities for children to respond to experiences that support them explore a personal spirituality. This is still at an early stage and not yet fully defined nor the potential for children to respond in depth reached. However, the developments already implemented show that children are already beginning to think for themselves with a growing confidence to interpret a spirituality that has meaning for them personally. The emphasis on values and encouraging children to express their views contributes to a learning environment in which children have positive attitudes towards their lessons and achieve outcomes that for most children are at least in line with national expectations. Following a review in 2013, five values were chosen and each has been linked to a Bible verse to help give them an explicitly Christian interpretation. Children are well aware of friendship, perseverance, justice, compassion and courage and talk about how they help them in their relationships and in their learning. They also are becoming increasingly confident to explain how these values link to the school's motto to 'dream, believe and achieve'. For example, they talk about needing to persevere in order to achieve and the courage to dream that they can do this. To support the children's growing awareness of values, the school agreed a definition of spirituality and introduced a framework in September 2017 through which opportunities to explore spirituality could be identified. This involves reflecting in different ways through 'Windows, Doors and Mirrors'. The school's definition of spirituality is still evolving and the skill by teachers to frame questions to support children to reflect in depth is also work in progress. However, where this approach has captured a child's imagination, they respond with considerable spiritual creativity. Relationships are excellent and members of the school community treat each other with kindness and great respect. Children know that they need to show tolerance to others and treat them with dignity and respect regardless of who they are. They have a good appreciation of the world beyond the school community and are developing their understanding of Christianity as a world faith.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Acts of worship at Marldon are distinct times in the school day when children come together to learn about Jesus from stories in the Bible, to sing religious songs, say prayers and have time to reflect on what the messages they hear teach them about their own lives. Improvements in planning have helped give collective worship a structure so that each of its elements supports clearer messages. To this end, weekly themes are based on the school's values and key Christian events in the church calendar. Class worship once a week gives children the opportunity to explore the value in more depth by linking it to a Bible story and then to their own lives. Opportunities for children to engage in prayer and reflection have grown and children respond very well to these. They show a marked degree of respect to prayer. They know that prayer is a time to talk to God and that 'He will listen' to them no matter who they are. Younger children willingly discuss how they use prayer to help them when times may be hard. Older children appreciate that prayer may not always be answered in the way that is expected, saying that we cannot understand God's will. Children have good opportunities to pray throughout the school day; whether it is in worship, at lunch or using the reflection books in each classroom. They have a good understanding of the purpose of prayer knowing that they can say thank you, ask for help for others and say sorry. The lighting of three candles to mark the start of worship helps children to remember the Trinity. Children have a good grasp of the nature of the Trinity and confidently share their views on God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are developing their appreciation of how each aspect of the Trinity is somehow linked together; they realise that it is a mystery and one that they may never fully fathom. Feedback from children regarding collective worship is regularly gathered and used to inform further improvements. For example, through listening to younger children, it was identified that they were not sure of the difference between collective worship and RE. Therefore, some sensitive work was done with those children to help them appreciate the differences. There is a variety of worship styles in the week although the use of the outdoor environment for worship has not been fully explored. Children have good opportunities to participate through drama and in taking a leading role in the delivery of worship where appropriate.

The effectiveness of religious education is good

The quality of provision for religious education has improved since the previous inspection and children are now achieving higher standards. The school has fully addressed the areas for improvement identified from the previous report with teaching more consistently at least good. As RE is now being delivered by class teachers, the greater

opportunities for them to link RE with other areas of the children's learning is making the subject more relevant to the children and engaging them more in their learning. Excellent support from the lead RE specialist in the federation to support the recently appointed RE leader in the school means that, through robust monitoring of the children's progress and the quality of teaching, children are making at least expected progress to achieve outcomes that are in line with the expectations of the local Devon Agreed syllabus and that teaching is at least good. Assessment is developing in line with the introduction of the latest version of the syllabus and is taking into account the expectations of the 'Understanding Christianity' resource which was introduced in September 2017. This resource is beginning to make a difference to the quality of the teaching of Christianity but its full impact is still at an early stage. For example, the concept of Incarnation challenged a key stage 2 class but children responded with enthusiasm to this and enjoyed having to explain their opinions. Similarly, in another lesson children were excited when exploring the meaning of a covenant. They are growing in their maturity and understanding of the complexity of the difficult concepts that they are learning. Teachers are growing in their confidence to deliver 'Understanding Christianity' and their assessment is becoming more accurate. Some moderation has taken place to assist teachers in bringing a more complete picture to how well children are achieving but not enough of this has been done yet to make it secure. Teachers challenge children with skillful questioning which they are increasingly linking to the 'Windows, Doors, Mirrors' approach to spiritual development. The potential for this to deepen the children's understanding has not yet been fully achieved. The RE leader ensures that the curriculum covers a broad range of world faiths including Islam and Judaism. Children enjoy learning about these and show respect and tolerance of all faiths. Children respond well to RE and show excitement and engagement in their learning. They have good subject knowledge and in some instances are beginning to apply this. For example, by using Bible stories to justify their arguments. The RE lead in the school is relatively new to the post but is quickly learning and has clear ideas about how to continue to take the subject forward. Religious education at Marlton is a far more successful subject than it was at the previous inspection.

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

The school has made good progress and is a better church school now than at the previous inspection. It has developed a more meaningful ethos that has firmer foundations in its Christian distinctiveness which is making a greater impact on the lives of children and adults in the school community. The executive headteacher is fully supportive of the head of school and his team in promoting the continual development of values and spirituality which are making an increasing impact on all aspects of school life. They are very ably supported by the federation's Christian Distinctiveness Leader who offers clear advice and support. There is a total commitment among school leaders to ensuring that the vision works to support the development of each child in the school. Together with governors, and the support of the school community, the school has implemented a number of initiatives that are supporting the children's wellbeing and helping them to do well in their learning. Self-evaluation as a church school is thorough and realistic because school leaders have a secure understanding of what it means to be a church school which they have accurately monitored by gathering good quality evidence. Governors, for example, have discerned through their monitoring that the development of a more explicit ethos, underpinned through a clearer understanding of values, has created better quality collective worship. School leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas to improve as a church school and have a good capacity to continue to develop the impact of its Christian ethos. Parents are making an increasing contribution to the school's evaluation as a church school and in some areas, such as SMSC, parents are making a greater contribution to the life of the school. Relationships with the local church community and clergy from the Totnes Team Ministry are a particular strength of the school. The fortnightly contribution of the 'Open the Book' team from the local church is a new innovation since the previous report and is widely valued by children because they enjoy taking part and hearing Bible stories. The lay minister represents the Team Ministry when worship is held in the church and a number of other clergy lead worship on a regular basis. The wider church community make a valuable contribution to the life of the school by supporting school plays and working with the school to provide lunch to members of the local community. Meetings of the parochial church council are held in school and a report about the school is regularly given. At a spiritual level, the church frequently prays for the school. Parents appreciate how the school's emphasis on values helps their children to learn how to be a good friend and encourages them to be kind towards others. They say that their children refer to values at home. Equally, parents strongly appreciate that the school teaches their children to be respectful and tolerant of others when learning about cultural diversity. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.