

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Maddern's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Bellair Road, Madron, Penzance, Cornwall. TR20 8SP

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Diocese	Truro
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Cornwall
Date of inspection	27 March 2018
Date of last inspection	7 March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary Voluntary Aided 111996
Interim Executive Headteacher	Hilary Tyreman
Inspector's name and number	Revd David Hatrey 844

School context

St Maddern's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary is significantly smaller than the average school, with 38 pupils in two classes. The majority of children come from a White British heritage. The proportion of children who are eligible for pupil premium support and the proportion of children who have special educational needs or a disability is above national averages. The school has recently experienced significant change in leadership and governance which resulted in the appointment of an interim executive headteacher in July 2017 and an interim executive board in January 2018.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Maddern's as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- The newly appointed headteacher promotes a vision for the school which is securely based upon biblical principles and which is beginning to become established and understood by pupils.
- A new enquiry-based approach to teaching religious education is effectively engaging pupils in their learning, improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising standards.
- Pupils have a growing understanding of Christian values and are beginning to recognise how they influence their lives and attainment.
- Pupils have increased opportunities to participate in worship and have begun to appreciate the contribution which it can make to their lives.

Areas to improve

- Embed the new approaches to teaching in religious education (RE) and continue to improve the quality of teaching so that attainment rises.
- Ensure there is a shared understanding of spirituality which enables all teachers to plan a broad range of experiences for pupils.
- Deepen pupils' understanding of prayer, its contribution to spiritual development and its place in daily life.
- Develop the understanding of the school's vision so pupils can explain its relevance for them.

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

Christian distinctiveness is now satisfactory. A review of Christian distinctiveness and religious education was undertaken by the interim headteacher, who was appointed in November 2017, in consultation with diocesan personnel. The conclusion was that although Christian values were in place, pupils' understanding was fragile and standards in RE were low. Immediate action was taken to raise the profile of Christian values through a visions day during which the whole school community worked together. Three new core Christian values are perseverance, respect and responsibility. These are steadily being woven into teaching and learning and throughout school life. Pupils have a growing understanding of values and explain what they look like in daily life. The importance of values is reinforced by the award of a certificate given by staff when they recognise pupils applying values. The reason why the award is given is shared so all appreciate the various contexts where values make a difference. Increasingly pupils are making thoughtful links between values and their learning. They talk about perseverance and how this encourages them to work through challenging questions. At present pupils' understanding of the distinctive Christian nature of values is limited to the values explored. These are linked to a Bible story which reflects their meaning. Behaviour at the school is improving following the introduction of 'golden rules' and awards which are derived from Christian values and which are proving effective in supporting pupils. Leaders are helping pupils to develop a sense of being a family by modelling values and talking about being part of God's family. Older pupils are beginning to realise that this is linked to the Christian character of the school and they have a growing understanding of the importance of values. Staff have high expectations and model values in their own relationships which pupils seek to emulate. Attainment has been variable and was previously below national expectations, but is now rising. The new leadership is effectively nurturing pupils' attitudes to learning, developing resilience and learning skills and raising self-esteem so pupils feel they can be successful. The provision for vulnerable pupils has been extended and specialist staff from the link school are working on programmes to specifically address identified needs. This is enabling pupils to make better progress and raise their aspirations. A good example of the school's Christian distinctiveness is the work with pupils who have behavioural needs. Different strategies such as individual support help them to feel valued. There is little evidence from previous years of any planning or provision for spirituality. This has not yet been addressed due to other priorities, although a few opportunities are now in place. Leaders talk thoughtfully about spirituality and areas where this can be explored. Pupils have moments to reflect on Christian values, considering what these mean for them and how they might respond. They have explored how Christians celebrate Christmas in different countries and they are able to make simple comparisons. They understand that Christians celebrate their faith in various ways. Other world faiths are studied although not in great depth and pupils have a developing understanding and respect for difference and diversity. Positive links with the local church are evident and pupils have some appreciation of the church's role in the community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Astute evaluations made by the new leadership have led to significant changes which have raised the profile and impact of collective worship. Leaders have listened to pupils and taken action. For instance, pupils are becoming more involved in worship and more visual images are used which engage them. Further, planning is more detailed, progressively exploring aspects of a value over a term. This is deepening pupils' understanding of Christian values enabling them to make links between values and biblical ideas. Leaders have supported staff to develop their role in worship through arranging visits to other schools and developing their practice. Pupils say they appreciate the wider range of approaches to worship. Pupils enjoy 'Open the Book' worship because they like being involved in acting out Bible stories. The vicar leads an interactive weekly worship which pupils enjoy and contribute to. Pupils asked to be more involved in worship and now have more opportunities to lead certain aspects. A clear structure for worship is in place which uses Anglican responses in an atmosphere which encourages reflection. The insightful purchase of new technology has richly extended the use of visual images which pupils enjoy. Pupils have begun to evaluate worship, saying what they like or if they understand the message. Questionnaires indicate that there is a growing feeling that worship is making an impact on pupils' and adults' thinking. At present there is no structure to develop pupils' understanding of prayer. Some pupils have a basic understanding of different types of prayer, but there are not many examples of these. There are few opportunities for prayer and pupils have not been supported to extend their ideas so the development in their thinking is not clear. Pupils have a greater understanding of some Christian festivals since the arrival of the new leadership. They talk about Christmas and Easter and explain traditions associated with these. Pupils now consider what these festivals mean for Christians. At present pupils are not confident to talk about these festivals as their knowledge is not secure. The positive links to biblical teaching enable pupils to extend their understanding of Jesus. At present pupils have a limited understanding of the Trinity. Until recently there was no evidence of monitoring of collective worship, whereas now it is regularly and effectively completed and it helps leaders to plan for future improvements.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

RE is only satisfactory because until recently standards were low, there was little assessment and no evidence of monitoring. Since September 2017 however, significant improvements have been made which have enhanced the quality of teaching and learning and raised the subject's importance. The new leaders' initial scrutiny of pupils' books showed little RE work had been recorded and that there had been insufficient coverage of the syllabus. There is no evidence from previous years of assessments being carried out in RE so it was not possible until very recently to determine standards or progress by different groups against other core subjects. The essential support of a lead RE teacher from the linked school has led to substantial improvements in a relatively short time. Leaders have re-established a strong focus on developing good quality RE. An extensive review of planning has led to a new rolling programme of study for each of the classes, so there is full coverage of the locally agreed syllabus. This enables the youngest pupils in a class to explore the same RE themes as older pupils, but at a level which is appropriate to them. Work is now well matched to pupils' needs and abilities. There is a clear focus on raising the quality of teaching and learning in RE which in turn has been used in other curriculum areas. Staff visits to see lessons in the link school have also enabled them to refine their practice. Feedback on lessons from the lead teacher has supported this, so teachers now have higher expectations. The quality of teaching in RE now is at least satisfactory and there are a number of examples of better practice. Pupils are now making better progress and achieving a higher standard of work in line with expectations. New approaches, such as enquiry-based learning, are being put in place. This is effectively engaging pupils as they respond to challenging questions of meaning and purpose. Pupils appreciate opportunities to share their ideas and are now challenged to justify them. Teacher questioning enables pupils to begin to think at a deeper level. There is a greater emphasis on the use of visual elements such as video clips and artefacts and pupils say that they enjoy these lessons. Pupils are beginning to talk about their ideas and pose questions, realising that the class is a safe environment in which to do this. Staff subject knowledge is developing through the introduction of 'Understanding Christianity' resources. Working walls now remind pupils of work they have covered and give examples of what they should aim to achieve. Opportunities for reflection are included in lessons enabling pupils to consider what these new ideas mean for them. Pupils' questions show a growing curiosity as they search to answer questions which may not have agreed answers. RE makes a positive contribution to developing pupils' understanding of Christian values. Pupils enjoy finding out about Cornwall's unique Christian heritage. Their knowledge of other world faiths is growing, but is at an early stage of development. Marking has improved and teachers' use of personalised questions extends pupils' learning. Whilst some pupils find RE interesting and challenging, others are only just beginning to see how RE enables them to make links with their own lives.

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

The new headteacher has brought renewed focus to the work of a church school. Her passion and commitment are evident, leading initiatives which are strengthening the Christian distinctiveness in a number of areas. The vision and values day culminated in an agreed new vision, 'Inspire, believe, achieve', linked securely to the Church of England's vision for education. Leaders articulate the vision thoughtfully, pointing to Jesus, his example and his inspiration to have life in its fullness. The head explains the belief that each pupil is special as all are made in the image of God and loved by him. The school believes that it has a responsibility to show God's love and caring hands towards families and build enriching relationships between all members of the school family. This is evident in displays around the school. This new Christian ethos has developed pupils' self esteem and belief in what they can achieve and pupils' understanding and application of values. Pupils have a limited understanding of the vision because it has only recently been agreed. There was little evidence of monitoring prior to the arrival of the interim headteacher. The interim governing body have completed strategic reviews and taken decisive action to address identified issues. Strengthening the Christian ethos of the school and renewing the emphasis on values are good examples. Detailed long and short term plans for improvement are already making a positive difference, for instance, strengthening the quality of teaching and learning in RE. Prior to the interim headteacher's arrival only one of three targets from the previous inspection had been actioned, now all are developing well. Continuing professional development opportunities have enhanced staff subject knowledge and skills, notably through the introduction of 'Understanding Christianity' resources. Relationships with the diocese are good and they support the interim governing body. The local church makes a positive contribution to school life. The 'Open the Book' team regularly lead worship whilst the vicar visits weekly. Pupils speak with some understanding of the wider church following visits to Truro Cathedral. The school continues to be active in the community where it plays a significant role. Positive feedback from parents celebrates the sense of being a family and the difference Christian values make to their child's life and attitudes. They feel their ideas are listened to and valued. The school now fulfils the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.