

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

### Feckenham Church of England Voluntary Controlled First school

School Lane, Feckenham, Redditch B96 6QD

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Worcester</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Local authority	Worcestershire
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	N/A
Date of inspection	14 November 2016
Date of last inspection	18 October 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	First School 116842
Headteacher	Jeanette Little
Inspector's name and number	Lynn Gill 848

#### School context

Feckenham VC **First** School is situated in the small village of Feckenham near Redditch. It has 120 pupils on roll, educated in single year group classes, who are drawn from a wide area well beyond the village. The large majority of pupils are of white British heritage. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average as is the percentage of children with support for special educational needs. There are no children with an education, health and care plan.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Feckenham CE First School as a Church of England school good

- The inclusive Christian vision of the school ensures that pupils and staff are strongly nurtured and supported in their personal wellbeing.
- The great value placed on worship is linked to Christian values and impacts positively on the life of the pupils and staff.
- The schools' excellent links with the local church and community promote pupils' understanding of their place in their local community.

#### Areas to improve

- Establish a clear training programme for staff and governors to increase their understanding of Christian distinctiveness and spirituality.
- Further develop the role of school leaders in taking a more formal approach to the monitoring and evaluation of the school's Christian character.
- Ensure that pupils frequently plan, lead and evaluate worship to increase its impact on learners.

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

Feckenham CE First school is a very caring and reflective Christian community where every individual is valued for who they are and everyone is 'special in God's eyes'. It is clear that Christian values play an important part in the life of the school. They have a positive impact on children's attitudes to their learning, well-being, behaviour and relationships with others. The headteacher describes the values as being 'real gifts to guide the children through life that no-one can take away from them'. Pupils' self-esteem, self-worth and self-belief are nurtured so that every individual is enabled to do the best they can.

The distinctively Christian values are underpinned by the teaching of the Bible and the life and work of Jesus. The values are agreed by the children each half term and are made explicit through acts of worship and as part of classroom expectations. When asked what their school would be like without the values one pupil commented, 'Nobody would know what to think or do. They would be bullied.' Another said, 'We wouldn't know how to behave. It would be a horrible place.'

Relationships in the school are a particular strength. A member of staff said, 'We are like a family. Everyone feels they belong.' Parents are very supportive of the school's Christian character which they feel provides an inclusive environment for all pupils. They speak very positively about the school's 'open door' policy where they are always welcome and which makes them feel valued as part of the school community. Parents agree that the school's Christian ethos is influential in their children's everyday life. They say that their children often talk about the teachings from the Bible they have learnt from assemblies and say how, "Jesus tells us how to live our lives".

Although the school does not yet have a clearly understood definition of spirituality which is shared across the school community, activities are planned to provide children with spiritual experiences. For example, all children take part in Forest school activities every week, giving them freedom to explore the world around them and to foster curiosity in a place of 'peace and tranquillity'.

The school has implemented the new Worcestershire agreed syllabus for Religious Education (RE) and staff feel that it gives the children opportunities to think and discuss and that it promotes curiosity and collaboration. The RE curriculum celebrates diversity and difference and ensures that learners are both interested in and respectful of those with other faiths and cultures. The school's recent introduction of the use of persona dolls is helping to personalise the different world faiths and helping to identify similarities and differences between them. Recently the Reception pupils celebrated the festival of Rosh Hashanah with 'Aaron', the Jewish persona doll, by sharing bread, apples and honey with him.

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

Collective worship is very important to life at Feckenham and supports the school's Christian distinctiveness. Collective worship themes are based on Christian values chosen by the children and the school strives to reinterpret the values in ways which not only relate to biblical teaching but also to the children's day-to-day experiences. The consequence of this is that children not only know the values, but understand their meaning and the relevance of them to their own lives resulting in a positive impact on relationships. For example, pupils were able to link the story of Zacchaeus the Tax Collector to their value of honesty.

'Open the Book' sessions are very popular and engaging, where the pupils are encouraged to relate Bible stories to their everyday life and reflect on their message. One parent commented, 'Open the Book assemblies are the best thing since sliced bread. My children say they are very special.'

Christian symbols and artefacts have been chosen to be particularly relevant to children, for example a colourful wooden plaque of Jesus showing his compassion for the children around him. The worship table, with a cross and candle acts as a focal point for worship. Within worship, time is given to reflection and prayer to support the spiritual development of all members of the school community. One child said, 'When Mrs Little lights the candle we look at the flame and think about what has happened to us during the week.' Reflection areas in every classroom, displaying a small painted cross, the Lord's Prayer, the school prayer and the class 'Prayer/Worry Box', give pupils the opportunity to use prayer and reflection during school day. Pupils use the boxes, which are offered to God each week, to write down their own prayers and worries. A Year Three child said, 'I prayed when my great nana was very poorly.' The children have a developing understanding of the Trinity with one child saying, 'They are different names for God; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.'

Special services held in the parish church throughout the year give pupils an understanding of important Christian festivals. Parents are involved in these services giving them the opportunity to share in their children's spiritual

reflection. Parents are also invited to the weekly 'Celebration Assembly' which acknowledges achievements of all and reinforces the Christian values needed to achieve success.

Although each class leads a 'values' assembly each year and enjoy participating in adult led assemblies the opportunities for pupils to plan and lead collective worship are limited. Children's views have been sought informally to improve their involvement and engagement in collective worship.

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

The headteacher and governors have a clear vision for the school as a church school and strive to provide an environment that values everyone for who they are and challenges individuals with high expectations for all. As a consequence they are committed to providing the best education for all pupils. The school vision statement 'A Passion for Learning, a Love of Life, in a School that Cares' is underpinned by Christian faith and British values. Governors commented, 'The school is on a continual journey of development and reflection.'

Clear strategies for moving the school forward are in place and school staff and leaders have recently embraced the principles of 'Growth Mindset' which has had significant impact on the expectations of teachers of their pupils and also pupils' views of themselves as learners. One feature of this is that making mistakes is seen as a learning journey, a message which is reflected in the stories of the Bible.

Foundation governors carry out learning walks and discussions with pupils and the information gained leads to improved provision of worship and RE. Issues relating to Christian ethos and values are discussed by governors and staff to improve the Christian character of the school. The lack of formal systems of evaluation involving governors, staff and children mean that improvement is limited.

Relationships between the local community, the parish church and school are very strong. The governors' 'Church and Community Cohesion' committee ensures that the school is at the heart of the community and therefore pupils understand the involvement of the church in the local and wider community. Parents appreciate these excellent links with the church and local community. Recently parents and members of the community joined the school for the Service of Remembrance, held outside in the churchyard surrounded by a 'poppy field' designed and made by the children. This was said by one parent to be, 'a very moving experience for everyone'. Following the involvement of children in these services parents and staff, who live outside the parish, remarked that they feel the church is 'their church' and return for other services. Pupils also regularly use the church building for other curriculum activities ensuring that it becomes one with the school. The local team rector is seen as a valuable link between the school and church both in supporting worship and the curriculum and in giving pastoral support to staff.

The leadership of collective worship and RE is strong with the result that pupils' knowledge and understanding in RE is impressive. Assessment, tracking and monitoring procedures for RE, in 'a life without levels', are being developed in line with other areas of the curriculum. The statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are met and all areas for development from the last inspection have been effectively addressed.

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