THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND EDUCATION OFFICE

The Methodist Church

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Stiperstones CofE Primary School	
Snailbeach, Shrewsbury, SY5 0LZ	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	**Satisfactory**
Diocese	**Hereford**
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Shropshire
Name of federation	The Chirbury and Stiperstones CE Primary School Federation
Date of inspection	23 November 2017
Date of last inspection	20 November 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 123519
Acting Executive Headteacher	Leslie Ball
Inspector's name and number	Eleanor Benson 920

School context

Stiperstones CofE Primary School is a small rural primary school with 38 pupils on roll, taught in two mixed age classes. The school's nursery was closed earlier this year due to low pupil numbers. Stiperstones has been in a federation with Chirbury CofE Primary School since 2012. An above average proportion of pupils have special educational needs. Very few are disadvantaged. The majority are white British. Leadership and teaching have been affected by long term staff illness. For the last year the school has been led by an acting executive headteacher. There are recent changes in staffing and the governing body.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Stiperstones C of E Primary School as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- Love and kindness to each other permeate and strengthen the whole school community.
- The leaders of the school have a realistic understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and approach the task of improving teaching and learning with honesty and determination.
- Collective worship is valued by all members of the school community.

Areas to improve

- Articulate and promote an explicitly Christian vision based in biblical teaching so that the whole school community is able to recognise its impact on their daily lives and achievements.
- Plan and provide a collective worship programme that allows pupils to explore biblical themes in a cohesive and relevant way across the week.
- Review and revise the religious education (RE) curriculum and its assessment so that it informs and underpins the Christian ethos of the school and the learning about Christian belief in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Plan and provide opportunities for pupils to become actively involved in their own spiritual journey, in particular through prayer, both in collective worship and through personal reflection.
- Develop the skills of leaders and governors so that they more effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of the Christian ethos.

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

Parents, staff and pupils affirm the importance of the Christian values that are central to the ethos of Stiperstones C of E Primary School. Amongst a range of values such as trust, friendship, kindness, generosity, honesty and perseverance, there is a particular emphasis on care and respect for individuals. Pupils appreciate the many friendships formed across gender and between all ages in this small school. One said, 'If someone falls over and gets hurt, some of the older ones will help.' Pupils accept and respect each other as individuals. This loving concern has an impact on wider families not only on the pupils. A parent spoke of the staff as 'very personal and caring – I can go to them about anything.' During the challenges of recent staffing changes, the whole school community has worked together with determination and dedication to serve pupils and their families. Pupils take an active part in raising money for charities through events like coffee mornings and table top sales. They enjoy working together to welcome the wider community to these events, to serve refreshments and make sales themselves. The staff take opportunities to teach Christian values through collective worship and across the curriculum. However, there is no systematic plan to highlight and teach certain values. There is limited consistency between the values mentioned by staff and by governors, and these did not match with the hall display or the five treasured promises for pupils. Most pupils are unable to explain adequately what their school badge signifies with its design of a cross and a heart. Staff and pupils do not relate values to the teaching of Jesus or to other biblical material. Christian values such as friendship, kindness, generosity and respect contribute effectively to pupils' moral, social and cultural development and to their good behaviour. However, they do not specifically inform school policies and have a limited place in curriculum planning.

There is no agreed definition of spirituality amongst school leaders. Apart from collective worship for pupils, opportunities for spiritual development are not planned and so pupils' responses are limited. Pupils enjoy RE which is taught thematically within a creative curriculum for foundation subjects. They make comparisons between world religions, this term focussing on the Jewish festival of Hanukkah within the topic of festivals. However, the thematic approach does not give pupils an overview of the key beliefs of Christianity or of other world faiths. RE makes a limited contribution to pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity and, therefore, to the Christian character of the school. Pupils lack personal experience of other world faiths or of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith.

The most recent Key Stage 2 results show that pupils are making good progress and achieving on average in line with the national average. Pupils with widely varying abilities and needs are well supported and challenged to make progress. Pupils' attendance is good, reflecting pupils' enjoyment of school. A parent commented that her child 'can't wait to come to school'.

The impact of the Christian character of the school is not yet good because the school ethos is not specifically rooted in biblical teaching or clearly articulated in all aspects of planning or specifically exemplified across school life.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Collective worship is an important part of the school day. A worship table in the hall covered with the seasonal colour, with a prayer book and cross, stands alongside a candle which is lit for worship. Various staff share in leading daily worship during the long-term absence of the worship co-ordinator. Worship is enriched by music led by a specialist. Pupils participate well in singing a varied repertoire of appropriate songs, many regarding this as their favourite part of worship. One pupil said, 'I love singing.' Another described how he liked to dance as he sang because 'you can make up actions to the music'. The associate minister of the local parish leads special services at harvest, Christmas and Easter as well as some other collective worship during the year. The Easter service was a memorable experience for pupils who described how they enacted events in Holy Week, walking from the school to the village pub which represented Jerusalem. This active participation deepened pupils' understanding of the last supper and Jesus' death and resurrection. The minister and music specialist make a valuable and creative contribution to worship. Pupils contribute to the provision of collective worship. Some pupils are responsible for the projector and sound system and others regularly read prayers in collective worship. Pupils' ad hoc responses influence the choice of music. However, pupils are not involved in the planning of worship or in wider leadership. A very simple evaluation of Wednesday worship by a few pupils was introduced recently but it is insufficient to inform future planning.

Due to staff absence there is no overall programme for the term's worship. Nevertheless, both teachers and teaching assistants have come forward to lead worship regularly. Staff choose their own themes and readings according to topical issues, often relating these to values such as perseverance and respect. In the majority of

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weekday worship the reading does not come from the Bible. As a result, pupils know few stories about Jesus apart from the events of Christmas and Easter. They show limited knowledge of God as Father and Son and no understanding of God as Holy Spirit. However, despite a series of staff changes, collective worship under the leadership of a range of staff, has been sustained and makes a significant contribution to the Christian character of the school.

A pattern of set prayers is well-established. Pupils pray before lunch and at the end of the school day. They know the Lord's Prayer and the Grace. On occasions such as Mother's Day pupils write their own prayers. However, they have limited opportunities for personal prayer or reflection away from collective worship. One pupil spoke of how praying helped to deal with feeling angry but most pupils said they did not usually think of praying. There is no place in school set aside for prayer or reflection for pupils at break or lunchtime. However, pupils are usually given an opportunity for quiet reflection during collective worship.

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

The school has had recent changes in leadership. Together with the other school in the federation, it is currently led by an experienced acting executive headteacher who has quickly identified priorities to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Through the agency of the local authority and the diocese, the governors have also engaged the headteacher of an outstanding church school to provide consultant support. The acting executive headteacher is assisted effectively by a teacher in charge who is always on site and is the only permanent teacher on the staff at the time of this report. The acting executive headteacher and teacher in charge understand the school's strengths and weaknesses and are supported by the governing body. They are determined that pupils achieve the best possible outcomes and have implemented a systematic improvement programme for teaching and learning in the core subjects. As a result, within a few months levels of achievement and progress have risen. Amidst staffing and financial challenges leaders ascribe continuing staff commitment and teamwork to the way Christian values of self-sacrifice, love and care for one another are lived out in the school community. However, there is no reference in the school development plan to strategies to strengthen Christian distinctiveness. Governors and school leaders have not been evaluating and monitoring Christian distinctiveness. The RE programme of study does not sufficiently support pupils' understanding of the Christian faith or the opportunities for spiritual development. Leadership and management of the school as a church school is not yet good because an explicitly Christian vision for the whole school is not articulated. Nor have the leaders and strategies been identified to take RE and collective worship forward in a way that strengthens and underpins the Christian character of the school.

The school benefits from the recently instigated partnerships brokered by the local authority and the diocese with the two local schools. These are effective in driving up standards in teaching and learning and in providing professional development for staff. There are strong links with the local church. The associate minister of the parish not only visits school to lead worship but also as a governor. The school joins in with deanery events such as Education Sunday. Parents are highly supportive of the school and see it as the heart of the village community.

The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

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