

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

### Stockcross Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Chapel Road, Stockcross, Newbury, Berkshire RD20 8LD

**Current SIAMS inspection grade**

**Good**

**Diocese**

**Oxford**

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

West Berkshire

Date of inspection

12 May 2017

Date of last inspection

April 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

VA Primary 110017

Executive Headteacher

Katie Dickens

Inspector's name and number

Lizzie McWhirter 244

#### School context

Currently there are 102 pupils on roll in this rural village primary school. The school is predominately White British, with pupils coming from nearby villages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is lower than the national average. The school works closely with Welford and Wickham Primary School, sharing key members of staff. The executive headteacher was appointed since the last inspection and is also the religious education [RE] subject leader.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Stockcross as a Church of England school are good

- The strong leadership of the executive headteacher, dedicated staff team and committed governors place paramount importance on serving the pupils and their families in this supportive Christian community. Consequently, pupils grow in confidence and achieve well.
- The partnership between school and churches enriches the worshipping life of this church school.
- The involvement in, and leading of, the Erasmus Plus Project enriches pupils' global awareness and makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural [SMSC] development of pupils and adults.

#### Areas to improve

- Ensure the governors regularly and rigorously monitor RE and collective worship to inform the future direction of these two key aspects of Christian distinctiveness.
- Embed the assessment of RE by gathering evidence to show progress and achievement in this key subject area.

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

Excellent relationships at all levels ensure the school's core values of love and mutual respect underpin all school policy and practice. This is embodied in the school's vision to put every single child first. Such values are seen in the way everyone respects one another and explained through biblical teaching in worship. Dedicated staff know the pupils extremely well. Parents praise the 'genuine love and respect' they see shown to their children. Consequently, attendance is above the national average. The needs of any vulnerable pupils and their families are well met by the family support worker, who works closely with individual pupils and their parents. As a result, these pupils grow in confidence and achieve better than expected progress. Love and respect underpin all progress and achievement, resulting in very good progress for all groups of pupils. For example, in 2016 Key Stage 2 pupils achieved very highly locally for reading, writing and mathematics. A range of achievement is celebrated, including musical and sporting activities. One of the hallmarks of Stockcross Primary School is their involvement in the Erasmus Plus project. Indeed the school's headteacher leads this project on moral values. As such, it enables this village school and community to respect difference and better understand the world beyond their own community. It makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural [SMSC] development of pupils and adults alike. There are good links with other partner schools in Lithuania, Estonia, Turkey and Italy which have helped to widen horizons. For example, following a recent visit to Lithuania by two members of staff, photographs were shared with pupils and adults back in school. Pupils especially recall images of the hill of crosses which provided a poignant moment of reflection. In addition, fundraising activities help support pupils' awareness of communities different to their own. Pupils also contribute to charity cake sales and work together with the village to support local initiatives, such as collecting for the local foodbank at Harvest. Through collective worship and RE, pupils grow in knowledge and research, for example, how Easter is celebrated around the world. This helps pupils understand more deeply the importance of the worldwide Christian community. Worship and RE therefore make a good contribution to pupils' personal development and to the school's Christian character.

**The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

The strong partnership between church and school enriches the worshipping life of the school community. Christian worship centred on biblical themes makes a very good contribution to the spiritual lives of pupils and adults alike. The vicar leads weekly worship in school, with pupils commenting that, 'he gets everyone involved'. Pupils often write prayers, including their own version of The Lord's Prayer, and lead worship and services. Many pupils contribute by playing their musical instruments. A significant number of pupils are learning different instruments and enjoy playing in worship. The pupil worship team received training from the diocese, resulting in them now leading worship once a month. This enriches their knowledge and understanding of Anglican traditions and practice. Consequently, the school recognises the importance of enabling pupils to plan, lead and evaluate collective worship more frequently. This increases their leadership roles and nurtures their spiritual lives. Year 1 and 2 pupils led the Easter service in St John's Church with confidence. In addition, pupils and their families attend services at Boxford parish church. Pupils say that, 'coming together as a whole school' is important and when they worship in church it reminds them of God. The prayer tree and the 'big book of class prayers' are well used, with pupils commenting that prayer is always shared at the end of the day. They say that Bible stories help them to value difference and respect others. Pupils say they would like to plan, lead and evaluate worship more frequently, which the school recognises. A significant number of parents attend worship in school every Friday for the weekly achievers assembly, led by Year 6 pupils. They are encouraged to join in with the school prayer as the pupils provide illustrated copies on their chairs. Parents say they find services, such as Remembrance Sunday moving, especially as some pupils play The Last Post on their trumpets. Pupils show very good understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In their own words they explain, 'The Father is the creator and our heavenly Father. He looks over us and helps us move forward. The son is Jesus who is God in man form and talked to us about God. Jesus made sure the word of God spread out to everyone and he rose back into heaven. The Holy Spirit is everywhere and inside everyone who believes in God. The

Holy Spirit keeps us doing right, not wrong.' Pupils go on to relate the detail of the story of doubting Thomas and the first Pentecost. They show good knowledge of the pattern of the church year and value celebrating festivals, such as Christingle, in church. They are aware of Christian symbolism, such as the cross which reminds them of the importance' to forgive another person'.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

RE has a high profile at Stockcross and, in the headteacher's eyes, is very much part of what the school offers in different ways of thinking and believing. She took up the role of the RE subject leader in September 2016 and acknowledges that the school is on a journey in terms of RE. Whilst book scrutinies are carried out, one of the challenges for teachers is how to assess and record the quality of RE work. The school acknowledges the need to embed the assessment of RE and the monitoring of pupil progress is an area for development. The programme of visits and visitors enable pupils to meet people of faith, enriching their spiritual and cultural development. For example, there was a visit from a rabbi last year and this year a visit to Neasden temple. Parents say such visits help to open pupils' minds. Teaching and learning in RE is good. Pupils enjoy RE and achieve well, which makes a good contribution to their SMSC development. Pupils say they like learning how others live and respect their religion. They say, 'We like learning about other faiths and their beliefs and values.' There is a big question each term to help pupils understand other religions and increase their knowledge about Sikhs, Hindus and Christians around the world. As one might expect in a church school, pupils know the Easter story well. Young pupils use Bible stories, such as The Good Samaritan, to reflect on good role models. Older pupils consider a question such as, 'What is the best way for a Christian to show commitment to God?' They seek answers in studying The Ten Commandments and how these rules might be applied to life today.

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

Much has been achieved in a relatively short space of time with a renewed impetus to move forward under the direction of the headteacher. Indeed, the strong leadership of the headteacher, dedicated staff and committed governors serve the pupils and their families very well. Love and mutual respect underpin academic and personal development. The executive headteacher also leads Welford and Wickham School, with key staff shared across both schools. She took up the leadership of RE from September. Whilst English and mathematics were the focus this year, the school has identified that RE will have a focus next year. Governors are committed to the wellbeing of all the community and supporting staff in this small rural school in their respective roles. They have addressed areas from the previous inspection. They rejoice in the appointment of their headteacher who has brought much to the school, such as the school benefitting from the Erasmus project. However, whilst RE and worship meet statutory requirements, the leadership and management of RE has been identified as an area for development. Governors acknowledge they need to monitor collective worship and RE more regularly and rigorously, especially finding the time to evaluate more formally. Currently, governors have a separate action plan with a focus on leadership and management to ensure the SMSC development of the school. Church and community links are strong. For example, all nine parishes in the benefice pray every week for the school. There are regular reports on the school at Parochial Church Council meetings. The school features regularly in 'The Grapevine' magazine. The school newsletter always contains a 'Thought for the Week'. Pupils sing at the local care home and the village Remembrance-tide service is well attended by all. Parents actively support the school and speak highly of the way their children live out the school's values and show kindness. There have been joint projects in the community to fund a defibrillator for the village as well as support a traffic calming scheme outside the school. There is good support from the diocese whose pastoral support is valued. Dedicated staff cite Stockcross for its supportive and caring environment, valuing the compassionate and understanding reflective team spirit they enjoy and experience here.