

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Long Marston Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Angram Road, Long Marston, York YO26 7LR	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	York
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Date of inspection	24 November 2017
Date of last inspection	September 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	VC Primary 121575
Acting headteacher	Sarah Poulter
Inspector's name and number	Lizzie McWhirter 244

School context

Currently there are 38 pupils on roll in this small village school. Almost all pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to pupil premium funding is well below the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average. The substantive headteacher left the school in April 2017. The current acting headteacher has been in post since September 2017. She is the religious education [RE] subject leader and works 2.5 days in school. The executive headteacher works half a day a week in school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Long Marston as a Church of England school are good

- The commitment and enthusiasm of the acting headteacher and her team is well supported by governors and the executive headteacher. This enables the school's distinctive Christian character to become more visible than it previously was.
- This is underpinned by the school's chosen values of community, dignity, hope and wisdom which are proudly displayed in school. Pupils, parents and governors can all articulate them in a most focussed way and link them to key biblical passages.
- Relationships at all levels are good. Consequently, pupils grow in confidence and achieve well from their starting points because their individual needs are nurtured within the context of a caring Christian community.

Areas to improve

- For the governors to further embed and develop the rigorous cycle for the monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of church school distinctiveness. This includes supporting the RE subject leader in her role.
- Extend the occasions for pupils to lead collective worship in church and school to enrich their experience of Christian worship through the year and support their personal spiritual journeys.

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

Long Marston's chosen core values of dignity, hope, community and wisdom inspire and enable pupils to thrive and be successful within a caring Christian community. Staff and parents confirm the strong sense of belonging they feel in in this rural church school. This is because of the nurturing environment which enables pupils to flourish. Pupils, parents, leaders and governors can all link the school's values to biblical stories and demonstrate values, such as wisdom, in their own lives. The strength in everyone knowing and clearly articulating the importance of these core values rooted in the Bible is seen in the good relationships which exist at all levels. Everyone gets on well together. Pupils comment that, 'however, small or tall you may be, you are all equal in God's image' In addition, attendance is good and there have been no exclusions.

Pupils make good progress towards their targets from their individual starting points. This is attributed to personalised learning and is seen as an important part of pupils' individual learning journeys. Partnership working ensures the needs of the most vulnerable are met.

The previous report recommended highlighting experiences to develop spiritual development throughout the curriculum, linking to worship themes wherever possible. The establishment of reflection corners, the spiritual trail and spiritual journals helps meet this.

Worship and RE both make good contributions to pupils' personal and spiritual, moral, social and cultural [SMSC] development and to the Christian character of the school. For example, some pupils comment, 'we know the story of our faith as Christians' and can explain the Christian story very well. Pupils know how Christmas is celebrated in other countries by Christians.

RE has an important profile and is linked to the understanding of the Christian values of the school. It enables pupils to understand the importance of Christianity. They learn about different faiths within their own community and the UK. Pupils have also reflected on questions, such as, 'How do non-religious people develop their rules to live by?' which links to wider aspects of RE. For example, pupils have met the Archbishop of York and a diversity week is planned for the spring. Pupils say they would like more visits and visitors and learn about people in other countries. The school has prioritised this and it would be of great benefit to the pupils in this rural context. Areas for on-going development therefore include a deeper understanding of the role of the church at a local, national and global level.

'Sporting Start', Forest school and other activities are part of the broad range of experiences which support pupils' SMSC development. For example, pupils have met Olympians who excel in diving and kayaking who have inspired pupils to achieve their personal goals in life.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is an important part of school life and engages adults and pupils alike. It is apparent from evaluations over time that there is an emphasis on key festivals in the church year and biblical teaching. Evidence from staff and pupils shows the difference the newly formed pupil worship committee meeting weekly to plan the music and prayers has made. For example, pupils say they like 'praying, singing, and thanking Jesus'. Currently, pupils lead worship every two weeks. Recent worship focussed on King Solomon's wisdom, with pupils making connections to their key values. In addition, 'Open the Book' worship takes place regularly which results in Christian values and approaches to life stemming from the Bible. For example, pupils said they enjoyed acting out the story of Jonah and the whale, which encourages them to make the right choices.

There are close links with nearby All Saints Church. The pattern of worship includes church services at Harvest and Remembrance-tide. Pupils say they enjoy worship in church and 'learn more about things around me, God Jesus and the church'. They go on to say, that collective worship has for them, 'the feeling like you're at home'. They know the cross symbolises the death of Jesus. They experience celebrating Christingle and Harvest in church and taking a leading role in such services.

The previous report recommended ensuring planning for worship was consistent. This has been addressed, with staff and pupils involved. It also focussed on the formal, rigorous monitoring and evaluation of worship, which is identified for on-going development.

Pupils are growing in their understanding of the Trinity. For example, they explain Father, Son and Spirit as, 'God is all of them. God the Son is Jesus. The Holy Spirit helped the disciples to not be afraid.' Governors confirm that the headteacher is very good at helping the pupils 'understand deep philosophies'.

Prayer books are well used in every classroom. In addition, pupils value reflection outdoors as they can 'think about inspiration and nature'. Pupils have been inspired to fundraise for global charities, such as 'Operation Orphan' which has been championed by a pupil. They are also inspired by the Archbishop Young Leaders award to positively make a difference in the world.

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

This school has a clear Christian vision which is to develop independent learners within a Christian learning environment whose Christian values give them integrity, creativity and a love of life. This is boldly displayed in classrooms where pupils can see it, refer to it and explain what it means. They can also readily symbolise what belonging to a church school means in simple hand signs. There is a renewed impetus from everyone to take this school forward on its school improvement journey. The acting headteacher and dedicated foundation governors are committed and firmly believe in the core purpose of the school to nurture every person, adult and child, both academically and personally. They are well supported by the executive headteacher, especially as the acting headteacher teaches part time. In addition, valuing others and developing positive relationships with God, self and others is an important part of the school's Christian vision. Staff and governors, and the parents themselves, confirm that there are much stronger messages to parents about the importance of Long Marston as a church school. This is because the headteacher is very capable and very enthusiastic, with a strong faith of her own. For example, RE is regarded as a core subject and the heart of the curriculum and staff confirm they have a new direction and a clear purpose. RE is identified as a priority moving forward by the leaders and governors of the school. Currently, the headteacher has carried out lesson observations and termly book scrutinies are planned.

The previous report recommended increasing the involvement of governors and other members of the school community in the review and development of Long Marston as a church school. On-going development for governors and others to continue this work has already been identified by the school. Governors have recently changed the focus of their monitoring visits, with more shared responsibility and more focus on action. This includes RE and collective worship as important aspects of Christian distinctiveness. Both meet statutory requirements and are well led, managed and resourced by the acting headteacher. Governors make a difference and are well aware of their responsibilities which they have fulfilled. During a period of change, governors have worked with each headteacher to ensure Long Marston remains a nurturing environment. The acting headteacher has helped provide a new impetus.

The school's Christian vision and values drive the leaders and managers forward. As a small rural school, they are very aware of the need for sustainability in the current climate and value their supportive links with the diocese. Governors want to improve the distinctive Christian character as well as pupils' progress. The school has benefitted from diocesan training and support for governance. Long Marston also has good links with local schools as part of the Star Alliance. Parents say, 'without the church we would have no church school'. Very good attendance at church services confirms how much they value this partnership. For example, 35 out of 38 families attended the Harvest service. Parents also go on to say, 'for such a small school the opportunities given' to their children are great, citing 'Sporting Start'. They speak highly of the school as 'welcoming, warm, ambitious' where their children 'know each other out of school'. They cite the teachers who 'lead by example'. For them, the leadership is in very good place now, praising the present headteacher who 'really wants the children to do well'. Staff confirm they 'love the way everyone 'takes care of one another and nurtures unique gifts'. This is a place with 'Christian values at the core which shines through this welcoming and happy school which encourages children to learn in different ways'. Above all, staff say they now feel their aspirations are valued as everyone here is on their own personal journey as well as on a journey together.

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