

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Meavy Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Meavy Yelverton Devon PL20 6PJ

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Exeter
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	1 October 2016
Name of multi-academy trust	St. Christopher's Multi-Academy Trust
Date of inspection	29 November 2016
Date of last inspection	7 October 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	143192
Headteacher	Gavin Hamilton
Inspector's name and number	Rev. David Hatrey 844

School context

Meavy Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary is smaller than the average rural school in comparison with others nationally. The number of children who have English as an additional language or who have special educational needs is below national averages. The number of children entitled to pupil premium support is broadly in line with national averages. The school is part of the West Dartmoor Federation along with Lady Modiford's School with whom they share the executive head teacher and in October of this year they became part of the St. Christopher's Multi-Academy Trust which is sponsored by the diocese.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Meavy as a Church of England school are good.

- The school's Christian distinctiveness is clearly shown in the warmth and inclusiveness of the family ethos where relationships are strong and supportive.
- Main Christian festivals particularly the Easter experience are inspiring and engaging and develop children's understanding of the significance of them.
- Leadership at the school is dedicated, creating a strong cohesive team who have established a community based on Christian values.
- New approaches to religious education (RE) are engaging children in their learning and enabling them to see the relevance of the subject in their lives.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that spirituality has a high profile in the life of the school, with innovative experiences that give children time to explore their ideas in different ways and express them in greater depth.
- Embed the new strategy for assessment in RE and the enquiry approach to teaching and learning so that this challenges the more-able children and raises attainment.
- Establish a systematic approach for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the school's Christian distinctiveness and all aspects of a church school involving consultation with children which identifies challenging ongoing improvements.

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

Meavy have adopted the fruit of the spirit as their core Christian values. These are: love, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, peace, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. Children have some understanding of most values and can explain as well as recognise these in daily life. A values tree shows the values and qualities which the school would like children to develop. Adults who recognise children showing these values in action write their name and value onto a leaf and attach this to the display. Children are rewarded in celebration worship and the reason given is made clear which develops awareness values in daily life. Children's understanding of the values reflects a more general interpretation rather than being distinctively Christian. Only a few of the values could be linked to a Bible story which reflects its meaning. There was also some confusion over which stories related to particular values. 'Values come from God and are shown in Jesus' life and teaching and we can find out more about these in the Bible,' was confidently articulated by the children. They recognise that these influence their behaviour and the way they treat one another. One child added, "these make us better children and we get on with each other." Children give examples of where these influence and shape their school family, aware that everyone is special and important to God. This was seen in the attitude of children to national incidents. In response to the Nepal earthquakes, they spent time making and waving flags to show their concern, following this up with fund-raising. There are a number of examples where they take action and organise activities supporting others. Parents are aware of the current value, each of which is developed over a two-week period. They add leaves to an external display demonstrating that children show values at home. Staff model these values in their own relationships with children, they know each child as an individual and their families. Children value these relationships and reflect this in the care they show to others, the support older children give to new and younger children stands out. Whilst children appreciate they are part of a Christian family they could not link the high standard of their behaviour with the Christian values. There was no indication of bullying and minor issues are resolved through children reflecting on values and encouraged to empathise on how others feel. The provision for spirituality is improving as a new approach is developed through "Windows, mirrors and doors," although still at an early stage. There are a few good experiences offered, however, there is no agreed understanding of spirituality from which all staff work, neither are opportunities identified for in planning which cover a broad range of experiences. There is insufficient evidence of written thoughts, these lack maturity, where this has not had a high profile, children are not encouraged to express these in different ways. One of the targets from the previous inspection was to, "provide more opportunities to explore cultural diversity both nationally and internationally." Links with two Tanzanian schools, one Christian the other Muslim enable children to see how faith is shown in different ways. Children are aware of different cultures through these links supported by staff visits and welcoming staff into school. It has extended their knowledge of other world faiths with children showing tolerance and respect for those who hold different views to their own. Exploring other local centres of worship has developed their understanding further.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.

Collective worship has a prominent role in the life of the school. Children recognise and value this time to share with God and their community. It provides them with a calm and relaxed end to the day. Planning for worship draws together various themes as well as exploring a Christian value. At times there are so many ideas to think about that the particular importance of the main teaching is lost and as a result children's knowledge of values is not deepened. There are a number of leaders of worship who bring a variety of approaches which children find valuable. Open the book worship is popular as children enjoy the drama linked and the opportunities to participate. Recently a child led group has been created, ABC, Acting out the Bible Club. They lead worship performing a Bible story, where they are also responsible for making the message clear and selecting music and writing prayers. They evaluate their worship and seek to develop this. Children enjoy this and feel that they have some ownership of worship. Children feel worship influences their thoughts but they are not confident to give examples of this. Evaluations by the leadership recognised that main Christian celebrations gave children a limited understanding of the significance of these. They introduced an exciting and vivid Easter experience, with children writing scripts and acting out scenes from Holy week as part of a series of dramas which moves through the week. There are some poignant moments culminating in the resurrection dance performed by the youngest children. Children talk with enthusiasm about this and show deeper insights into the meaning of crucifixion, their involvement has brought this to life. Other Christian festivals are celebrated with children writing prayers for carol and christingle services bringing the community together. Prayer is well taught and developed across the school, children use teaspoon prayers, made up of please, sorry or thank you. There are prayer/reflection areas in each class although the school has yet to evaluate their impact. There are other opportunities to write prayers as well as for particular occasions. There is evidence of a growing maturity in these. They know prayer is a way of sharing with God, with some aware that it has a relevance to daily lives. Children generally have a good understanding of Jesus and some of His teaching, whilst their appreciation of the Trinity is growing. At present there has been little evaluation of worship so school and

governors are not sure of the impact this has. Whilst there have been some improvements, these have not been informed by monitoring or led to ongoing improvements.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

The recently appointed subject leader has brought enthusiasm and expertise which is raising the profile of RE across the life of the school. She has steadily introduced a number of initiatives which are improving the quality of teaching and learning and children's interest. An enquiry approach to learning is growing, where children pose their own questions and seek answers. Children share their ideas and justify these through discussion. Teachers challenge children with more open ended questions, "Why do you think this?" encouraging them to listen and evaluate the responses of others. Children reason through opinions and re-establish their views in light of this. There is a greater understanding of more subject specific language used, whilst staff's subject knowledge has risen. The coordinator has spent considerable time creating an assessment system, where for each module statements are related to the different ability levels. This is beginning to provide staff with more accurate information about what children can do and what they need to consider next in order to move forward. This provides effective feedback for children with additional questions related to each child's work, this extends their thinking and directs where and how they can do better. Comments by children show this is effective and taking learning forward. There are some opportunities to explore 'big' issues, where children consider their responses, contrasting their thoughts in light of biblical teaching. This is at an early stage, but not yet fully embedded. Attainment in RE is generally in line with the other core subjects and national expectations. At present not enough children are achieving the higher levels. However, current expectations which requires children to use and apply the higher order thinking skills should support this. There is evidence of good and better progress in years 3, 4 and 5. Lesson observations have been carried out in conjunction with governors, who are aware of developments in this area. Teaching and learning is good and there is evidence of this rising and of very good practice in some areas. Work is effectively matched to children's needs in lessons, with a variety of approaches, where children can respond and record their work in more creative ways. RE makes a positive contribution to the school's Christian ethos through strong biblical links. Whilst exploring the meaning of some stories about Jesus, one child commented, "Each story has a secret message," which they are seeking to find. A number of the younger children are trying to apply these teachings to their own lives as this is what Jesus would want them to do. At present RE makes little contribution to children's understanding of values. There was a mixed response whether RE makes a contribution to their lives and thinking, younger children think it influences their actions, but older children are not sure, although children indicate that through discussions their ideas are changing and they perceive its relevance.

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

The school has a dedicated, enthusiastic leadership team committed to creating a vibrant church school. They have a clear vision for the church school and how it impacts on children. They have high expectations for all children to fulfil their potential both academic as well as with all of their gifts. This is achieved in and through a Christian community being part of a caring family, where each person is important and special to God. As such they are nurtured on their learning journey of life, where Christian values, teaching and worship are valued and explored. The school's Christian distinctiveness is seen in the care for children, whether this is for particular groups who are carefully monitored or activities created to match their needs. There are a number of examples where these are having a real impact on well being and progress. Teachers complete a weekly evaluation regarding children's needs which the leadership review and take actions. Parents celebrate the rich family atmosphere and the quality of relationships enjoyed. Standards at the school are steadily rising, where the needs of individual children are well met which has led to enhanced progress. There is evidence of particular areas of strength, notably in literacy, whilst other areas have been identified for development which are rigorously addressed. Governors support the work to raise standards and monitor these closely. Their strategic vision has been to oversee the move to become part of the diocese's Multi Academy Trust (MAT) to preserve the Christian distinctiveness, which has now been accomplished. This has meant that the monitoring and evaluation of being a church school has not been fully completed. There have been no evaluations of the impact of Christian distinctiveness or the values, worship, spirituality or other aspects. Therefore, development plans are not in place to raise the impact further. Relationships with the diocese are good and improving through the MAT, as well as drawing upon expertise through professional development opportunities, notably in RE. The church makes a full contribution to the life of the school, particularly in worship as well as governance at different levels. Strong links are established with local churches who show case work and achievements. Valuable contributions are made to village life, Remembrance day being one that stands out. Many parents commute some distance to bring children to the school, valuing the work it does. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.