

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Romsey Abbey Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School.

Church Lane, Romsey, Hampshire SO51 8EP

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Winchester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Hampshire
Name of multi-academy trust / federation [delete as appropriate]	N/A
Date of inspection	5 December 2016
Date of last inspection	29 November 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	116368
Headteacher	Julie-Anne Palfrey
Inspector's name and number	Lorraine Pugh 819

School context

Romsey Abbey Church of England Voluntary Aided primary school is situated next to Romsey Abbey in the town of Romsey. It has 204 children on roll who are taught in six classes. Most children are of White British heritage with approximately 14% from other ethnic groups. The Pupil Premium Grant for disadvantage is received for 20% of children, most being in the upper part of the school. 17% of children receive extra support for special educational needs. In 2013 the school was judged to be Good by Ofsted. The current headteacher, who was the previous Deputy Headteacher, was appointed in April 2016. A new Deputy Headteacher has recently joined the school. There has been a significant turnover of staff within the past 3 years and the school also has a new Chair of Governors.

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

- The Christian ethos of the school, in which all children are highly valued, is leading to significant improvements to standards of personal development, academic achievement and well being.
- The school has established strong links between the Christian values, Religious Education (RE) and Worship, each having Jesus and the Bible as a central focus.
- The strong commitment and vision of the Headteacher and her governors in ensuring that the school continues to develop as a distinctively Christian school.

Areas to improve

- School leaders and governors need formalised procedures to support their monitoring role in evaluating the impact of the school's work as a distinctively Christian school.
- The school needs to develop a shared understanding of spirituality so all school staff are able to effectively support the children's spiritual development across the whole curriculum, including planned spiritual encounters.
- Increasing the number of opportunities for children to have first hand faith experiences will allow them to increase their knowledge of different faiths, including their similarities and differences from Christianity.
- Allow the children to be more involved in the leadership, planning and evaluation of worship so they increase their ownership of this special time in the school day.

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

Romsey Abbey primary school is a thriving Christian community where children value their school, friends and teachers. The strong commitment of the new headteacher is clearly evident and an instrumental feature in the school's continuing development as a Christian school. The core Christian values of love, trust and forgiveness are explicitly taught and referred to often during the school day, impacting positively on the children's academic, spiritual and moral development. Increased monitoring from the school's leadership has led to children achieving closer to and above national academic standards for attainment and progress. The school's mission statement, 'We are walking in the footsteps of Jesus with love trust and forgiveness', is included on school documentation and this further establishes the school's position as a Christian school where every child is seen as unique in the eyes of God. Children with special educational needs are highly valued and supported by the school's Christian community. This is evidenced by the current building project, which will allow children with mobility needs to continue their education in the school. Behaviour, in and outside of lessons, is exemplary, with children clearly showing respect and kindness to each other. One child, explaining their understanding of the values stated, 'They help us to be friends, so we know how to act and behave towards each other.' Children gain an understanding of their role in the local and wider community through their charity activities and this allows them to witness the difference that helping others can make. This has included their support for an ex pupil who is helping to build a school in Africa and child initiated charity activities, such as their request to support the local food-bank. The school's close proximity to Romsey Abbey is fully utilised for lessons and worship. Children describe the Abbey as, 'Their Abbey' and this close link continues, even when they have left the school with past pupils still making regular visits. The excellent relationships throughout the school enable staff and pupils to work closely together and this results in outstanding pastoral care. Parents speak very highly of the school's care, compassion and perseverance when dealing with particularly challenging situations, and for this they are extremely grateful. They are keen to describe the importance of the school's Christian ethos and its welcoming, inclusive atmosphere. The strength of the Christian bond between the Abbey and school is shown in the Abbey's sensitive support for particular needs within the school. Children can talk about other religions, demonstrating a growing knowledge and respect for faiths, however, increased first hand experiences are needed to strengthen this understanding. Pupils are challenged in RE and encouraged to consider deeper questions such as, 'Is it possible to share something or someone you love?' This is successfully developing an understanding that there can sometimes be many answers to a question.

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

Collective Worship is central to the life of the school and children talk confidently about its themes, which are often linked to the core Christian values of love, trust and forgiveness. Children listen attentively and participate with enthusiasm, especially when singing or sharing their individual prayers. A special Eucharist service, held in Romsey Abbey, starts each academic year and a Prayer Day, led by the school's vicar, follows this. This successfully reminds the children of the Lord's Prayer and what it means. Children refer enthusiastically to the 'teaspoon prayer' structure they use to say thank you, sorry and please. A very well attended lunchtime club, led by a clergy member, allows children to explore faith at a deeper level and this has led to some children choosing to be baptised or preparing for future confirmation. The Vicar plays an active role in the leading of worship and he is also involved in its planning and organisation throughout the Christian year. A wide range of visitors lead worship and this allows the children to have rich experiences of worship styles. During the year children visit the Abbey for a wide range of services and workshops. These activities are carefully planned to impact on the children's understanding. For example, children making poppies to remember local people who lost lives in war. Worship focuses around the work of Jesus and his central position within Christianity and children talk confidently about familiar Bible stories and the lessons within them. One child described the trust in God that was shown by David when he had to face Goliath. Anglican traditions are evident with pupils understanding their meaning, such as why we light the candle and the colours of the altar cloths. Children have an understanding of the Trinity at an age appropriate level with adults making sure that language is simple and within their understanding. Children like being involved in leading worship and they would like an increased role in its planning and evaluation. They say that they are lucky to have the Abbey as their special church and they enjoy their regular visits for lessons and services, especially when they have an active role. Personal prayer and reflection are used in worship and children respond well to this quiet time with their own thoughts. Children are able to explain how they use prayer in their own lives and how this supports them. One child explained that you can pray anywhere and that, 'God knows you are there and hears you'. Music and art contribute strongly to the children's spiritual development and plans are in place for a spiritual garden for prayer and reflection. Establishing a shared understanding of spirituality to support planned opportunities is now necessary with so many new adults having recently joined the school. The Memorial Garden offers a place for quiet reflection supporting children and families through bereavement. Each classroom has a sacred space, providing a focus for the class worship and children are keen to explain the ways in which they use it.

The effectiveness of religious education is good.

Standards of teaching and learning in RE are good. This is shown by the work in children's books and through discussions. Lessons are well planned, providing appropriate challenge according to the ages of the children. Teachers demonstrate a good understanding of their subject and their questioning is successful in encouraging deeper thinking around the topics studied. For example, the older children were challenged to design an Advent calendar where each door revealed something good in the world. Discussions displayed deep thought and respectful debate as children considered the merits for each door's gift. Written work shows evidence of a balance between 'learning about religion' and 'learning from religion'. Children are actively engaged in lessons when working within the class, with each other or independently. They say they enjoy RE and this is allowing them to develop a good understanding of the Christian faith and other faiths. Children are keen to share the RE experiences they have particularly enjoyed, for example, when a teacher brought a Torah Scroll into school for their study on Judaism. They explained how important it is to respect the Torah Scroll saying, 'You must wear gloves and use a pointer so you do not touch it.' This illustrates the children's understanding that each religious faith is very important to those people who follow it. RE links strongly to collective worship, reinforcing the school's Christian values. Children are able to link these values to Biblical references and stories. For example, children are able to explain how the story of the Good Samaritan shows the value of love. The subject leader has recently introduced the new 'Understanding Christianity' RE materials, to work alongside the existing Hampshire agreed syllabus. These materials are supporting teachers in providing a consistent and challenging curriculum. The subject leader monitors the impact of the RE teaching by visiting lessons and assessing children's work. This information informs future planning. Governors have undertaken RE learning walks as part of their monitoring role and their findings are incorporated into the RE development plans. The RE leader has attended professional training provided by the Diocese and local authority. This training has supported the school's leaders in accurately identifying priorities for the development of RE learning throughout the school.

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

The Headteacher has a clear and passionate Christian vision for the school and she is well supported by the clergy and governors. Since the last inspection there has been significant changeover of staff, however, the school's present leaders have a very accurate view of the school's improvement needs. Since joining the school in April 2016 the headteacher has brought about rapid improvement, with the full support of her governors and staff. This has maintained a vibrant, caring school where all individuals are valued. Development points from the last SIAS inspection have been successfully addressed with established RE assessment systems and strong connections being made to the school's Christian values. Children are at the centre of all decisions with the emphasis on their academic and emotional development. Strengthened links with the Diocese are ensuring that staff and governors benefit from personal, professional and spiritual development. Leaders within the school monitor the planning of lessons to ensure that RE and Collective worship impact on the Christian development of the pupils and link with the core Christian values of the school. This has been strengthened through their active involvement with the 'Understanding Christianity' materials and their use of the Hampshire agreed RE scheme of work. The governors are well led and they have an understanding of their role in developing the school's Christian ethos and what it means to be a Christian school. They also have a clear vision for the school's Christian development and the actions needed to fulfil this. Governor monitoring contributes to the school's effectiveness as a Church school, however, improvements to how this is organised are necessary. Agreed formal systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work need to be established. Recent evaluation records show that this is starting to happen with systems now needing to embed. The school greatly values and benefits from its close partnership with Romsey Abbey. The vicar is a regular visitor and very active member of the governing body and parents say that they really appreciate the Abbey's approachability and support. They say that the school provides a gentle and kind environment in which their children are allowed to develop and learn from their mistakes with the school's ambition for each child clearly evident. Parents say that recent changes to communications have been appreciated with increased information regarding Abbey events and a prayer included in each newsletter. Statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are met.