



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

<b>Ridgewell Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary</b>	Church Lane, Ridgewell CO9 4SA
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Diocese/Methodist District</b>	<b>Chelmsford</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Good
Local authority	Essex
Date/s of inspection	13 October 2016
Date of last inspection	November 2011
School's unique reference number	115142
Executive Headteacher	Linda Buchanan
Inspector's name and number	Graham Lancaster 713

### School context

The school is smaller than average with four mixed aged classes for its 91 pupils. Almost all of the pupils are of White British heritage. The percentages identified as having special education needs and those from disadvantaged backgrounds are below the national average. The headteacher left the school in July 2016. The school is currently led by an executive headteacher, who also has responsibility for another school locally. Two experienced Ridgewell teachers are sharing the role of head of school.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ridgewell primary school as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- The partnership of the current school and church leaders is strong. This provides a strong Christian foundation on which to build future improvements.
- Pupils respond with enthusiasm and questioning minds to strengths within the teaching of religious education (RE).

### Areas to improve

- To develop the effectiveness of assessment in RE so that teachers can ensure lessons are pitched to meet the needs of all pupils.
- To engage all stakeholders, and particularly the pupils, in the evaluation, planning and leadership of collective worship.
- To develop a shared understanding of spirituality through increasing the range of opportunities available for prayer and reflection.
- To extend the scope for delegated responsibility of the leadership of RE and collective worship by capitalising on existing strengths within the staff team and providing targeted training and support.

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

Ridgewell primary school has a deeply rooted Christian ethos which underpins its life and work. It is clearly recognised and appreciated by all members of the community. As an expression of its Christian love Ridgewell is an inclusive school. New pupils from all backgrounds are warmly welcomed into the community. Attainment in mathematics and English is high, but more able pupils are not consistently sufficiently challenged. Where additional

needs are identified every effort is made to provide appropriate support and these pupils make good overall progress. Pupils want to be in school resulting in attendance which is above the national average and there have been no permanent exclusions.

The core Christian value of love, underpinned by values of trust, respect and forgiveness are evident throughout the school. Pupils and adults readily express their understanding of their impact on school life. Pupils know the biblical foundation of the values linking them explicitly with the teachings of Jesus. The values actively contribute to the exemplary behaviour of pupils and to the positive and supportive relationships between all members of the community. One parent reflected on the 'remarkable' way that her daughter in the reception class is already talking about forgiveness and caring. Another described the values as 'integral to the ethos of the school'. The Pupil Council contributes to identifying and planning the school's charitable giving. Pupils have a growing understanding and respect for other faith communities through the RE curriculum and collective worship. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. Opportunities to develop their understanding of spirituality are provided, particularly through worship and through outside learning, where pupils are given opportunity to reflect on the beauty and diversity of God's creation. One teacher described the importance of 'stillness in the rhythm of the day'. However, there are too few areas for personal reflection and prayer within the school, either within classrooms or in shared areas.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory**

Pupils, staff and parents recognise the importance of collective worship in contributing to the school's Christian foundation. Anglican practices are well established within collective worship gatherings. This includes opening and closing sentences with response and lighting a candle to support personal reflection and prayer. Worship is distinctively Christian. Through suitable readings from scripture pupils are supported in developing an appropriate understanding of the importance and significance of the Bible and Jesus for Christians. Some opportunities are created in worship to explore the distinctively Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. However, pupils' appreciation of belief in the Trinity is under-developed. Pupils engage well in worship, they sing very well and are keen to participate and respond to questions with enthusiasm. The worship programme in school is extended by opportunities to worship in the church to which parents are invited. Parents express their particular appreciation at the warmth of welcome they receive as a family during these worship times. Pupils say that they can really feel that God and Jesus are there on these occasions. When asked to identify his favourite place in school one pupil replied 'the church, to sing in'. Opportunities for reflection and prayer are provided within worship which has an impact on pupils' spirituality.

All teaching staff and a range of visitors, including the local vicar, lead worship. This variety is a strength. However, there is currently no cohesive planning of worship which reduces its impact. Pupils contribute to worship through their prayers and enthusiastic interaction, but are not effectively engaged in the planning or leadership of worship. The school has rightly identified the need for a systematic approach to engage all stakeholders and particularly governors in the evaluation and development of collective worship. The planning and evaluation of worship is therefore not rigorous enough.

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

There are significant strengths within the teaching team at Ridgewell primary school. Teachers employ a range of very creative approaches when planning for RE, making effective use of appropriate links with other curriculum areas. This contributes to a high level of engagement and response from pupils. They particularly enjoy class discussions, at times raising questions which are quite challenging for staff to answer. The principle of openness and acceptance within RE is well established. One pupil described his fascination as he compared Buddhist, Muslim and Christian accounts of creation. A two year rolling programme for RE has been established and overall coverage is good. Achievement in RE appears to be broadly in line with national expectations. However, recorded evidence in pupil workbooks is limited. More able pupils are not consistently set challenging enough tasks to ensure they make good progress.

Assessment and marking in RE is not sufficiently focused and secure to provide a clear picture of pupil attainment and progress across the school. Consequently, it does not help pupils to improve their learning in RE. Leaders recognise this and there are firm plans in place to address it. There is a recent improvement in the way in which the senior school leadership team monitors and evaluates teaching and learning in RE. However, the impact is currently limited. The RE subject leader is aware of current developments in the teaching of RE and has accurately identified

priorities for improvement. Her plans are yet to be fully developed in collaboration with staff.

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

Senior staff and church leaders are working closely together to ensure that recent changes in the senior leadership of the school are managed well. The partnership with the church ensured that the distinctively Christian character was maintained through a period of change and uncertainty. Whilst actively drawing on support from the diocese and local authority church leaders have been instrumental in establishing an effective governing body. There is now a shared vision for Ridgewell as a church school. Overall attainment against national measures is high and the majority of pupils make good progress from their various starting points. Arrangements for RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements and both areas contribute well to the school's underlying Christian ethos. Leaders have established strong links with the local community and local schools work in close partnerships.

The recently formed senior leadership team of executive headteacher and heads of school contains a wealth of experience and commitment to the school. This means that they are securing rapid improvements where these are most required. Governors recognise that these are 'relatively early days' in this new structure and consequently evidence of impact is minimal. Self-evaluation as a church school has taken place in the past but this was not sufficiently focused and neither did it involve enough people and groups across the school community. Current leaders have an accurate picture of their school and what is required to strengthen its Christian effectiveness and distinctiveness. Although some support and training has taken place the impact has been limited. The executive headteacher is highly skilled in assessing the strengths and areas for improvement within teaching and learning and is an experienced church school leader which she is applying effectively to move forward developments. The heads of school know their school very well and have much to offer. The current arrangements for the leadership of RE and collective worship limits the capacity of the school to secure future progress. However, both areas are deliberately given prominence by the leadership of the school and are used to reinforce the clear commitment to Christian values. High standards of behaviour, warmth in relationships, sensitivity in ensuring all children are included and the celebration of success are all expected by the leadership team and are firmly established.

SIAMS report (October 2016) Ridgewell CE (VA) Primary School, Church Lane, Ridgewell, Essex, CO9 4SA