

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Epping Upland Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	
Carters Lane, Epping Green, Epping, Essex, CM16 6QJ	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Chelmsford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Essex
Name of multi-academy trust	Epping Forest School's Partnership Trust
Date of inspection	9 May 2018
Date of last inspection	March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled - I45601
Headteacher	Sarah Hurwood
Inspector's name and number	Iain Gunn 727

School context

Epping Upland is a smaller than averaged sized primary school. The school became part of the Epping Forest Schools Partnership Trust in April this year. The school was graded as good by OFSTED in October 2017. The school has below the national average of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. The headteacher was in post at the time of the previous denominational inspection. The majority of the pupils are White British and the proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is below national average. The number of pupils with an education health care plan is also below the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Epping Upland as a Church of England school are good

- The meaningful relationship with the local church adds to the sense of community, and supports pupils' spiritual development very well.
- Pupils are encouraged to ask questions about religion and this leads to a deeper understanding of their own faith and that of others.
- The focus on developing the whole child, spiritually, morally, socially and culturally is very strong.

Areas to improve

- Formalise a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating the school's distinctive Christian character in order that it drives forwards developments as a church school.
- Increase pupil leadership and involvement in acts of worship, so that they have more ownership of the daily worship.
- Through worship develop pupils' understanding of a greater range of Christian festivals such as Pentecost, Ascension Day and Trinity Sunday so that they have a more in depth appreciation of the pattern of the Christian year.

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

Epping Upland School has a distinctly Christian ethos that is based around developing the whole child through a set

of four core Christian values which are: perseverance, trust, compassion and responsibility. Pupils can link these values to the Bible as well as applying them to their lives. One pupil explained that in Year 5 all the pupils take a recognised first aid certificate, which they then use in school to help others. The pupil linked this action to the parable of the Good Samaritan and how he helped people. As an expression of its Christian care and concern for pupils, a wellbeing mentor is employed to ensure that the pupils feel safe and loved. Pupils and parents rightly recognise the positive impact that this has. Attainment and progress, by the time the pupils leave the school are above the national average. However, attendance remains stubbornly just below the national average despite the children enjoying school and the school having a number of appropriate measures in place to improve this. The distinctive Christian character of the school is evident through displays in every room as well as in corridors and the hall. This was an issue identified for further improvement in the previous denominational inspection report which has been well addressed.

The pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) is very good. A carefully thought-out curriculum means that pupils enjoy learning and behaviour is excellent. The varied curriculum and extra-curricular provision successfully helps to develop the pupil's spirituality. An example of this is the daily mile walk that takes place. The route is carefully planned to provide opportunities to appreciate the beauty of nature and thus provide reflection, awe and wonder. A breadth of clubs run in school which cater well for a range of interests and abilities and develop the children both socially, culturally and academically. Pupils work hard in school raising money for a number of charities, both locally and further afield. One pupil said 'one of our values is compassion and we show this by helping others'. Such activities support pupils' moral development and sense of fairness and right and wrong well.

Religious education (RE) contributes to the SMSC development of the pupils very well. For example, Year 6 pupils are able to link key messages from the parables of Jesus to their own lives talking about acceptance and difference. They are able to take part in sensitive discussions in RE because they feel safe to express their views respectfully. RE successfully provides good opportunities for pupils to explore 'deep questions' such as, 'Death isn't a full stop but a semi-colon'. Pupils' responses to such questions show a level of maturity above those expected from primary school pupils. Through RE pupils enhance their appreciation of the school's Christian values and are able to link them with biblical stories such as that of Noah and the Flood, linking it with perseverance and trust. RE, delivered in line with the Locally Agreed Syllabus, also teaches the pupils about other faiths and life stances so that pupils have a good knowledge of these. Pupils recognise an understanding of difference and diversity as important to the school's Christian ethos with one saying, 'We need to learn about others' beliefs as we are all different and need to understand each other.'

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Engaging and inspiring worship, is central to the way that the pupils learn about the school's core Christian values. For example, the worship observed was based around perseverance and well linked to Jesus' teaching with reflection on its impact on community and individual life today. Thus worship greatly influences pupils' attitudes to each other as well as their general behaviour around school. Worship is well planned and based around biblical teachings. Pupils enjoy it and speak enthusiastically about the vicar's fun worship. Worship follows Anglican practices and is based around praise and thanks giving to God. This provides a flexible structure for worship to take place. The vicar leads worship regularly and acts as a positive role model for staff who have learned to lead worship following his lead. Thus there is a consistency to the quality of worship which is beneficial to both staff and pupils. Within the structure there is variety, with a range of people leading worship. This variety helps the pupils to engage well and to see faith from other viewpoints.

The distance the school is from the church makes it hard to use regularly. However, cleverly planned events and close cooperation with the church mean that meaningful services happen. This use of the church develops the pupils and their parents spirituality with one parent describing the 'magical', and 'spine tingling' candle lit carol service that happens in the evening around Christmas time. Pupils can describe in detail some key events and practices in the Christian calendar particularly around the Christmas and Easter celebrations. However, their understanding and appreciation of other festivals such as Pentecost, Ascension Day and Trinity Sunday are less well developed. Pupils understand the purpose of prayer and describe when and how they pray together in school, and for some of them personally at other times. One pupil said, 'praying to God made her feel safe and that someone is listening to her'. Reflection time is built into worship so that pupils can think about how they can apply the message in the worship to their lives. There is also a beautiful illuminated tree that pupils can go to, in order to reflect and this helps develop their spiritual wellbeing. Pupils plan and lead worship in key services in church. Their role in leading worship within school is not as developed.

Monitoring of worship by staff and governors does happen. However, this is not regular or rigorous enough to impact positively on ongoing developments and improvements to worship.

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

A strong sense of trust exists between the school and the church. The school commented that the vicar gives them the security to take risks as, 'he is always there to answer our questions'. Improvements in the school have also come about through a good working relationship with the Diocese Education Advisor. An example of this is the school's more in depth understanding of spiritual development which has led to the construction of the reflective area. This was identified as an issue in the previous denominational inspection report which has been successfully addressed. Similarly, the school's distinctive Christian character is now evident through displays in every room as well as in corridors and the hall. Also the provision of worship has improved through working alongside the diocesan staff, governors and the vicar. These were issues identified for further improvement which have been well addressed.

Recognising its Christian foundation parents speak very highly of the school's inclusive nature and recognise how it develops the whole child. Openness and clear communication enhances the relationship between parents and staff. Parents recognise how the school's Christian values impact on their children both in school and at home. As part of its Christian and inclusive ethos the school ensures that parents are welcome with the headteacher explaining that it is there to serve both pupils and parents.

Appropriate time is given to develop the staff in their roles as leaders in a church school. An example of this can be seen in improvements within the RE curriculum through the quality of questions now asked during lessons.

Governors regularly visit the school, and an impact of these visits has been in the introduction of age appropriate bibles across the school.

The school has identified the priorities that they need to take them forward resulting in an accurate development plan that has areas identified to develop Epping Upland as a church school. However, a detailed evaluation and monitoring system is not in place to track improvements. Having very recently become part of a multi-academy trust there is an appropriate plan in place to develop practice within the trust in a mutually beneficial way.

SIAMS report May 2018 Epping Upland CE VC Primary School, Epping Green, Essex, CM16 6QJ