

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Lawford Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School	
Long Road, Lawford, Manningtree, Essex, CO11 2EF	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Chelmsford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Essex
Date of inspection	28 September 2017
Date of last inspection	October 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided (VA) - 115297
Headteacher	Donna Wenden
Inspector's name and number	Caroline L'Estrange (784)

School context

Lawford Primary School is of average size. Currently there are 211 pupils on roll. The percentage of pupils for whom the school receives extra funding due to social disadvantage is well below the national average. The vast majority of pupils are White British. The school has very close links with the local parish, St Mary's, Lawford.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Lawford (VA) Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The mutual and substantial link enjoyed with St Mary the Virgin Church, Lawford, embodying shared Christian values, and how this link is embraced by everyone, is a key strength of the life and work of the school.
- The priority and value placed on the provision of religious education within the school, guided by clear expectations, impacts positively on pupils' attainment and progress.
- The work of senior leaders in ensuring the school's continued development as a distinctive church school effectively ensures that all members of the school community can both formally and informally feed into the school's effective self-evaluation process. This leads to a shared understanding and consistency of practice.

Areas to improve

- To develop the pupils' understanding of key Christian concepts, such as that of the Trinity so that they are able to express understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit with both confidence and application.

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

Lawford has high aspirations for all pupils, founded on its church school status and values embodied in everything they do. Stakeholders see the Christian character as being 'the golden thread that pulls everything together'. The school's Christian ethos is firmly embedded through its life and work. Parents value the way that the church school status is, for example, clearly expressed and shared at new intake meetings. This indicates how its status underpins the development priorities of the school and how every child is valued for who they are. Parents speak highly of the high quality of relationships and consistent expectations. They rightly recognise that staff model these based on the school's Christian character. The high quality of relationships and pupils' excellent behaviour is recognised and affirmed. It is rooted in a high level of care and loving support. High expectations are clear in all aspects of school life and this has a deep influence on pupils' confidence and excellent attitudes to learning, very good progress and on their well-being as individuals. Consequently, attendance is good. Parents share how 'children come home talking about God in a natural way,' and that, 'through school they know they can talk to God and share their worries and fears'. There is a high level of challenge and support for all pupils, with a lived-out vision of developing the whole child, both academically and personally. The most recent end of key stage assessments show that standards are above both local and national data across the school. Pupils enjoy talking about their school, saying that it is a welcoming, safe place where they are helped to solve any type of problems straight away. Effective planning means that religious education (RE) contributes significantly to pupils' understanding of world faiths and to their spiritual and moral development. RE successfully supports pupils' understanding of difference and diversity and contributes very well to the school's ethos and values. Pupils have a strong sense of 'caritas' (charity as an expression of faith in God), saying 'we help people in need ... not just because it is a nice thing to do, but it will help their lives to be the best it can be'. Excellent provision of opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is deeply embedded in both the life and curriculum provision of the school. Parents speak highly of opportunities provided for the pupils to develop their spirituality including through 'Prayer Spaces'. These opportunities provide times for reflection and contemplation, with, for example, a pupil asking, 'am I on the right path?' In response to the question 'If you could ask God one question what would it be?' a pupil responded, 'Will God ever fade away if people stop believing in him?' Pupils know that forgiveness is important, with one pupil saying, 'I gave them a second chance'. Pupils are confident to ask any questions at all, secure in the knowledge that they will be listened to and accepted, 'we know we matter'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is evidently a central part of the daily life of the school for all stakeholders. One pupil said 'I cannot imagine school life without it'. Another pupil said, 'it is our time to come together, to reflect and to pray'. Worship is led by staff, the incumbent and pupils. Pupils enjoy worship and engage closely with it. A recent sequence of input on 'salvation' was commented on as being very helpful. Pupils felt strongly that it was important that they were given time to reflect so that they could 'think and make it our own'. The Church's year and the school's values provide the focus for worship. Bible input is used to support the development of the school's values, making appropriate links to Jesus' life and ministry. This leads to a very good understanding of the importance of the Bible for Christians and of the significance of Jesus for his followers. Worship contributes highly to helping pupils explore Christian values as well as moral and social issues. Pupils said that the focus on the school's values helps them to be better people and to make good choices in their life. Prayer is evidently important in the life of the school and for many individuals. Pupils recognise importance of their class books which contain prayers written by them and their prayer tables as 'a place for peace'. One pupil said that prayer is important because 'we are talking to God in our own way, even in the silence'. Another added 'he talks back and helps us'. Anglican traditions are used throughout worship. Appropriate responses, religious images, lit candles and a display indicating the season of the Church's year are used as focal points. The pupils confidently articulate that the candle is to represent that Jesus is the light of the world. Pupils also place value on both the special candles for each of their school values and the opportunities for shared and personal reflection given during worship. Pupils in Key Stage 2 plan their own weekly classroom worship which supports their growing understanding and appreciation of worship very well. The key elements of gathering together, engaging with the focus, responding to it and then being sent out in order to 'live the message' are well used across the worship programme. Parents speak highly of this opportunity, sharing the eagerness with which the pupils engage in this responsibility. This supports pupils' awareness of Anglican practice excellently. All pupils are engaged in worship through singing, focussed attention and an absolute desire to be involved. Participation by the pupils is actively encouraged and valued, with Key Stage 2 pupils sharing their own psalms and prayers and Foundation Stage children reciting stories, linked to the theme. Parents value and appreciate the opportunities provided to attend worship at the school and at the parish church. Pupils are involved in monitoring and evaluating the worship programme, with their request for worship to be led by a range of teachers being implemented into the provision for worship. This enhances the range and style of worship within the school, engaging all pupils and adults appropriately.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE is delivered with excitement and enjoyment and everyone has a clear understanding of how it is a key part of pupils' whole development. Pupils learn exceptionally well because teaching is consistently good with a high proportion being outstanding. The RE curriculum draws on a range of creative and exciting approaches which engage pupils well both personally and academically. As a result, pupils enjoy RE. Enquiry learning is a key feature of the RE provision, with the children being challenged with deep questioning. This means that all children are confident, thoughtful and mature in their discussions. Teachers successfully ensure that all pupils, whatever their ability, are fully able to access the RE curriculum and that there are no barriers to deep learning in this subject area. Marking is generally linked to objectives and to the next steps in learning, although this is not consistent throughout the whole school. Books are scrutinised regularly by senior leaders, with effective feedback given to actively inform future teaching and learning opportunities. The effective subject leaders inspires colleagues to work well together. Thorough termly tracking and assessment is carried out in RE as in literacy and numeracy as the other core subjects. Pupils achieve as well in RE as they do in these other core subjects, with the most recent assessments showing that standards are above national expectations for RE. Assessment is carried out in a meaningful and purposeful manner to ensure it has an impact on teaching and learning throughout the school. There is a clear set of non-negotiables for the teaching of RE which give clear consistency across the school. The school has an able, gifted and talented register specifically for RE, with focussed challenges being given, expecting deeper and wider thought processes in these pupils' learning. There are numerous examples of this age-appropriate and deep learning and questioning across the school. In the Foundation Stage when looking at God's creation, pupils can use classroom resources to match elements of the story with the correct day. Time is given to experience God's creation in the outside environment, with pupils demonstrating awe and wonder about all they could find. In Year 6, when looking at a psalm, pupils can confidently discuss its meaning and relevance for them personally, explaining the messages in each verse. For example, one pupil identified that 'some verses are describing God and others are identifying what he has created for us'. Value and time is clearly given to exploring the Bible which supports excellently pupils' developing understanding of scripture. A pupil in Year 3 shared that 'the Bible is where you go to see how to lead your life and it will help you to pray'. A Year 4 pupil spoke with feeling about how 'God's love is so deep that he would give a pearl away for just one of us'.

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

Lawford is excellently led and managed with the school's mission statement and values at the forefront of every decision and relationship. The senior leaders readily articulate the school's vision rooted in Christian values. They ensure that these values impact on the lives of the pupils and the whole school community. The senior leaders have a deep passion for the school as a church school. The headteacher has a very open commitment to provide the best outcomes for all the pupils and their families in all aspects of school life, including their spiritual development. The focus on the value of respect is very apparent in the way in which pupils speak about all aspects of school life, with parents saying, 'my child says we must try to behave as Jesus would'. This is further demonstrated by the way pupils speak with consideration and respect for other people's faiths. The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents is excellent. The approachability and openness of the headteacher and her team are seen by parents as an expression of the school's inclusive Christian values. The parish has a deep commitment to the life and work of the school. The links with the parish church are a strong feature and core strength and provide mutual support for both communities. These includes, for example, displays of pupils' work at the church which reflect this. All stakeholders talk about the inter-twinned relationship and parents speak highly of the very visible presence of senior leaders, governors and the incumbent. The regular involvement of the incumbent means that the pupils know that they can talk to him about anything and that 'he teaches us how to be close to God'. The school's self-evaluation is highly effective. The senior leaders have a thorough understanding of the school's Christian distinctiveness and performance and how further progress can be made. The governors are involved with the self-evaluation and the school's development planning process and meet with staff to discuss progress. Relationships between stakeholders are strong, giving a clear and shared understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. For example, through thorough self-evaluation the need to broaden cultural development opportunities was identified. Consequently, the current school development plan has a clear focus on ensuring that opportunities are well taken across the school. There is a governor with responsibility for RE and worship, recognising the value placed on these fundamental aspects of school life. RE and worship meet statutory requirements and there is effective leadership of both areas. The school is committed to the professional development of staff. The school engages well with the Diocese, valuing the provided opportunities for professional development of all staff.