



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Pencombe Church of England Aided School

Pencombe
Bromyard
Herefordshire
HR7 4SH

Previous SIAS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Hereford

Local authority: Herefordshire

Date of inspection: 28 January 2016

Date of last inspection: 20 October 2010

School's unique reference number: 116907

Headteacher: Susie Bishop

Inspector's name and number: Karen Surrall 842

School context

Pencombe is a smaller than average rural primary school with 54 pupils on roll. The percentage of children with additional needs and those attracting the pupil premium is below the national average. There is a growing number of children with English as an additional language. Following the arrival of the current headteacher in September 2014 there have been significant changes to the staff and the leadership team. There was an interregnum until the appointment of the current incumbent in April 2015.

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

- The clear vision of the headteacher who is determined to develop the school's spiritual life so that learners are well equipped for the challenges they will face in their future lives.
- The school is good at meeting the academic and personal needs of its learners and the relationship between the school and its community is strong.
- Teaching of religious education (RE) is rapidly improving, providing memorable ways to address pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.

Areas to improve

- Condense the current list of over twenty Christian values so that there is a sharper focus on a few core Christian values.
- Ensure that collective worship is more often biblically based and centred on the person of Jesus, supported by rigorous monitoring and evaluation by governors.
- Deepen the school's spiritual life through the provision of reflection spaces both inside and out.

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

'We inspire to believe and achieve' is the schools recently reworked mission statement and this is readily understood by staff, pupils and learners. As a result, the headteacher's vision that 'when pupils leave the school they have a firm faith in God, themselves and each other to do the best that they possibly can' is well understood by most stakeholders. Children achieve well at Pencombe, being known well as individuals and supported appropriately where necessary. The school has chosen an array of Christian values, which are focused on month by month on a two year rolling programme. There are too many of these so that although the headteacher and staff are clear about the Christian foundation of these values, many pupils are not. There is no understanding within the community that these have been arrived at through consultation. This means that the impact of the school's effectiveness as a distinctly Christian school is not embedded fully. Creating a core set of fewer values will enable them to be focussed upon more regularly so that learners are able to see their foundation in the school's distinctive Christian character. The school takes a robust approach to embedding policies within its Christian character and the newly revised attendance policy now means that that attendance is better than the national average. The new behaviour policy makes explicit links between the school's Christian values and its expectations. As a result, children feel safe in school and are able to relate the value of the month to their own behaviour. Within the local community links are good and older people value the contribution children make to the annual cycle of services. An example of this is on Remembrance Day where pupils write and read poems, taking an active part in the service. This means that the school's Christian character and values are highly thought of by parents and in the wider community. The school's developing vision of spirituality, through the life cycle of a tree, which is shared by teachers and some of the older children, is not yet firmly rooted enough in the schools Christian character. Parents are enthusiastic about the school, attributing its Christian character to the children's eagerness for school and for learning. 'They all run into school, every day' remarked one parent. The highlighting of the value of the month on the weekly newsletter, together with a Bible verse is appreciated by them. 'It means that we can remind the children of what is expected at home and at school'. They see that the children are given experiences that enable them to be individuals so that they are able to achieve well. RE lessons are having an increasing impact on pupils' SMSC development and all pupils recognise its importance. They acknowledge that RE helps them to understand diversity and difference. As one child said 'you can't treat people differently, just because they have a different faith'. Learners have some understanding of Christianity as a multicultural worldwide faith but, due to the rural nature of the school, they do not have enough experience of Britain as a multicultural society. This is a school where leaders are determined that learners will achieve their very best, firmly rooted in its Christian character.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Wednesday Worship, led by the vicar in the church adjacent to the school, is at the heart of weekly worship at Pencombe. It is well attended by parents as well as other members of the community and has a strong focus on the church year and Anglican liturgy. This means that all pupils are very aware of the link between the church and the school. Collective worship is seen to be important to the life of the school and the recently reinstated worship table provides a focus during whole school worship times. Children are able to identify the candle as representing the Trinity but a lack of focus on the symbolism of the liturgical colours and the candle means that pupils are unable to explain these concepts in any depth. Collective worship is meticulously planned for throughout the week, with a clear link between the monthly value and each worship session. There are learning outcomes for each session, although monitoring and evaluating of these by staff is still in its infancy. Pupils have memorable moments within worship; passing a 'handshake of happiness' with the addition of glitter caused many gasps of wonder. However, the teaching about the current Christian value is not sufficiently rooted in the Bible or in the person of Jesus. As a result, although pupils can explain how worship supports their moral development, they have a limited understanding of how it can support their

spiritual development. Learners take part enthusiastically in worship, sharing ideas eagerly. They are not yet involved in the planning and leading of worship times, apart from the half termly services in the church that mark Christian festivals. Whilst governors sometimes attend and lead services, particularly during the interregnum last year, they are not sufficiently involved in monitoring and evaluating worship. Consequently, there is not enough analysis of the impact of collective worship on learners and on the wider community. Prayer is seen as important to the life of the school and is undertaken at key parts of the school day. This is limited to rote prayers which are not yet enabling learners to engage with prayer as a dynamic conversation with God, incorporating stillness, reflection, forgiveness or thanks. As a result, learners do not see prayer as important in their daily lives and there are not enough places for reflection embedded within the curriculum or environment. Staff carefully plan themes so that they are relevant to the children and help them to understand more about the world around them. From this the children are proud of their link with a child in Sri Lanka, seeing it as an important way that they can 'help other people who are less fortunate'. They not only raise money to support their foster child, they are also making gifts to send to her. The school meets its statutory duty for the holding of collective worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The school follows the Herefordshire Agreed Syllabus and is currently developing effective systems to monitor progress and attainment in RE. The headteacher and senior teacher have a strong vision for how RE can drive forward the spiritual life of the school. They have taken decisive steps in raising the profile of RE and it is now taught in the morning, alongside other core subjects. As a result of this, expectations are higher and standards have risen sharply, particularly for the older children. Standards of attainment for the large majority of pupils are now in line with national expectations. Governors are not yet informed as to the standards in RE and their monitoring and evaluating of the subject is not yet sufficient to bring about improvements across the whole school. There is a well-articulated understanding by leaders that it is necessary for standards in RE to match those in English. This results in excellent teaching for the older pupils which challenges and inspires them. Pupils speak eagerly about their RE lessons and are articulate in their questioning about their 'big question'. Artefacts and questions are skilfully used to broaden the learners' understanding of diverse faiths and cultures. Older learners are able to develop a range of skills including the ability to apply their ideas in a range of contexts. This is very evident in their RE books where there are regular examples showing the children working at length and depth, producing work of a very high standard. Leaders acknowledge that this is not yet the case across the school but have the insight and experience to drive this forward. Teaching across the school is good, the curriculum is well balanced with an appropriate focus on the teaching of Christianity. RE contributes well to the SMSC understanding of the pupils so that there are clear links between the current Christian value and the curriculum. The school has addressed the development point from the last inspection and meets the statutory requirements for the teaching of RE.

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

The headteacher's clear vision is a strength of the school; it is well articulated and based on distinctly Christian values. Governors are proud of the close relationship that the school has with the church and see the values espoused as grounded in the Christian message. One governor explained 'we show that by using the values they are part of God's purpose'. There is a good understanding by all leaders and stakeholders of the impact of the Christian values on the learners and on the life of the wider community. The governors have, under the leadership of the new headteacher, visited again many of the key policies of the school. These are now much more firmly rooted in the schools distinctive Christian character and as a result policies are much more effective. Learners' academic progress and achievement is good at Pencombe and this is attributed by all stakeholders to the way children are treated as individuals. Where progress stalls, robust measures are put in place so that by the time pupils leave Pencombe they

truly are the best they can be. Governors are very involved in the life of the school and very supportive of the work of the staff, ensuring it meets statutory requirements for RE and collective worship. They are yet to ensure that their role in holding the head and staff to account is embedded in monitoring. This means that self-evaluation is not yet robust enough to bring about rapid improvement or to ensure that the whole curriculum is informed by a distinctive Christian vision. The school's Christian values impacts on all aspects of the school's life, particularly the pupils' behaviour and their personal development and well-being where each one is seen as a child of God. They also inform planning of collective worship and are having an increasing contribution to pupils' SMSC development. Pupils have limited occasions for visiting other places of worship or larger conurbations and as a result staff have worked hard to ensure a good understanding of local, national and global issues through assemblies, visitors and links with other schools. The school takes its role as a church school very seriously and staff are able to access training that supports them well in their roles now and in the future. Parents work in close partnership with the school, exemplified by the newly built under 5's and reception classrooms. Links with the parish church, the diocese and local community are a strength of the school and as a result the children leave Pencombe with a real sense of personal worth, rooted in the school's vision of 'We inspire to believe and achieve'.

SIAMS report January 2016 Pencombe C of E (VA) Primary School HR7 4SH