

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Rowde Church of England Primary Academy

High Street, Devizes, SN10 2ND	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Salisbury
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good (as the predecessor school)
Date of academy conversion	1 January 2013
Name of academy trust	Rowde Academy Trust
Date of inspection	24 February 2017
Date of last inspection	2 February 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary converter academy 139163
Headteacher	Lorraine Colquhoun
Inspector's name and number	Jo Fageant 104

School context

Rowde is an average sized primary school in Rowde, Devizes. It became an academy in January 2013. Pupils come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The proportions with special educational needs, eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium grant or speaking English as an additional language are lower than national averages. The small number identified as having extreme emotional problems are supported through a therapeutic mentoring facility. In September the headteacher returned to school on a phased basis after an extended period of absence and in January a new deputy headteacher and a newly qualified class teacher took up their posts. Following a year without a vicar a new one will join the church in March.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Rowde Church of England Primary Academy as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The biblically inspired vision statement, 'A bright start for a bright future', is known by everyone and has a positive impact on behaviour, relationships and attitudes to learning.
- The commitment to and care for every individual, encapsulated in leaders' vision, is a powerful demonstration of the living out of Christian love which strives for the best outcomes for everyone.
- Christian stories and teachings are used beyond religious education (RE) to explore questions of meaning and purpose, richly supporting spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. The understanding of hope and love in particular, arising from the 'bright' vision, inspires generous charitable giving.
- Third point omitted

Areas to improve

- Building on pupils' enthusiasm, develop their understanding of worship, expressed in diverse forms, so they are able confidently to plan and lead worship in all the settings in which it occurs.
- Review documentation to ensure it communicates the rich Christian ethos which is lived out so passionately within the school.

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

This is a school in which the love of God for every individual is reflected through a consistent striving to ensure the best outcomes for everyone. Parents confirm that 'nothing is too much trouble' for staff in their work with pupils. The provision of breakfast, school uniform and lifts to school in cases of need is evidence of the lengths to which the school will go. Children know they are cared for and describe school as being like family, their home, a 'bright' place. They talk about Christian values which are explored in a variety of contexts helping 'us choose our own path, the right path,' enabling them to be different and learn from their mistakes, encouraging them to be better people. Their understanding that they should treat others as they would like to be treated results in excellent behaviour and relationships throughout the school. There are very few instances of bullying. The introduction of a relaxed, activity based start to each day is an initiative which has successfully reduced incidents of poor behaviour. Pupils like this change to the day saying it calms them and 'wakes us up for learning'. They recognise that teachers make learning fun and they like the opportunities they are given to choose what they will learn on pupil choice days. This provision, together with detailed tracking of progress that enables teachers to match tasks and resources to learners' abilities, leads to a great enthusiasm for learning. Pupils talk particularly enthusiastically about exploring big questions of meaning and purpose which are often addressed in RE and in daily PSHE sessions. Rather than following a pre-determined scheme for PSHE, these sessions are responsive to children's concerns and interests. They often draw on biblical material to explore spiritual and moral issues such as why and how we should help others and what people believe about God. Together with RE, these sessions promote a high degree of spiritual reflection as well as understanding of and respect for diversity and difference both within Christianity and between different religions. They also provide rich opportunities for social and cultural development and are an important element in the school's commitment to the broad learning needs of every individual.

A particular strength of this school is the way in which its Christian care for everyone has led to the establishment of a therapeutic mentoring room. A specialist trained teacher works with pupils in need of this facility. In addition, classroom assistants have been trained so there is emotional literacy support throughout the school. This provision is helping pupils manage emotional challenges which sometimes lead to inappropriate behaviour and, in addition, have a negative impact on their learning. This attention to the needs of every individual, arising from the Christian idea of hope for a bright future, results in high levels of attendance in this harmonious, hardworking and happy, caring community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Staff and pupils are animated about the value of collective worship as an important aspect of the life and culture of their church school. It affirms, celebrates and enriches its Christian ethos. Pupils like the way in which it brings the school together enhancing the sense of family which they value so highly. Beyond that, there is a sense of the school as a worshipping community because all teachers take part and contribute to the leadership of worship. Themes are developed with great care so they explore Christian values and the messages in biblical and secular stories in ways which provoke reflective thinking. Pupils make connections between the stories, values and their own lives. Even the youngest children recognise the transformational impact of stories that 'tell us what things to do right.' They particularly enjoy acting out stories when the 'Open the Book' team leads worship. Pupils recognise the relevance to them of themes and stories and the messages they convey have a discernible impact on relationships and behaviour. In response to themes which raise concerns and awareness, adults as well as pupils are inspired to social and charitable action. Most poignant was the openness with which information shared about reasons for the headteacher's absence gave rise to generous giving and fundraising for breast cancer research. Many, showing a good understanding of the value of prayer, confidently contribute prayers for inclusion in worship. Some of the oldest pupils particularly appreciate that the school's inclusive approach to worship does not force faith or belief on them but gives them important ideas to think about. Whilst they may not pray, they value time for quiet reflection in response to these ideas. These rich experiences develop a high level of spiritual and moral reflection.

Worship is enriched by the variety of leaders, groupings and locations, so pupils have an awareness of different elements of worship and ways in which it can be experienced. Responsive greetings, the lighting of a candle and services in the church mean pupils develop an understanding of Anglican traditions and practices. Even the youngest children can talk about how the candle with three wicks symbolises the Christian concept of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. A learning focus on the Trinity means everyone has an age appropriate understanding of this. Pupils enjoy planning and leading services for key Christian festivals. However, in the last year or so they have had fewer opportunities to take responsibility for worship than was the case before the headteacher's extended absence. Records, however, show their capability. The new leader of worship, with a passionate vision for its development, has plans to reintroduce pupils' leadership. Purposeful monitoring and evaluation of worship is in place and information about its impact is used to plan for future improvement.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious education benefits from exemplary leadership exercised with energy, enthusiasm, insight and vision for the future development of the subject within the school. The use of the 'Discovery' scheme of work for several years has established an enquiry focused approach to learning. Pupils enjoy the challenge of big questions that explore meaning and purpose and say they always learn new things in lessons. Through varied activities and the use of interesting resources they develop higher order thinking skills such as evaluation, interpretation and reflection from an early age. Teaching is consistently good and sometimes outstanding. Religious education has a high profile and its status as a core subject is demonstrated by the budget allocated to it, the training provided for staff and the monitoring undertaken by the subject leader and governors. It is also included in the monthly pupil progress meetings using a rigorous approach to assessment and identification of interventions needed to ensure all pupils make good progress. Carefully kept records show pupils attain standards in line with or above the expectations of the scheme of work. This means pupils learn well and gain a good understanding of Christianity and other religions and the impact they have on people's lives. They understand the value of this in preparing them to be good citizens of multi-cultural and multi-faith Britain. Applying their understanding of the Christian values they explore within the general life of the school to their learning in RE means they talk with respect about people who hold different beliefs from their own. The subject leader is aware that the RE curriculum and approaches to assessment both locally and nationally are in a state of transition. She, along with senior leaders and governors, has a good understanding of the decisions that need to be made in relation to planning and assessment. Following training, the new, innovative and challenging 'Understanding Christianity' resource is being piloted during the current term. Consideration is also being given to diocesan guidance on assessment. Introducing these initiatives gradually is enabling responses and concerns to be gathered in order to inform the next steps of development and the provision of appropriate training.

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

Leaders' clear and consistent vision is articulated in a variety of ways summarised in the strap line, 'A bright start for a bright future'. This is not an idea set in stone but one that is revisited and refreshed, making its Christian relevance accessible to all within the school community. It has origins in the Gospel teaching that Jesus is the light of the world. In its most recent version it is linked with a quotation from Psalm 119: 'Your word is a bright lamp to our feet and a bright light to my path.' It is a successful vision because it is applied to and discerned in all decision making and actions, though not yet explicitly stated in all policies. It captures the infectious enthusiasm, energy and tireless efforts of leaders, including governors, for the success and wellbeing of all members of the school community. The clear outworking of this is seen in one to one interviews by governors with every member of staff. These are seen as opportunities to encourage, thank and support, reflecting governors' commitment to finding ways for all 'to shine'. The vision is also seen in detailed observation, evaluation and tracking of pupils' academic progress as well as their emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Responses to the insights gained by these means, and from responses to parent and pupil questionnaires, have resulted in innovations from which other schools are learning. The most high-profile of these is the establishment, initially in response to a particular need, of the therapeutic mentoring room and the training provided for key staff to support its work. This enables the school to identify why pupils behave as they do and provide appropriate support rather than simply and only applying conventional sanctions. In this way leaders live out their belief that 'children can repair'. There is no hesitation on the part of leaders, teachers and pupils in identifying this care and attention as the living out of Christian love for every individual. This love is the sort that strives at all times, through emotional support, high quality teaching and the provision of rich opportunities, to achieve the best possible outcomes for every individual. Another example of using the inspiration of Christian love to prepare for a bright future is the successful changes made to the start of the day arising from an analysis of behaviour incidents. The exploration of questions of meaning and purpose in PSHE and RE lessons contributes richly to pupils' SMSC development. Acknowledging the significance of this, leaders assign great importance to RE and collective worship both of which meet statutory requirements. They ensure both areas are well led and resourced and training is provided for all staff involved. As a consequence, not only is highly effective practice seen in both areas but their leaders are constantly striving to bring about ongoing improvements. Senior leaders and governors communicate clearly their expectations of those working within this church school. This means everyone is clear about the responsibilities they have to uphold and support its Christian foundation and ethos. Leaders have successfully addressed all the areas identified for improvement in the last inspection report. However, self-evaluation documentation, and to a lesser extent the website, does not reflect sufficiently the impact of the rich Christian ethos of the school. The vision of being a bright influence for a bright outcome is seen beyond the school itself in relationships with parents, the church and the wider community. Parents feel well supported and have confidence that the school does all it can for every individual. In turn, Rowde Association of Friends and Teachers (RAFT) works hard in support of the school and has funded valuable resources. A strong relationship with the church has been sustained during the period in which there has been no vicar. The 'Open the Book' volunteers enrich worship in school and similarly pupils' contributions enrich some church services.

