

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Llangrove Church of England Academy	
Llangrove, Ross-on-Wye HR9 6EZ	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Hereford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	February 2013
Name of federation	Herefordshire Marches Federation of Academies
Date of inspection	6 November 2017
Date of last inspection	October 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary academy I39313
Executive headteachers Head of School	Peter Box & Paul Whitcombe Sarah Dean
Inspector's name and number	Lyn Field 151

School context

Llangrove is a stand-alone academy that is part of the Herefordshire Marches Federation of Academies, a federation of eight church and non-church schools. It is led by two executive headteachers and a head of school. This is a much smaller than average-sized school serving a scattered rural community. Numbers are rising and 60 pupils are taught in three classes. Almost all are White British and the proportions with special educational needs and for whom the school receives extra pupil premium funding are below average. There is a pre-school onsite but this is not managed by the governing body.

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

- Gifted and inspiring leaders have implemented an exciting curriculum that gives a high profile to matters of faith and religion. Pupils' excellent skills in reflection and reasoning means they derive great benefit from this curriculum in order to make sense of the world in which they live.
- Pupils are fully involved in their learning by raising spiritual, moral, social and cultural questions for investigation. The ownership this gives them motivates a thirst for learning and results in their high achievement.
- The school is genuinely energised by its Christian ethos and this is lived out in the relationships and conduct of staff and pupils.
- Governors have taken highly effective steps to enhance and sustain all that the school stands for as a church school by actively engaging members of the church and village communities in the life of the school.
- Wider partnerships enrich the experience of staff and pupils and extend the school's influence as a church school.

Areas to improve

- Improve the efficiency and cohesion of self-evaluation systems to better inform strategic planning as a church school.
- Provide regular opportunities for pupils to transfer their leadership skills to collective worship in order that they enjoy the same level of challenge, ownership and motivation they experience in other areas of school.
- Extend pupils' knowledge of religious vocabulary so that their confidence to articulate religious beliefs and concepts reflects the depth of their understanding.

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

Llangrove is a welcoming and inclusive school. Christian values have traditionally been a powerful presence in its daily life. The list is extensive but they are well-known to pupils and a Christian understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation is central to how excellent behaviour and relationships are managed. If any tensions arise, pupils show an impressively mature understanding of how individuals have different emotional needs and may struggle to see things from someone else's point of view. The biblical basis of the school's values is not explicitly documented but it is fully understood by pupils because it is consistently taught in religious education (RE) and collective worship. Pupils are familiar with many Bible stories and soon come to appreciate their meaning at a deeper level. Members of Oak class (Years 4-6) readily refer to stories such as the 'Good Samaritan' to discuss prejudice and respect. In a technological age where pupils have immediate access to the wider world, parents are grateful that these Christian values keep their children rooted in 'thinking of others before themselves'. They act as a cultural antidote to what pupils see in the media as a direct result of the quality of debate in lessons. RE exemplifies this and makes a major impact on the school's Christian character. The subject informs pupils' perceptions of religion in society by presenting the positive side of faith and pupils take these discussions home to continue with their parents. A typical comment from pupils was 'People often feel their religion is not heard in the right way and what we learn in school helps.' Pupils are therefore confident to talk about moral, ethical and cultural issues in considerable depth. Practical activities such as visiting an exhibition of nativity scenes in a local church, a faith trail of local chapels and talking to members of the village community about what it means to be a Christian in Britain today all help to expand pupils' appreciation of Christianity as a worldwide religion and of the diversity within the Church. Learning about other world faiths is popular with pupils and parents as they recognise their own community has limited diversity.

Pupils' spiritual development is outstanding in every class. All members of staff show an instinctive understanding of how to spot opportunities that arise to foster this, particularly in the outdoor environment. The grounds are widely used for 'Forest school' activities where circle time, reflection and prayers nurture pupils' care of the natural world. They develop these skills from an early age because Reception children pass around a 'holding cross' in circle time and choose to be silent or contribute to discussion. The introduction of 'Philosophy for Children' across the school is yet another example of how staff consistently absorb new initiatives into their practice so that pupils have a range of key learning skills at their disposal. Learning in this rich environment motivates pupils and enables them to achieve highly. Standards and progress both exceed national expectations and attendance is much better than average because pupils really enjoy school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils engage enthusiastically with worship because it is interactive and is a continuation of the reflective dialogue that is such a strong feature of RE lessons. Pupils are increasingly involved in writing material for special services in church and contributed some telling and perceptive ideas to the Harvest festival. The theme explored farming on different continents and one prayer read 'Help us make sure the hard work of farmers is not wasted by us being fussy.' Although pupils now have more ownership of worship, they are not taking the same level of responsibility on a daily basis that is seen in classroom life. This is a missed opportunity to build on their understanding of the distinctive nature of Christian worship and to challenge their spiritual thinking. All staff are confident and keen to lead worship but the deployment of their time means they do not all attend on a daily basis. However, the themes capture pupils' interest and ensure they understand how key Christian beliefs about Jesus Christ shape the pattern of worship. They understand the symbolism of the artefacts used in worship and can generally explain the significance of the three candles in representing the Trinity.

Pupils make regular use of reflection boards in classrooms. They primarily respond by writing prayers and this is helping them to understand the value of personal prayer and the distinction between this and the more formal prayers that they use in worship. One Year 6 pupil has responsibility for reviewing the prayer boards each week and constructing a prayer that reflects the concerns of everyone in the school. This role is taken very seriously and held in high regard by other pupils.

The emphasis on services in church continues to grow. Worship is now more open to parents, an issue addressed from the last inspection, and this has proved popular, with some saying that it has given them insight into faith. The inclusive and invitational nature of worship ensures that no-one feels compromised, whatever their religious position. Pupils are comfortable with being inside the church building and the graveyard because it is a space they regularly use for other curriculum activities. This is the result of initiatives such as Church Week, Christingle activities, Pebble club and weekly worship which are all led by governors and members of local churches. The impact of worship on the whole community has, therefore, increased since the last inspection but there is not an efficient system of gathering feedback to inform what the next steps might be. In a small school, identifying priorities is essential to make development manageable and this has wisely been included in the development plan for church schools in the federation.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The curriculum for RE has been totally integrated into planning for the school's creative curriculum and this opens up extensive opportunities for pupils to make connections with religious beliefs in all topics. The current topic of 'Space' has explored how the perception of the sky has evolved over the centuries. This has led pupils to consider how 'heaven' and the afterlife is now interpreted by people of different religious faiths. Pupils are fully involved in planning topics and in reflecting on their learning lesson by lesson. The use of the Traffic Light System means that assessment is meaningful for individual pupils and highlights where they need to focus their attention but the wider impact is that they are constantly raising bigger questions for investigation. Teachers are hugely skilled and flexible in responding to pupils' questions in the course of lessons and in planning the next stage of learning. Consequently, a vibrant culture of enquiry exists in every class. Discussion is open and trusting with pupils learning to disagree in a spirit of harmony. Teaching assistants are highly skilled and adopt the same approach as teachers so support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is completely consistent.

The quality of teaching is outstanding and inspiring. RE is monitored alongside other subjects but it is the quality of the daily dialogue between teachers that is impressive and the dynamics of these professional relationships result in pupils' excellent learning. The leader of RE is highly ambitious for the subject and has developed the confidence of all staff to engage in developing methodology. The induction of a newly qualified teacher has included approaches to teaching RE and the deputy head of school is implementing 'Philosophy for Children' as a strategy to develop pupils' higher order thinking skills. The early impact is already evident across the school.

Classes are of mixed ages and this is of huge benefit to older pupils in articulating their ideas and for younger ones through engaging in dialogue. Consequently, the majority of pupils exceed expectations and are confident and creative in expressing their ideas. They can articulate religious beliefs and concepts, especially about Christianity. However, this is sometimes a little slowed by their lack of familiarity with religious terminology because they have to search for the language to express some very complex ideas.

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

Established in 1875, the school's core purpose remains unchanged and, in spite of the changes to status, the longstanding vision statement still affirms its role as part of the church's presence in the community. A more contemporary statement enhances this, recognising that children are entitled to enjoy childhood, are valued for their individuality, culture and heritage in order to reach their full potential in the context of the Christian faith. Although both lack a specific theological basis in documentation, they give clear direction to leaders and this shapes the excellent education that pupils receive.

The head of school and deputy head of school provide dynamic leadership on a daily basis. They are leading by example in developing an inspiring curriculum that consistently gives a high profile to pupils' ability to reflect and reason on matters of faith and wellbeing. They work closely with governors to ensure the high profile of RE and collective worship meets statutory requirements and continues to evolve.

The partnership with the church is exceptionally strong and defines the school's Christian character. The determination and passion of governors in engaging local church and village communities in the life of the school has played a key role in ensuring its sustainability as a highly effective church school through the two years without a vicar. Similarly, the highly skilled executive headteachers have ensured that membership of the federation is of two-way benefit because staff and pupils gain experience that would not be otherwise available to them as a small school. Pupils flourish from their involvement in sporting events and dance and drama productions at the Courtyard Theatre. The executive headteachers keep a close eye on the quality of teaching and learning and this plays a significant part in the high standards achieved. Outside of this, they allow the school to pursue its own distinctive identity but recognise the value to other schools of its particular strengths. The head of school at Llangrove is leading on RE and literacy across the federation and the chair of governors is joining the board of directors with full voting rights in its strategic direction. Leapfrogs Pre-school Nursery shares the school's site and facilities and key staff also have a role in the school. Nursery children, therefore, experience the school's atmosphere and this leads to a seamless transition for them. Consequently, Llangrove has an influence on the education of young people beyond its own boundaries.

The school enjoys some benefits of its partnership with the diocese by accessing governor training and attending the Year 6 leavers' service in the cathedral. However, it is not taking full advantage of the expertise available from the diocesan education team in supporting curriculum initiatives, church school leadership and systems for strategic development. The school's self-evaluation lacks a tight and cohesive process that formally links with the business of governors to ensure that the excellent improvement work of the last few years remains sustainable. Parents were initially daunted by the federation but the Christian values remain unchanged. Pupils are still put first and have a rich experience both in and outside of lessons. This contributes to their high achievement and wellbeing. Parents believe the profoundly positive ethos here has transferred to other schools in the federation.