

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St. Matthews' s Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Windmill Lane Smethwick Birmingham B66 3LX

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Birmingham
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Sandwell
Date of inspection	29th June 2017
Date of last inspection	April 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary
Headteacher	Fiona Deakin
Inspector's name and number	Reverend Alison M. Morris 759

School context

St. Matthews' Church of England Aided Primary School is a very popular average sized primary school with 211 pupils and 35 pupils in the nursery. The school serves the community within Smethwick. 40% of pupils have EAL and 19 different languages indicate the faith diversity within school. The figure for pupils on the register for Pupil Premium is 34% and 12% of pupils receive SEND support. The school has very close links with the wider community and St. Matthew's church community. From September, the school will expand its school population to be accommodated over a split site.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Matthews as a Church of England school are outstanding

- An inspirational leadership team, whose Christian distinctive vision impacts successfully on the needs of all pupils within this multi-faith community served by the school.
- Exemplary pastoral care and intervention strategies that overcome barriers to learning and enable pupils to realise what they are able to do, and to be successful.
- Embedded Christian values, seen particularly in the exemplary behaviour, which allow them to speak about the Christian faith, identity, belonging and how this impacts upon their daily life within this church school.

Areas to improve

- Through development of the pupil voice, engage pupils further in the process of planning, leading, monitoring and evaluation of worship throughout the school.
- Continue to implement the new religious education (RE) scheme of work alongside the 'Understanding Christianity' resource to make RE more accessible to all pupils and support their spiritual development.
- In the light of the school site expansion explore with the leadership and governance ways in which the exemplary Christian distinctiveness can be maintained throughout the split school site.

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

This explicitly Christian school is outstanding in the work it does. All aspects of school life from documentation and displays to classroom practice evidence the Christian character of the school and its Christian witness. It is a rich, vibrant Christian environment permeated by positive values, in which learning and achievement flourish. The promotion of core Christian values, such as faith and shared learning, embraced by the school sets the expectation for how all should live and is embodied in the motto, 'Learning Together in the Love of God'. Christ is at the centre of the vision and through his life and teaching and the values that emanate from this, pupils' learning is enhanced. There is a total commitment to meeting the needs of the whole child. Exemplary pastoral care and an 'Active Curriculum' both reinforce teaching points and address gaps in learning. Pupils in all ability groups make good progress and reach expected standards. Effective intervention programmes, such as emotional coaching and excellent provision for special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) have a direct life-changing impact on all pupils, particularly those with deep seated needs. As a result, inclusion of all pupils is good so that disadvantaged pupils achieve well so that there is no difference between their progress, and that of other pupils. Pupils are valued, treated equally and respected as unique individuals loved by God, and nurtured in this caring Christian environment. The Christian foundation provides an explicit faith context for every pupil to explore their own journey in a climate of inclusion and acceptance. Pupils from all cultures feel safe and happy, secure in the knowledge that diversity is embraced and their beliefs are respected. This means that pupils of all faiths are confident to speak about their beliefs, expressing their thoughts and views in depth. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) is nourished and challenged through Christian values. Self-awareness, understanding and knowledge of other faiths and cultures are also enhanced through RE. It highlights Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith which also contributes to the Christian character. Harmonious relationships are based on Christian values. This is a strength of the school. Pupils are polite and respectful. They are proud of the school and have a good sense of self belief and self-esteem. They understand what it means to be a pupil at a church school and make the link to Christian teaching in the Bible. Classrooms have Christian symbols and prayer tables which, when used, make a significant contribution to pupil's spiritual development. An effective school council allows pupils to express their views. They also participate in the mission of the wider community through fundraising, for example 'Comic Relief'. Standards of behaviour and management are exemplary due to high expectations and a sensitivity which are clearly underpinned by Christian values, such as respect and making wise choices. This successful school is an excellent environment, in which all pupils mature and thrive academically and socially, in a distinctive Christian community where differences and diversity can be celebrated.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is distinctively Christian and evokes a sense of belonging and gathering in God's presence. It is seen as important in the formation of Christian character and forms the main element of the school Christian distinctiveness. It uses biblical material and imagery with an emphasis upon Jesus and his importance for Christians, as well as the Trinity. Worship is planned using materials from Roots & Shoots which connects to Bible stories, Christian values, festivals and the church calendar. Great care is taken to ensure that worship is spiritually nourishing and accessible. Thoughtful use of inclusive language allows all pupils to listen, reflect and respond appropriately so that they are spiritually nourished. This successful approach allows people of all faiths to participate in meaningful and experiences that are significant to pupils' lives. For example, very good use of role play energizes pupils' attention. Pupils are keen to share the peace. They make very good use of responsive prayers. The Christian character of the worship makes a substantial impact upon and contribution to, school life and the pupils' spiritual development which is exemplary. During worship a range of experiences are used as prayer, silence and music, all of which are interwoven to stimulate pupils' attention and atmosphere. Visual images, symbols and lighted candles are used to encourage awe and wonder and to encourage spirituality. This variety of approaches enables pupils to engage in Anglican traditions and practices. Key Christian festivals such as Harvest, which are always celebrated in church, reinforce the shared vision and enhance knowledge. Pupils know many Bible stories and older pupils have a very good understanding of parables, their meaning and significance for them in their daily lives. Pupils do lead some worship. However, the school has identified the on-going development for further pupil involvement in planning, leading and evaluation. Prayer and reflection here foster spirituality and deeper relationship with God. Response to prayer is enthusiastic. Pupils understand its purpose and the impact that prayers have in their lives. Through work with Smethwick Church Action Network, the creation of prayer spaces successfully allows pupils to explore spirituality in a safe and interactive way. Links with clergy, parish and foundation governors are strong. These nurture pupils' attitudes to faith and strengthen pupils' spiritual development. Additional activities such as attending Year Six leavers' services offer a richer experience of different worship. Very detailed plans underpin the worship and provide an excellent tool for monitoring and evaluating practice. Since the last inspection, effective evaluation records of worship gathered from

governors' observations, questionnaires and pupil interviews provide useful and substantial feedback for future development.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE is given a high priority and is strategically planned within the School Improvement Plan. This has led to highly effective practice where teaching and learning is of the highest quality. Standards of attainment in RE are in line with national expectations and a significant number of pupils reach higher levels. RE makes a significant contribution to pupils' development and the Christian character of the school. Creative learning activities with well planned and structured teaching enables pupils to learn about and learn from RE with opportunities for personal reflection. Teaching methods are age appropriate and effective, for example, with good use of visual aids and interactive whiteboards to stimulate thinking, enabling pupils to make exceptional progress. Pupils are excited by RE, and are challenged by creative learning opportunities. As a result, it provides a positive, spiritual and affirming experience for reflective thinkers, leading them to be able to speak confidently, for example, about how Christian belief is linked to wisdom. Since the last inspection, the focus for development for RE has been addressed with positive outcomes, as the Sandwell Agreed Syllabus has been well implemented. It now provides a well-structured thematic scheme which enhances academic rigour and also fosters deep respect of Christian values and beliefs. Pupils' knowledge of the Christian story is excellent as well as their awareness and understanding of other faiths and cultures, including Judaism. However, the school has identified the need to integrate even further the Understanding Christianity resource, so that RE is more attractive and engaging for pupils. Religious education (RE) makes a very significant contribution to pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Subject leadership in RE shows skilful expertise with an ambitious vision; extensive management with purposeful development and focussed action plans. Excellent support and INSET training has impacted upon staff development and their spirituality. RE books are consistently scrutinised and annual pupil conferencing effectively evaluate and develop the scheme of work. Such monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in RE ensures teaching to be judged good or outstanding and has led to improved pupil standards of attainment.

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

Inspirational leaders and managers have worked with faith and commitment to develop an explicit Christian vision which pervades the school. Purposeful and professional partnerships exist between all staff to promote the vision. Staff feel a sense of vocation in this Christian foundation. All articulate, understand and ensure that the distinctive Christian values and ethos are vital to the school's vision. Foundation governors are particularly supportive of the strategic drive to raise standards within a collaborative learning culture. As a result, robust and rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's impact on pupil achievement are in place. School improvement plans fully reflect at every level, the monitoring and evaluating of the school's progress as a church school, taking account of the school's Anglican foundation. Self-evaluation and reflection is rigorous as skilled governors, through the Ethos and Values Committee, effectively set the strategic direction for this Church school. All staff and governors have a realistic and challenging view of the future developmental needs of this school. They have identified the need to develop and embed the Christian distinctiveness even further in preparation for the expansion of the school site. Significant contribution by the head teacher, through targeted professional development and succession planning, has strengthened the schools' capacity to succeed. Relationships with social agencies, parenting support projects and clergy are very strong and extremely effective in overcoming economic disadvantage. Exemplary relationships throughout the school show the key role that Christian values play in the community. As a result, the school is a source of refuge and peace for both pupils and parents. An experienced foundation governor nurtures the close relational links that exist between the school, the church and diocese. This significant contribution promotes dialogue and understanding between different faith contexts. Both RE and collective worship are led with an enthusiasm which radiates through to the staff and pupils, and fully meet statutory requirements. Purposeful, effective partnerships with parents and multi-agencies create cohesiveness. This is also achieved through active engagement with the local mosque and other places of worship such as the Gurdwara and the Mandir Temple. Strategies such as 'Play & Stay' and the INSPIRE workshops enhance parents understanding of their child's learning, and lead them to have confidence in the school, feel included, and recognize the underpinning, welcoming Christian faith. There is real cohesion through genuine relationships based on Christian values. As a result, parents are happy with the school as a church school and state that their requests and issues are dealt with sensitively. They believe that their child's needs are being met and that this process is enhanced through extra-curricular clubs and enrichment activities. Pupils are inspired by activities and reflection opportunities celebrating diversity which make them aware of their wider responsibilities towards society. Through such work, the school shows itself to be an encompassing community that is much valued by pupils and their parents of all faiths. One parent said, when interviewed, 'St. Matthew's teaches the pupils that if you are from different faiths you can be still be friends'. Inspection evidence supports this.

