

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Paul's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary

Garden Street, Stafford. ST17 4BT

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Diocese

Lichfield

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

Staffordshire

Name of multi-academy trust / federation

N/A

Date of inspection

23 June 2017

Date of last inspection

21 May 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Controlled 124299

Headteacher

Matthew Davies

Inspector's name and number

Marianne Phillips 586

School context

St Paul's is a smaller than average primary with 109 pupils on roll. The numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals is below national average. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. 16.5% of pupils have been judged to require special need support. This is above the national average. Numbers of pupils in receipt of a statement or educational health and care plan are above national average. The headteacher, vicar and the deputy headteacher have been appointed since the previous inspection.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Paul's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The Christian values are embedded in all aspects of school life, helping to guide the choices of pupils and staff and to strengthen relationships underpinned by love and care.
- The vision is made explicit and is known and endorsed by all members of the school family who are challenged to 'Learn and grow together in God's Love'.
- The very strong partnership between the headteacher and the deputy headteacher is effective in driving the Christian values to enhance the Christian distinctiveness of the school and to support the spiritual development of all members of the school family.
- The strong links with St Paul's Church and the work of the clergy, children's worker and foundation governors enrich the spiritual experiences of the school community.
- The reflection areas in classrooms and around the school motivate prayer and personal responses from the pupils helping them to turn to Jesus as a guide for their daily lives.
- The forest school curriculum and activities are highly effective in developing a spiritual appreciation and respect for God as the Creator and encouraging a celebration of the world as His creation.

Areas to improve

- Further extend the involvement of learners in worship to develop them as spiritual leaders planning, delivering and evaluating acts of worship throughout the year to support the distinctiveness of the school.
- Strengthen and extend the existing monitoring approaches undertaken by governors to drive the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school ensuring they are regular, systematic and timetabled to include discussions with pupils to gather their views, particularly about worship.

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

This a wonderfully vibrant Christian school where the nurture of the child is at the heart of all it does. The core Christian values of family, hope, perseverance, belief, love and respect are lived-out fully. Consequently, relationships between all members of the school family are strong and supportive. Also, pupils' behaviour is excellent underpinned by the 'Golden 5' choices and the 'reward gems'. Consistent references and reminders of the Christian teaching encouraging them to respect and care for others. As the school and worship councils shared, 'there is no bullying; our values and 'Golden 5' help to remind us to forgive and make friends.' Each class displays the 'Golden 5' choices, which were chosen by the children. These choices are guided by the vision, 'Learning and growing together in God's Love' and the Christian values. They are key aspects of the 'Good to be Green' behaviour policy. The headteacher and his new deputy work well in partnership to bind the school community into a family united in love. All members of the school family understand the Christian values and know they are important. In the words of children, 'it is important to be part of a church school; we look to God and Jesus to guide us; we learn about the Holy Spirit and experience being part of a school where we are encouraged to believe, be hopeful and have faith.' As you enter the school grounds and buildings the signage and Christian symbols proclaim its Christian heritage. Colourful displays excellently challenge all to, 'Have a Dream'; be the 'Star of the Week or the Month'; and to join the 'Proud Cloud'. These displays evidence the creative talent of the teachers and the commitment to building self-esteem and perseverance in all. The reflection areas in each class hold an array of crosses and individual prayers. The worship council books record shared comments evidencing the power of the pupils' voices and the respect for their opinions. The 'cross of sin' is a very poignant reminder of the impact of their forest school activities. The wooden cross was made by the children who then wrote and pinned their confessions to it. The child explaining this noted, 'Jesus was nailed to the cross to save us from our sins so we pinned our sins to this cross to remind us to do better in the future.' Forest school is a key part of the curriculum enabling pupils to grow in the knowledge of 'God the Creator'. The recent atrocities in the news have had a huge influence on the young children in the school. Teachers have focused on the positives coming out of the grief. Thoughts for the day question, 'Who are the heroes amongst us'; or, 'is forgiveness always possible?' These discussions help pupils to deal with their worries and concerns. The 'Worry Boxes' organised by the staff give pupils another outlet for their thoughts. They are empowered to, 'be strong and courageous; not to be afraid; not to be discouraged for the Lord our God will be with you wherever you go.' From the time pupils enter the school with skills below national expectations leaders provide trained staff to target individual needs. Government grants and the school budget are used effectively to provide resources. School tracking and interventions for all pupils, particularly the vulnerable are positive in outcome. As a result, everyone questioned is confident about the school and the difference the new leadership team is making. Consequently, pupils flourish and grow in confidence and perseverance nurtured by Christian love and care. By the time they leave most pupils are in line or exceed national expectations. Attendance is good. Pupils acknowledge they feel safe, happy and enjoy learning. The curriculum is rich and exciting. Religious education (RE) is a popular subject which meets all statutory requirements. As one child explained, 'RE is one of my favourite subjects; in it we think and do things to learn about Jesus and other religions – it's fun.' Through RE pupils are challenged to learn about and reflect on a range of beliefs and cultures. They are developing an understanding of Christianity as a global faith. Visits and visitors enhance the learning experiences as do the strong links with the St Paul's Church. The minister and the children's worker discuss spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues at school and in church with pupils. 'Messy Church' and worship provide regular settings for them to meet and reflect on Christian teaching and values informally. Parents are very positive about the strong links with the church and the teaching of Christian values. They believe that, 'through the triangle of church, home and school there is continuity and faith is reinforced.' They appreciate the changes the new headteacher and his team have introduced. 'Christian values are more explicit; it is not a job to them; they care.' They confirm that their children have settled well in the school through Christian nurture and care. 'Every parent feels their child is the favourite of the teacher because of the individual attention they receive.' They are witnessing the difference being part of a church school is making to their children's lives and spiritual journey. Pupils are fully involved with the life of this church school. They develop maturity through their roles as play leaders, prefects and council membership. They raise funds for others less fortunate than themselves through Red Nose Day, Operation Christmas and Run for Life. In these and many other ways they play a part in making this school distinctive, caring and loving. Photographic records, documents and displays and pupils' voices evidence the ways they are growing as young citizens through Christian care. Parents views endorse the high esteem in which the school is held by those it serves. Also, the difference it is making to communities locally, nationally and internationally.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is an inspiring part of daily life. It is central and effective in bringing the school family together to reflect and pray daily. As pupils note, 'through worship we learn about our values and are encouraged to pray to God and

Jesus.' All pupils questioned enjoy worship and praying. They write prayers and share them in their 'prayer baskets' in the reflection areas in class. These areas are a focal point to enable pupils to reflect and pray independently and to support class worship. There is also a 'Reflection Retreat', a garden where pupils, 'think and pray in God's love'. Pupils help to set up and have responsibilities in worship, but currently do not plan and deliver worship fully. They would like to do this. Also, to extend their ways of sharing their opinions of worship currently through the worship council books. Worship experiences are varied and spiritually inspiring, whether at school or in church. Pupils engage with responses acknowledging the presence of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They know the Lord's prayer and enthusiastically sing hymns that are both modern and traditional. In these ways worship is supporting their spiritual development and their understanding of Anglican tradition. In St Paul's Church, they celebrate special services throughout the year. These are attended by parents and other members of the community who enjoy the experiences. Christian values underpin all worship, as evidenced by the worship observed. The headteacher skilfully links the Bible with real life experiences to share how there is always hope. Yellow roses are symbols of the yellow rose bush in the school grounds. A memory of those who have died in recent disasters. Pupils bow their heads and reflect deeply as the children's worker leads prayer. These activities are a powerful reminder of their Christian foundation and belief. There are strong links between RE and worship and both aspects of school life promote spiritual growth and well-being. Worship is also a setting of celebration when the stars of the week or month walk the 'red carpet' of success. Pupils and their parents are proud to be recognised for their achievements through their family values of love, hope, respect and perseverance. Worship is regularly monitored by staff to ensure it is effective in shaping the spiritual lives of the school family. Governors also share their views about their experiences when they attend. School leaders plan to facilitate more regular monitoring by governors through developing a timetable for formal visits throughout the year.

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

The new headteacher is committed to the Christian values underpinning the school. Through his Christian witness and passion, he wants to make the school outstandingly distinctive as a church school. He is building a team who are strong partners in achieving this aim. The support of pupils through Christian love and care focuses on the 'whole child', unique in the eyes of God. The vision is shared by all and explicit founded in the love of God. The strong sense of family, guided by Jesus, is ensuring needs are met and standards are rising. As the minister reflected, 'there is a changing culture and focus on Christian distinctiveness, which is explicit and lived-out.' There is a shared purpose that is witnessed by all. All members of the school family and wider community endorse this belief. School improvement is driven by leaders who know the school's strengths and effectively target areas for development. Professional development and training is a feature that is building future capacity and leadership of the school. There are strong links with the Diocese. RE and worship have a high status and are linked strongly through school approaches. The RE coordinator, governors and staff are being trained in 'Understanding Christianity' delivered by the diocesan advisor. These are being piloted alongside the Staffordshire syllabus to strengthen RE. The RE and worship coordinator is new to the school. Her enthusiasm and commitment to the subject is infectious. She is being guided effectively by other school leaders to ensure RE is of the highest quality. Governors are fully involved with the school. Ministry with the church and the school is a strong feature of their role. They are working with school leaders to expand their strategic knowledge and skills to further drive the school's Christian distinctiveness. The minister is the vice chair of governors and he regularly meets with the headteacher. To choose the school's Christian values they raised the question, 'what makes us who we are?' Pupils, worship council, parents and staff shared in the process and celebrate the agreed values. It is evident that systems and structures now in place are effectively enabling the school to be distinctive and to grow. The strong links with the church, the Diocese and the local authority are appreciated. The areas for development from the previous inspection have been met. As a result, everyone questioned is confident about the school and the difference the new leadership team is making. There is a joy in the knowledge that this school is committed to the future lives of its pupils and the community it serves.

SIAMS report June 2017 St Paul's CEVC Stafford ST17 4BT