

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Matthew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary and Nursery Centre	Church Road Donnington Wood Telford TF2 7PZ
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese/Methodist District	Lichfield
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Outstanding
Local authority	Telford and Wrekin Unitary Authority
Name of multi-academy trust/ federation	N/A
Date/s of inspection	13 October 2016
Date of last inspection	14 September 2011
School's unique reference number	123557
Headteacher	Kate Clark
Inspector's name and number	Marianne Phillips 586

School context

St Matthew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary school serves an area of high deprivation. Over 31% of pupils are eligible for Free School Meals and 7% are drawn from Forces families. There is high mobility. A large proportion of pupils (15%) are from ethnic minority backgrounds and 13% are registered as having special educational needs. The current headteacher has led the school for the past 4 years, returning from a headship elsewhere after previously being the deputy headteacher at this school. There have been a number of staff changes since the last inspection.

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

- The clear Christian leadership of the headteacher supported by a strong team, committed to driving the Christian distinctiveness of the school.
- The nurturing care, based on Christian values, provided by the 'SEND Team' that ensures all pupils, whatever their needs, are inspired to learn and families are supported.
- The excellent behaviour and positive attitudes of the pupils, who show care and concern for each member of the school family.
- The inclusive practices that unite all members of the school, regardless of their background or faith.

Areas to improve

- Further develop the work of the 'INSPIRE' group in planning and leading worship, on a regular basis.
- Develop the strategic role of the foundation governors to include leading and monitoring worship in school, to actively support the Christian distinctiveness of the school.

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

The uniqueness of this outstanding church school is proclaimed from the time you set foot on the site. Signage is clear and explicit and as you enter the school building, the focus on the work of Christ, through the cross, is evident in many ways. The school effectively marries this commitment to their Christian heritage with inclusive, nurturing practices that ensure all pupils, regardless of their faith, background or need, flourish and progress. Christian values underpin and guide daily interactions creating a sense of shared purpose through the 'CRAFT' vision statement, which is known and understood by all. The headteacher, as a Christian leader, describes the school as "her extended family". Her strong Christian witness and commitment to the development of the school as a church school is understood and appreciated. She has created a strong effective team that live out the belief that is summarised by a line from St Matthew's Gospel, "nothing is impossible with God". Parents of all faiths, talk about the 'school family' and endorse the strong focus on teaching their children about religion through visits to St Matthew's church, religious education (RE) lessons and visits. The older pupils can participate in the Eucharist, during some services at church, and this is helping them to develop an understanding of the Trinity, which they share is important to them. Pupils are sure they feel safe and protected. The 'INSPIRE' worship committee and school council are active groups that take their responsibilities very seriously. They communicate the views of their fellow pupils to school leaders, who respect and listen. As a result they feel they have 'a voice' that influences the daily life of school. Behaviour is outstanding; attendance is high encouraged by the caring relationships that exist. They experience daily prayers and know that prayer is an important "way of talking to God". The school is rich in artefacts and resources. The vibrant displays and reflection areas support spiritual development, bringing biblical stories and experiences to life. School leaders are constantly considering ways in which personal prayer and reflection can be encouraged and recorded, to map the spiritual growth of the pupils as they move through the school. Children enter the school displaying skills that are well below national expectations. There is a very effective 'SEND Team' that assess individual need on entry. Pupils requiring additional support are identified and appropriate intervention provided. The 'Rocket Room' is an example of a place which the school has created, where very vulnerable pupils can feel safe and have time to reflect quietly. Support often involves close contact with the family, who are invited to work with the school to help their children. The school also provides guidance in response to parental requests. The recent 'Phonics Workshop' and the 'Understanding Children' course, which was oversubscribed, are examples of this. Support is funded through additional funding such as the pupil premium grants (PPG) and the school budget, to enable each individual to experience success and to grow in confidence, nurtured as "children of God". Consequently, through this skilled support, by the time they leave the school the majority of pupils are meeting or exceeding national targets. The well planned curriculum and ethnically rich school family provide a wealth of experiences to effectively develop the pupils' understanding of Christian and other faiths globally and locally. In the words of their pupils, "our school helps you find who you are and who you want to be, on your journey to secondary school and your future life".

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Two acts of worship during the inspection, led by the headteacher and staff, focused on clear Christian values of caring, sharing and compassion. Pupils questioned and the school's documentation confirm that worship is enjoyable and an important part of the daily life of school. The 'INSPIRE' group regularly evaluate and contribute to worship. They would welcome more leadership challenges in worship however. School leaders are considering ways in which this could be facilitated as a priority. The Lord's Prayer and St Matthew's Prayer are well known by all pupils and are said daily. Worship, prayer and reflection are inclusive. As well as uniting pupils of all faiths, worship also offers a means of supporting pupils in their understanding of how biblical truths and the guidance of Jesus can inform the way they approach their daily lives. The centrality of worship and the experiences it offers is also supporting pupils in their understanding of Anglican tradition. Parents are encouraged to attend worship services in church. Their opinions of these experiences are very positive. Foundation governors support the services in church. School leaders would like to expand this role to enable foundation governors to lead and monitor worship and RE in school. This is a priority for the future to support the development of the school as a distinctive and effective church school.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious Education (RE) is an outstanding part of the school's curriculum. Pupils are enthusiastic and inspired by the creative experiences offered through lessons and visits and enjoy learning about all religions. The RE coordinator and the headteacher regularly monitor the quality of teaching and learning in RE. This is consistently good or outstanding. In addition, book trawls and learning walks are two effective strategies employed to ensure standards of learning are high. Documents evidence the work done and the impact of her effective leadership over the last 18 months. As a result of this attention to detail and commitment, attainment in RE is at least in line with national standards and often above expectation. The RE coordinator and the Year 6 teacher have been piloting 'Understanding Christianity' approaches. One example of this was seen in the Year 6 class. Pupils were challenged to role play as Christian groups in a town, in charge of providing centres where "the love of God could be experienced". These centres had to provide the elderly, individuals newly released from prison, refugees and other vulnerable members of the community with support. This lesson motivated and engaged the pupils. They showed high level of skill cooperating in their 'centres' to agree their actions for the town. Plans are in place to roll out these approaches across the school from January 2017. Similarly, personal responses were a feature of the Year 2 class, where pupils pondered on the feelings of David after he had been selected to be King. They were encouraged to express his feelings in a reflective diary entry, through poetry or by considering the qualities of "David the man" because "man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart". Both lessons evidenced how RE is enabling pupils to use their learning experiences in 'real life' scenarios. 'Assessment in RE follows the 'Chris Quigley' guidance and is consistently used by the whole school. As a result, pupils know, through highlighting, the targets they have met and those, which still need to be addressed. A learning dialogue is established between the teachers and their pupils, through effective marking. There are strong links between the themes used in RE, worship and PSHE. The school is also well supported by the Local Authority and the Diocese.

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

The headteacher and her staff live out the Christian values which underpin the daily life of the school. Leaders know their school and build on its strengths. This effectively drives the 'CRAFT' vision to enable all pupils to "be curious, creative, aspirational and to have faith and self-belief that nothing is impossible with God". Self-evaluation is used effectively, through the team approach, to target support where it is needed. All stakeholders regularly share their views contributing to the decisions made. Parents and pupils also appreciate the ways in which this school teaches them to care and respect others. This generates strong relationships and a sense of community and unity which is appreciated by all. Governors monitor the effectiveness of the school through their meetings and visits. The foundation governors are involved in strengthening the links with the church through the regular services and visits, by pupils, parents and staff to the church. Extending their role to formally lead and monitor worship, in school, is a priority. School leaders are keen to support them in this to strengthen and challenge them in their strategic role, to further drive Christian distinctiveness. Continued professional development for teachers and governors is effectively supported by the Local Authority and the Diocese. Strong links exist which underpin school improvement. The developmental points from the previous inspection have been met.

SIAMS report October 2016 St Matthew's CE VA Primary and Nursery Centre, Telford TF2 7PZ