



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St George's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School	Church Lane, New Mills, High Peak, Derbyshire SK22 4NP
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Derby
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Outstanding
Local authority	Derbyshire
Date of inspection	22 September 2016
Date of last inspection	6 December 2011
School's unique reference number	112889
Headteacher	Mandy Brown
Inspector's name and number	John Horwood (177)

School context

St George's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is a long established school which has invested in an ongoing programme of modernisation to meet the needs of the pupils. It is set in spacious grounds where the 132 pupils are taught in four mixed age classes and a morning nursery. The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is above average. The proportion who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. An increasing proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. The headteacher, who was the previous deputy since 2002, was appointed in November 2013.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St George's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- School leaders are committed to promoting Christian values throughout the school and this has led to a welcoming, supportive and caring ethos within the school that ensures that parents feel part of the school and where all pupils are able to develop and learn effectively.
- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership to ensure that this a successful school which is a happy and inclusive place where everyone is treated equally and expectations are high.
- The excellent partnership with the nearby St George's Church ensures that the church and the school communities work together to support all the pupils and their families.
- Leaders recognise that a large number of pupils and their families benefit from the Christian values of 'Love' and 'Support'. All the adults in the school work hard to ensure that this is provided in abundance on a daily basis.
- Through the high priority given to religious education (RE) and collective worship, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) ensures that they become mature, sensible and caring individuals and that excellent relationships exist throughout the school community.

Areas to improve

- Continue to improve the already good rate of pupils' progress in RE, throughout the school, so that a greater proportion of pupils reach the highest levels of attainment.

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

Pupils and parents clearly identify the Christian character of the school as being fundamental to the welcoming school ethos. As well as being overtly Christian through its proximity to the church and the presence of Christian artefacts around the school, the Christian character is visible through the strong focus on Christian values which pupils say help them learn and develop their skills for later life. The improving attendance at school is due to the caring and supportive approach of school staff which make pupils keen to come to school and the support provided to parents to enable them to send their children regularly and punctually. The positive approach to supporting behaviour through the golden rules, based on Christian values, has ensured that exclusion of pupils is not a feature. The high profile of religion in the school, and in particular the skills developed in RE, ensures that pupils are confident to express their views on spiritual matters and, for example, say the school prayers with pride and understanding. Parents identify that the school is well thought of in the area because of the excellent relationships and behaviour that pupils demonstrate. Throughout the inspection pupils were seen to be well-behaved and polite. The strong faith of the headteacher is a feature which shines through every-day life in the school. All the staff follow her role model within a happy and supportive environment and both adults and pupils are able to confidently talk about religion and prayer. Parents and pupils talk confidently and positively about the church community and how important the church and the clergy are in supporting pupils' preparation for later life. Pupils described how the curriculum content gives them an understanding of faith and diversity which is supported by visits to other communities and e-mail links to 'different' schools. Pupils talked confidently about RE lessons and how they found them enjoyable because they were interactive and presented in meaningful ways and were 'not boring!'. The broad range of faiths and denominations covered within RE ensure that pupils are able to talk about different faiths and different denominations within the Christian church. The school had also taken up the opportunity to be one of only four schools in Derbyshire to be involved in the 'What If' project. This was run by the Church of England Education Office for the whole school community to think about the value of 'Hospitality' in all areas of the curriculum.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The provision and the impact of collective worship have improved since the previous inspection in response to areas for development identified. Pupils are always involved within worship but also have more opportunities to plan, deliver and evaluate their worships in groups. They demonstrate in worship their knowledge of the Bible and how the stories have an impact on their lives. They use the 'prayer stones' to demonstrate how this quiet reflection time has had an impact on their enjoyment of collective worship. Reflection areas around the school, together with a prayer box, provide opportunities for individual prayer. Parents are now given more opportunities to be involved in worship. Parents have attended special worships where pupils are leading on topic and class work themes. Parents say that their children do talk to them about what happened in worship. These improvements have improved the impact of worship from good to outstanding.

All members of the school community see worship as a key activity during the day. Both pupils and adults join in enthusiastically with worship. The leading of worship by school leaders, clergy, staff and visitors ensures the pupils experience a wide range of practice. In addition to the vicar leading worship in the school, the school community visit the church for key festivals. Worship is well-planned and the effectiveness monitored to inform future planning. The worship themes link through to classroom activities and the promotion of Christian values. This allows ongoing development of the worship theme. Pupils were able to instantly recall past acts of worship that they had enjoyed and talk about the impact of them. The older pupils could explain how prayers help them and the importance that they see in them for later life. Some parents, who had children who had recently moved to secondary school, said that worship was the thing that their child really misses in secondary school. There is a strong focus on Jesus and the Bible during worship and as pupils move through the school they develop a growing understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The older pupils can talk about this with an age-appropriate understanding, and a few with an impressive degree of understanding.

The impact of worship and prayer is extended beyond the daily collective act of worship through prayers at the start of the day and The Grace at lunchtime. Every classroom has a worship area to stimulate prayer and self-reflection. Whilst the worships are predominantly Christian, the Bible stories are used to discuss the impact on the lives of Christians and how Christian values compare to the values of other faiths.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

There is a strong focus on monitoring the achievement of pupils in RE. This was a relative weakness at the time of the last inspection which has now improved. The assessment for learning in RE is now an integral part of the whole school assessment framework. Each term teachers assess whether pupils are below, at or above age-related expectations. The criteria used are based on the Derbyshire agreed syllabus for RE. Pupils generally start with relatively low levels of understanding of RE but make good, and often rapid, progress in their understanding of both Christianity and other faiths. However, whilst the majority of pupils, at the end of Year 6, reach expected levels of attainment, few exceed them. Pupils make this rapid progress because they enjoy the lessons and are motivated to learn. Teaching is consistently at least good and some is outstanding. This is confirmed by the work in pupils' books, their ability to talk about religion and their promotion of Christian values. Pupils develop the skills to discuss and reflect about religion and values. They gain age-appropriate skills at investigating and evaluating their understanding of how religion helps people. This is encouraged throughout the school by a start of day activity which encourages pupils to be reflective. School leaders put a high priority on providing for every pupil and they ensure that sufficient priority is given to RE to ensure that both the curriculum and the activities meet the needs of every pupil. Recent developments to do this include the introduction of 'Big RE days' to bring the whole school community together so that pupils can spend the day, in mixed age teams, learning about a specific religion. The school had also taken up the opportunity to be one of only four schools in Derbyshire to be involved in the 'What If' project. This was run by the Church of England Education Department for the whole school community to think about the value of 'Hospitality' in all areas of the curriculum.

The headteacher is the subject leader for RE and in addition to her strong Christian faith keeps up-to-date with current developments to ensure that she has the highest subject expertise. She has a clear vision to help pupils attain high levels of understanding in RE. She ensures that termly work scrutiny is carried out in RE and that performance management observations include observations of RE lessons. Also one INSET day each year is given over to developing and supporting the teaching of RE.

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

The partnership between leaders, staff, governors and parents is outstanding. Representatives of all groups identified the same strengths of the school demonstrating how well informed they are. They also praised the outstanding links to the church who give each other mutual support within this close community. Much praise was also given to the local vicar who is an active governor and a 'friend' to the children. All leaders are excellent role models for pupils and identify how the Christian values, especially 'Love' and 'Care' benefit the whole school. The close working relationships they have ensure that they all have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and any areas of development. This in turn enables them to focus on further improvement. Their strong commitment to Christian values ensures that the whole curriculum provides excellent support to pupils' SMSC development. Leaders also work together with the diocese and the wider community to ensure that there is a significant impact on pupils' understanding of local, national and global communities. This is exemplified by the creation of a partnership with a school in Palestine with whom pupils exchange e-mails and the opportunity for pupils to visit a mainly Muslim primary school. Other outcomes of the partnership include, for example, children singing for the church luncheon club and the weekly parent prayer group held in the school. Leaders and governors have ensured that both RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements. Both are given the highest priority of leadership as they are led by the headteacher and involve both the vicar and the governors. The leader has close links to the diocese so that excellent support and training is available for her and other staff. This link also supports the training of staff for becoming future leaders. Two staff are already taking part in the local authority's 'aspiring leaders' course which will be followed by a specific day for church school leaders with the diocese.