

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Walter Evans Church of England Primary School

Darley Abbey Drive
Darley Abbey
Derby
DE22 1EF

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Derby
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Derby City
Date/s of inspection	23 March 2017
Date of last inspection	10 January 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy 142752
Head teacher	David Brown
Inspector's name and number	John Clapham (775)

School context

Walter Evans is a larger than average primary school, overlooking St Matthew's church in the Derby suburb of Darley Abbey. The school has been regularly oversubscribed, and has recently increased the pupil admission number. There are currently 398 pupils on roll, a significant rise since the previous inspection, with numbers expected to rise to 472 by 2021. Pupils are drawn from a wider geographical area than the immediate catchment area. The proportions of pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium (those eligible for free school meals or who are in local authority care) are well below the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are below average. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language. The school recently converted to academy status under the Derby Diocesan Academy Trust. The head teacher joined the school in January 2017.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Walter Evans as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Walter Evans School is characterised by exceptional levels of care, where high expectations and strong pastoral support are underpinned by the school's distinctively Christian character.
- A culture of high quality questioning and reflection supports children's spiritual development consistently across the whole school community.
- Collective Worship is a particular strength of the school, because it is highly inclusive and relevant, and draws strong links with religious education (RE) and children's spiritual, moral social and cultural (SMSC) development.
- Walter Evans School is well led and governed in every aspect of its work and witness, with a strong consistency of approach and a passionate articulation of distinctively Christian values.

Areas to improve

- Strengthen the high profile of the school's Christian character by combining the many effective articulations of Christian values and distinctiveness into a coherent expression that is owned and understood by everyone.
- Strengthen the teaching of Christianity, through a wide range of higher level enquiry skills, by engaging in the Understanding Christianity programme.

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

Distinctively Christian values are deeply embedded in every aspect of the life of Walter Evans School. The greatest commandment of 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength and love your neighbour as yourself' has been adopted as a vision for the school, and is a significant driver behind the Christian character and the whole life and witness of the school. All adults in school show genuine care for the children, as articulated by a parent who noted, 'our school is all about love and care and looking after others. Everyone here looks out for each other, and that is why the values make a difference.' The Christian character of the school is apparent from first entering the building, and is consistent across school. Reflective areas, creative prayer prompts and the prominent display of biblical material contribute strongly to the spiritual development of the whole school community. Children are treated compassionately as individuals and are given the opportunity to think and consider for themselves. They work through difficulties and are given the skills to resolve differences for themselves. Children report that the independence pyramids in each classroom support them in perseverance. The school's Christian values are reinforced effectively through the church run lunchtime clubs. Indeed, a parent observed that, 'Everything that happens in school gives children the space to come close to God and develop their spiritual life.' Children take their responsibilities seriously, particularly through the school council, and Worship Crew and in caring for each other as a whole school community. They have also made a real difference beyond their immediate locality with a huge range of charitable initiatives, including the sponsoring of a child in Swaziland, charity fundraising, and serving lunches in the parish church to the elderly. Children show high levels of respect and understanding of the views and beliefs of others, both in school and church, and in other faith communities. The school's behaviour policy is structured around giving children space to reflect on the Christian principles of remorse, forgiveness and reconciliation. This can clearly be seen on the playground, around school and at lunchtime, where children work together, play together and care for each other exceptionally well. As one child reflected, 'our values change us because they help us get on with each other and collaborate and forgive.' Children know that any issues are dealt with quickly and fairly and so they are confident and feel valued. The work of the governor worship and learning committee in linking the new curriculum with the school's Christian distinctiveness has ensured that this runs throughout the whole life and work of the school. As one governor noted: 'Our Christian distinctiveness is not just a slogan- it runs deeply through everything.' The school's Christian character results in a secure and caring environment where children attain well both academically and in terms of their SMSC development across the whole curriculum. As a result, attendance is very high and children value school as a safe, happy place.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

At Walter Evans school, distinctively Christian collective worship is valued as a key part of the school day and is at the heart of the life of the whole school community, with the whole staff team participating fully in worship with the children. Children relish the chance to reflect and develop a personal spirituality through a wide range of experiences and formats for worship. Collective worship is based upon the school's distinctively Christian values and clearly drives and inspires the thoughts and actions of the whole school community. The collective worship and RE coordinators work exceptionally closely, which has resulted in many integral links within and between the two. The Worship Crew, made up of willing key stage 2 (KS2) children, meet regularly with the RE and collective worship coordinators and are making great progress towards regularly planning, and leading worship. Children report that since the establishment of the Worship Crew, worship is more fun, with considerably higher levels of engagement. Good use is made of drama and questioning and time dedicated for reflection. Evaluation jars used at the end of worship in the school hall, and a range of questionnaires give this group the feedback necessary to make positive and meaningful changes. A focus for development from the previous inspection was to develop systems for more regular monitoring of collective worship by the governing body. This has been fully addressed and is now a strength of the school, with monthly governor evaluation of collective worship across class, key stage and whole school worship. A washing line, where themes and ideas are visually built up over a week in collective worship, supports children's understanding, gives a consistency of approach, and enables children to make links and see the bigger picture. Well established routines and expectations for classroom worship have become an integral part of classroom life and link well with RE and the wider curriculum. This gives children the opportunity to think reflectively and consider big questions of real meaning to their lives. Consistent, well-structured areas for reflection and a clear prayer focus in each classroom support children's developing spirituality well. Prayer is integral to the life of the school, with formal prayer well embedded, as well as many creative opportunities for personal prayer and spiritual reflection. This includes a dedicated prayer room, which makes a significant impact on the life of the school. The prayer room is also used for lunchtime clubs run by local churches, which enhance the many meaningful opportunities for worship throughout school. Prayer and the use of dedicated prayer spaces are features that children say they value most highly about the school. A wide range of approaches are giving the children, particularly across KS2, a clear understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Clear biblical teaching

is well linked to themes and highly relevant to the children's lives. Collective worship in church fully involves both the parents and children, and is very well attended. Local clergy, church members, school staff and children's workers from local churches make a significant contribution to collective worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

RE is clearly and consistently valued in the rich learning environment throughout school. The school's Christian values are a key part the RE curriculum. The quality of teacher questioning is a particular strength across the school and supports children to express their feelings and beliefs, showing a great deal of tolerance and respect for the feelings and beliefs of others. The depth of children's understanding is shown by the ease with which they make links with their own lives, and with the beliefs and practices of the faiths that they study. Regular assessment shows that children's attainment in RE is at least in line with other core subjects. The school have identified areas where children need further input and support, particularly with children's understanding of Christianity, and these are being addressed effectively, including through collective worship. Whole class RE books are valued in classrooms and show children's understanding of God and themselves through big questions. Children's individual books, however, do not yet consistently show progress over time throughout school. A clear understanding of 'mastery' of RE as 'an ability to make links between RE, Bible stories and their own lives' is supporting the school's vision for the Christian character of the school to affect all areas of school life. In RE lessons, children are encouraged to think deeply, have their perceptions challenged, and are able to justify choices and viewpoints and tackle enquiries with real perception. Teaching is often creative and engaging, and includes the regular use of Godly Play, hot seating and debating. There are, however, insufficient opportunities for embedding high level skills in children's enquiry, analysis, interpretation, evaluation and reflection. Consistent marking of RE across the school, including good use of peer and self-assessment, gives children ownership of their next steps in learning. Children take on board advice through marking and feedback, which is based on questioning. Tasks are well matched to children's needs and provide appropriate challenge, including for the more able. Opportunities for personal reflection are highly developed, and older children show a striking understanding of difficult world issues through this. An example of this is the school's recent visit to Derby cathedral, where children considered the implications of modern slavery. The RE curriculum meets statutory requirements, with the teaching of Christianity given prominence. The RE subject leader is proactive in supporting and challenging staff to constantly improve their practice.

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

At Walter Evans, school leaders, including governors, are particularly effective in linking their vision to day-to-day actions. The impact of the work staff and governors have carried out since the previous inspection is apparent across school. Governors are highly committed to, and have a sustained focus on the Christian distinctiveness of the school. They have spent time looking in depth at what it means as a school to be distinctively Christian, and placed a clear focus on this when appointing the new head teacher. All governors have been fully involved in the process of exploring the school's Christian ethos and distinctiveness, giving tangible meaning and purpose to the work of the governing body of this church school. This has supported an agreement throughout the governing body of a clear scriptural basis for governance around core foundational Christian principles. Governors take an active role in supporting the head teacher and senior leaders in school self-evaluation and strategic planning, including foundation governors' evaluation of the impact of collective worship. Self-evaluation is insightful, evaluative and highly accurate, giving staff and governors a clear picture of the strengths and areas for development as a school. The Christian distinctiveness of the school runs clearly through all school improvement plan priorities, as well as through the school's Christian distinctiveness action plan. A rigorous and sustained drive for improvement has ensured that the head teacher and his team clearly understand the attainment and progress of groups of children throughout the school and have appropriate support and intervention in place. In addition to strong support from St Matthew's Church, where the new incumbent has quickly got involved in the life of the school, the school is also well supported pastorally by their own chaplain. Joint events are well attended, and parishioners offer practical support to the work of the school. A staff training day has been dedicated each year to exploring the school's Christian ethos and distinctiveness. Continual professional development for staff at all levels has been prioritised by leaders and governors, including a head teacher peer to peer review, where the school's Christian distinctiveness was explored and strengthened. The professional development of all staff and governors is planned strategically, building up a strong team well placed to take the school on to its next stage of development. Particular emphasis is placed on succession planning, where staff are nurtured to fulfil their full potential. The school benefits from support and collaboration within DDAT, the wider diocese, a local teaching schools' alliance and close partnerships with other church schools. The school leaders and governors ensure statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are fully met, ensuring that Walter Evans school makes a significant impact on improving well-being for its children, families and the local community.