

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### St George's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Church Street, Church Gresley, Swadlincote, Derbyshire, DE11 9NP

**Current SIAMS inspection grade**

**Good**

**Diocese**

**Derby**

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

Derbyshire

Date of inspection

9 November 2017

Date of last inspection

September 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Primary VC 112860

Headteacher

Sue Brindley

Inspector's name and number

Kerry Palmer (60)

#### School context

St George's is a one form entry primary school serving a diverse socio-economic community in the urban village of Church Gresley and areas of Swadlincote in south Derbyshire. Almost all the pupils are of White British heritage. Although recognised as an area of significant social deprivation, the proportion of pupils considered disadvantaged or with special educational needs or disabilities are relatively low. The school is full and copes well with limited accommodation. The headteacher is leading significant positive development with an established leadership team but relatively inexperienced governing body. There are close links with the St George and St Mary's Parish Church, the vicar also being chair of governors.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St George's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- The successful promotion, by the headteacher and leadership team, of school life informed by implicit Christian values results in an inclusive, rich and broad education for children of all abilities.
- A common recognition amongst staff, governors and families of the key contribution of the school's Christian ethos to quality education.
- A well informed and enthusiastic religious education (RE) subject leader who ensures that RE successfully promotes Christian distinctiveness throughout the school.
- Strong and active school links with the parish community who, together, work to 'put church at the heart of the community'.

#### Areas to improve

- Review website, documentation and worship approaches to make the Christian foundation of the school's strong ethos more explicit.
- Explore strategies to extend opportunities for pupils to plan and deliver worship that promote Christian values and extend the team of adult worship leaders to deepen its impact.
- Integrate the evaluation and development planning of Christian distinctiveness, by school leaders and governors, into the whole school improvement process so that it remains a key focus.

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

It is clear that Christian values of service, wisdom and community, are at the heart of this school. It is rightly proud of its inclusive and nurturing environment. However, the biblical foundation of the school's Christian ethos is not clear in documentation or the perception of many stakeholders. The deputy head plays a central role in ensuring that all staff closely monitor individual provision and standards. They all recognise and value the worth of each individual child, expressed in the professional and compassionate support for those with particular needs or are less able; children love the positive play area. This concern extends to all. The more able thrive on challenge and enrichment opportunities such as theatre visits, forest school and participation in 'Young Voices'. Children's well-being is of paramount importance, they enjoy school and strive to do well, illustrated by enthusiasm throughout the school day and high levels of attendance. Behaviour is excellent with any issues addressed in a spirit of understanding and reconciliation. Children's attainment is good. Along with progress, it often exceeds national figures. Challenge and determination are positive drivers. Children work purposefully, often in cooperative groups. They are confident and articulate, happily talking about their activities and the friendly relationships that are inculcated throughout the school. Children initiated a friendship club at playtime and Year 2 children mentor the little ones in the reception class. The school actively addresses issues related to respect for difference and diversity. There is appropriate teaching about other religions and visits to a gurdwara and mosque, as well as Christian places of worship. Compassion and empathy are successfully promoted through the curriculum and enrichment activities, for example Year 6 exploring Judaism whilst reading 'Boy in the striped pyjamas', in literacy. Children are keen to support a range of charities and efforts to support the less fortunate. This includes donations to the food bank as part of Harvest celebrations and Christmas hampers for the Salvation Army, support for Children in Need and carols sung at the local old peoples' home. Quality RE contributes significantly to the school's Christian character and children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. For example, in reception, children thought about God's promise to Noah after the flood and went on to think about good promises they could make. Whilst older children debated whether love is more valuable than an Xbox!

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory**

Bible based collective worship is an important feature of school life, although generally referred to as assembly. Themes embrace church festivals and seasons with strong links to key Christian values. Year 6 children recently used a class worship to share their understanding of Christian values with the rest of the school. At Remembrance time children heard about the bravery of Bill Colman, a Christian soldier, who lived locally, in World War One and reflected on suffering and sacrifice. Bible stories are a regular feature and children happily share stories of Noah's Ark and five loaves and fishes. Children recognise the special nature of Jesus but are not clear that he is the model for the values they strive to display. They have an age appropriate appreciation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. 'Jesus is the light of the world', one explained. Prayer and reflection are embedded activities. Children's prayers, including a school prayer written by the children, are displayed and used, showing an understanding of prayers for asking, say sorry and thank-you. Discussions with the children refine activity. Considering a variety of approaches to prayer, children said they enjoyed quiet reflection and 'Just think' assemblies best. This has a positive impact on their spiritual development. Worship themes sometimes link to other curriculum areas, so that finding out about the plight of street children or life in parts of Africa is used to inform children about the world-wide nature of the Christian church. School worship is usually led by the headteacher, along with class and celebration assemblies; leadership by other staff is too limited. Children also enjoy occasional worship led by the local 'Youth for Christ' group who also run an oversubscribed 'Jesus and me' after-school club. There are occasional opportunities for children to plan, deliver and evaluate worship which have significant impact. Examples of pupil initiatives include one focussing on autism, in support of a particular child, and another sharing the children's plans for a butterfly garden and quiet area. Harvest and Christmas are celebrated in church with much pupil participation and Remembrance is commemorated annually at the local war memorial. Families and friends enjoy joining the children for festival services but there are insufficient opportunities for them to join school worship throughout the school year.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is good**

The commitment, energy and professional skill of the headteacher sustains a drive for improvement and growth which motivates and energises the staff team and governing body. This is clearly driven by strong Christian values but these are implicit rather than explicitly articulated in documentation and on the school website. Staff work together to promote the school's development priorities through careful evaluation and focussed planning, including a recent review of RE and worship. Professional development is recognised as important, the RE subject leader's training and cascading to staff of 'Understanding Christianity' resources being an example. Professional development at all levels is actively encouraged and staff supported to grow as leaders. Governors welcome diocesan input. Recent training, focussing on the impact of Christian values, as they, along with staff, re-assess the school's mission

and aims. Recent changes in governor membership has strengthened its Christian profile and the new chair has a clear focus on effective governance. A foundation governor monitors RE and worship and the vicar, along with his pastoral role, helps with the evaluation and planning of worship themes. However, the development of the school's Christian distinctiveness is not integrated into whole school improvement plans. Governors maintain a healthy balance of challenge and support for school leaders. The school is rightly proud of exceptional relationships with children's families. Parents are welcomed to regular workshops and families enjoy social events, such as the summer fair and opportunities to attend children's performances and presentations. They value staff expertise and accessibility, speaking of sympathetic responses to queries and requests. Typical comments are 'they embrace the children', 'the kindness is monumental' and 'by Year 6 children are happy, confident and equipped to move on'. Links with the parish are stronger than ever with active support for the school's church foundation, practical examples being the introduction of Christian children's literature to support the school's literacy drive and promotion of Messy Church and pre-school drop-in sessions. Some progress has been made in addressing the areas for development identified at the last inspection. The school fully complies with statutory requirements for RE and collective worship and is well placed to make further improvements.

SIAMS report November 2017 St George's CE (VC) Primary School Church Gresley, Derbyshire, DE11 9NP