

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Christ Church Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School	Albert Street Oldbury B69 4DE
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Birmingham
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Good
Local authority	Sandwell
Date/s of inspection	14 October 2016
Date of last inspection	7 October 2011
School's unique reference number	103997
Headteacher	Michaela Long
Inspector's name and number	Jane Martin 646

School context

The school has been growing year on year to become a two form entry school and this will be fully accomplished in 2018. There has been significant re-building and expansion work since the last inspection. The school is located in the heart of Oldbury which is ethnically and religiously diverse. Many pupils are at an early stage of learning English and the proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average. The Parish Church is very close and is currently in interregnum.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Christ Church School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Christian beliefs and values are sensitively embedded into the life and work of this diverse school so that everyone feels loved and valued.
- Christian faith shines out in the physical environment so that pupils and staff are enveloped in the Christian message.
- Collective worship promotes Christian values and contributes to the very positive and harmonious community.
- Religious Education is well led and ensures that the faiths in the community are understood and valued.
- School leaders are highly driven by a practical and compassionate Christian vision focussed on the specific needs of this community.

Areas to improve

- Strengthen the biblical and theological structure of Collective Worship so that all acts of worship including those in classrooms are worshipful and contribute to pupils' spiritual development, understanding of Anglican traditions and the world-wide Church.
- Develop the school website so that the school's Christian life, vision and values are as clearly embedded there as they are in the school's physical environment.

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

A deeply practical and compassionate Christian vision underpins the provision of this school. It has a thorough understanding of the needs of the pupils and their families and supports them to be successful. As a parent noted, the school 'wants the children to thrive whatever their situation.' The Single Point centre is a well-used hub for advice, training and access to IT facilities, providing a place for community, support and friendship. This enables families to have skills and confidence to face and tackle social and economic challenges. The school is proactive, innovative and creative in responding to pupils' learning needs and a recently established Focussed Provision ensures that a specific group of children can remain included and nurtured in the school community. These significant and bespoke aspects bring life to the Christian values it promotes so that they are encountered and experienced as making a difference in people's lives and to pupils' achievement. The school uses its resources exceptionally well to inspire the children and ensure they can achieve as well as they can. This is borne out in the recent excellent outcomes for children in year 6 which are well above what was typical nationally. Using staff and other resources effectively and through incisive self-evaluation the school tackles underachievement robustly. Recent year 2 outcomes are significantly improved from the previous year for example. The mission of the school is beautifully and imaginatively captured and displayed in the school's entrance with the rays of the sun representing the school's strongly held values such as compassion, friendship, joy and acceptance. These symbols are then enlivened by the experiences children have in school to give meaning to these values. Relationships in the school are overwhelmingly positive. Staff describe the school's culture as supportive and open. The children work and play together harmoniously and readily identify that children of different faiths and cultures are friends. They think that if Jesus visited Christ Church School He would be impressed with their behaviour and note that when people make mistakes sometimes 'we forgive and ask God to forgive'. The children articulate their understanding of Jesus in the context of their experience of the values of the school. 'We know Jesus is fair, kind and helpful and so in our school we learn, we pray and share His light'. Parents experience the Christian character of the school in its inclusiveness of everyone. They feel 'accepted and respected' in an environment that is committed to its children and their families. Religious Education makes a highly positive contribution to learners' spiritual and moral development with lesson by lesson opportunities for enquiry and reflection. This ensures that learners talk fluently about aspects of Christianity and have a meaningful grasp of the religious traditions in the community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Following the last inspection, robust systems for evaluation of worship by governors, staff and children have been established. These inform its development. As increasing size makes it difficult for the whole school to gather to worship together, leaders have been creative in finding ways to maintain the impact of worship on the school's spiritual life. In larger gatherings for worship, use of the Roots and Fruits resource promotes Christian values and their biblical context. Learners explain how this enables them to understand the person and work of Jesus Christ and how the values impact on the choices that they make, such as how they treat one another and how they put things right. The Collective Worship Crew organises the setting up of and evaluating of worship. They lay the worship table with symbols and liturgical colours and talk knowledgeably about their significance. Learners are aware of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and how the Trinity is represented in worship by the Bible, a crucifix and a candle. From an early age children contribute to and participate in acts of worship. Whilst classroom worship is impactful on attitudes, behaviour and relationships, the Christian dimension needs strengthening so that each gathering is worshipful and develops understanding of the Bible. Harvest, Christmas and Easter are celebrated in Church. Services are well attended by parents who appreciate the welcome to be part of the school's worshipping life and the ensuing sense of belonging and acceptance. Relationships have been maintained with the church through the absence of the incumbent and visiting clergy have led some services. Prayer is prominent in the school at different points in the day. Pupils fluently recite the school prayer and take opportunities to be thankful at lunch time and reflective at the end of the day. Focus areas in every classroom with Christian symbols alongside those of other faiths, incorporate children's prayers and thoughts. These demonstrate learners' increasing depth of response to ideas about themselves, others, the world and God. Half termly 'prayer spaces' linked to worship themes are led by members of the church and all pupils take the opportunity to express their prayers in thoughtful and creative ways. The outdoor 'reflection hut', a response to a suggestion by learners, is regularly used by learners to pray, reflect or seek solace. The impact of worship can be strengthened by a more systematic approach to the theological and biblical topics covered across each type of worship in the week to bring greater cohesion between the values, biblical teaching and Anglican traditions.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious education has the status of a core subject and standards are similar or better to those achieved in core subjects. These are carefully recorded and analysed by leaders and governors. Quality is ensured by carefully developed standards files making expectations clear across the school. The provision is fully compliant with the local agreed syllabus focussing on developing positive dispositions in learners. Enquiry and reflection are embedded in the teaching and some themes lead to learners taking community action such as supporting Action for Children and Water Aid. Religious education provides opportunities for inner growth and for understanding the beliefs of everyone in the community so that children are highly respectful of one another. Children readily and confidently contribute to religious education by sharing artefacts from their own faith and explaining their traditions so that others are developing their knowledge and understanding from first hand sources. The school makes effective use of its staff to ensure that Christianity is taught with integrity and from a believer's perspective. Religious education is very well planned with precise learning objectives and differentiated outcomes. Almost all learners are positive about their learning and this is because the teaching is relevant to their lives, and reflection and response are embedded into lessons. This is enabling learners to develop and value a deep sense of spirituality. Questioning is encouraged and children question one another with deep interest and respect. The teaching of Christianity is biblically based and contributes to children's broader achievement for example as they explore the meaning of biblical language such as 'alighting' in reference to the dove at the baptism of Jesus. Religious education underpins children's understanding of theological concepts such as baptism, the Trinity and prayer. Teaching is based on excellent subject knowledge in the classroom and strong subject leadership. The passionate subject leader has ensured that the curriculum is highly relevant to the community and that learning is expressed in ways that have deep meaning for the learners including through remarkable art projects such as the stations of the cross and visits to the church. The quality of work in books and around the school is impressive showing high engagement with and impact of the subject. At the end of a lesson about the Baptism of Jesus a child prayed to the Holy Spirit, 'lift hatred out of my heart and fill it with your love'.

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

Strategic leadership, focussed on the impact the school's distinctiveness has on its community, enables the school to make a tangible difference to the lives of learners and their families. School leaders and governors have thoughtfully developed their vision and mission so that it is much more than rhetoric. The headteacher has been resourceful and innovative in developing the school's buildings and provision to have a gospel-centred, transformational impact for the vulnerable. A distinctiveness that is embracing of all faiths and cultures shines out of the life of this church school that proclaims its values in its actions and decisions. Provision for two year olds, sensory and imagination rooms, and a delightful school dog all contribute to children's development and emotional wellbeing. Christian distinctiveness permeates the physical environment of the school but this is not yet the case on the school website. Taking advice from the diocese, the governors have formed an ethos committee for shaping and evaluating school distinctiveness, bringing into the group people with experience and expertise. They have a very firm grasp of the elements that contribute to the Christian character and have taken an active role in strengthening it. Governors systematically monitor and evaluate this, with all action points from the previous inspection having been thoroughly achieved. Partnership with St. Michael's CE Secondary School is a great strength that enriches experiences for children such as through the reading bus and which prepares many children to take the next steps of their learning journey in a church school too. The governing body is clear that the gospel message is most powerfully expressed by inclusion being at the heart of everything it does and this being followed through in the support the school offers to its community. Staff and children evaluate the school and identify ways to improve. This could be further extended to include parents. The leader of collective worship and religious education has had training opportunities through the diocese and has worked positively with the education team to develop policy and practice. All staff have training that impacts on the character of the school which is explicit in the school's recruitment measures. Christian faith and values radiate from Christ Church School through an inclusive, accepting vision that is realised in its compassionate approach to everyone and its determination to find ways to give its children and families a future filled with hope and possibility.

SIAMS report October 2016 Christ Church Church of England School, Oldbury B6 4DE