

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Edgeley St. Matthew's Church of England Primary School

Bowden Street, Edgeley, Stockport SK3 9EA, Cheshire.

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Chester
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Date of Academy conversion	January 2014
Name of multi-academy trust	Chester Diocesan Academies Trust
Date of inspection	2 February 2017
Date of last inspection	February 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	VA 140417
Principal	Jacqueline Band
Inspector's name and number	Anne B. Woodcock 445

School context

St. Matthew's serves an area of relatively high deprivation in central Stockport. Most of the 199 pupils are of White British heritage. A small, but increasing number of pupils have English as an additional language. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well-above the national average. The school supports a higher than average proportion of pupils with additional needs and disabilities. The school status changed in January 2014 when it became an academy sponsored by the Chester Diocesan Academy Trust (CDAT). The change involved them taking on some of the characteristics of a voluntary aided school. The principal has been in post since January 2015.

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

- The outstanding vision and leadership of the principal and vice-principal has inspired staff and governors to re-establish a truly Christian, fully inclusive learning community in which all are valued as unique and special.
- Exceptionally strong, caring relationships, based on Christian love and hope, nurture and support pupils and their families extremely well.
- Pupils' very good behaviour is attributed to their understanding and use of the school's core Christian values.
- The school's truly inclusive nature ensures that provision for pupils' emotional well-being, personal and spiritual development is highly effective.

Areas to improve

- Provide opportunities for pupils to regularly plan, lead and evaluate collective worship independently, so that they can further develop their understanding of the nature and purpose of Christian worship.
- Extend pupils' understanding of diversity and related issues by providing more first-hand experiences of different cultures and faiths.

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

The school's Christian character is immediately felt by visitors. The six core Christian values, which include friendship, hope and compassion, are prominently displayed and consistently referred to by staff and pupils. 'Jesus gave us our values in the stories he told,' explained a Year 1 member of the school council. One Year 2 pupil stated, 'Love is the greatest value because it means that you are kind and compassionate.' Christian values impact strongly on relationships across the school family. As a result behaviour is very good and pupils' attitudes to life and learning are positive.

Pupils enjoy their learning and strive to achieve the targets set for them. They benefit from an innovative, creative curriculum which meets the varied needs of all learners. Provision for the early years is excellent. As a result, pupils make good, often rapid progress from their starting points. This progress is maintained across the school, so standards of attainment continue to rise.

The school is highly inclusive because the school believes that every child is unique and special. This is demonstrated through the care and support provided for vulnerable pupils and their families. Parents value this and recognise the difference it makes for their children. One parent explained, 'Our children are happy and extremely well-supported. The school looks after us as parents and they have our best interests at heart.'

Children are increasingly confident and articulate learners. They are well-used to expressing their opinions and collaborating within an atmosphere of trust. Provision for their emotional well-being, personal and spiritual development is excellent. As a result, the school's motto to 'let your light shine' is achieved and pupils flourish. They are reflective and thoughtful, expressing their ideas through art, poetry and prose. Displays reflect the high quality of their experiences. The class Big Question books reflect the depth of pupils' thinking. For example, when considering what the Kingdom of God might be like, a Year 3 pupil wrote, 'People would show kindness by helping others and not just thinking about themselves.'

Effective use is made of the outdoor learning spaces. Although limited, the school has created a green oasis within the urban setting. This is used creatively to support children's knowledge of the natural world and give them some experiences which inspire 'awe and wonder'. Religious education (RE) contributes strongly to the school's Christian character and to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is a much valued and integral feature of the daily life of the school. Pupils enjoy their worship experiences, particularly when they are involved in helping to act out a story or read from the Bible. Themes are founded on Bible teaching, Christian values and festivals. Children have a good knowledge of Bible stories and they talk confidently about the life and teaching of Jesus. 'Jesus used parables like the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son to teach people about God's love for everyone,' explained a Year 6 pupil. 'They help us know how to live good lives and help others,' added another. 'That's why we raise money for those who are hungry or ill.'

Children have a well-developed understanding of God as a caring father and creator. Older children talk knowledgeably about the Christian concept of the Trinity. 'God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, all in one,' explained a Year 6 pupil. 'The Spirit is not a physical thing but it will be with you.'

Increasingly strong links with the church support worship. The vicar and a foundation governor assist in planning worship themes. As these are closely linked to RE themes, children have repeated opportunities to deepen their understanding. The vicar leads worship in school each week, which is much enjoyed by pupils. He is a regular visitor, providing pastoral support and guidance for staff and pupils. Children are familiar with some traditional Anglican practices, such as the use of candles and responses. Festival services are held in church. Parents attend these services in considerable numbers because they value the opportunity they give to share in their children's worship. They also attend weekly celebration worship in school. One parent explained that the celebration worship showed how the school 'lives and breathes the value of love thy neighbour.'

Prayer and reflection are key features of daily worship. Children know the Lord's Prayer and Grace. They write and use some of their own prayers, some of which are displayed around school in books and prayer bags. Older pupils take responsibility for aspects of worship. The ethos group helps to lead some worship and all pupils are involved in the church services. However, pupils have infrequent opportunities to fully demonstrate their understanding of the purpose of worship. Collective worship is effectively monitored by governors and senior leaders. Feedback from staff, pupils and governors informs future planning and leads to ongoing improvements.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The profile of RE has improved considerably over the last two years. This is recognised by older pupils who relish the opportunity to discuss ideas openly and honestly. 'RE is good because we talk a lot about what we think and believe. There are often no right or wrong answers,' explained a Year 5 pupil. The innovative curriculum, based on the diocesan syllabus, is closely linked to worship themes, such as the current Kingdom of God theme. The enquiry based approach excites and challenges pupils of all ages and abilities. It ensures that a good balance is achieved between learning about and learning from religion.

Children enjoy their learning and their attitudes are positive. They use drama, art and collaborative work to help them investigate and analyse their ideas. Lessons are well-planned and resourced, enabling all pupils to make a contribution and make progress. Standards are in line with those achieved in other core subjects. This is evident in the well-presented quality of work seen in class folders and scrapbooks. The recently introduced assessment procedure tracks pupil progress and identifies gaps in learning. Pupils make good progress from their starting points.

RE makes a significant contribution to pupils' SMSC development. Children have a good understanding of the key features of Christianity. They use the church as a resource and learning is supported by the vicar. RE supports pupils' understanding of diversity through the study of Judaism and Islam. Older children make effective links between aspects of these faiths. For example, they understand that Jews, Muslims and Christians pray to God in different ways and that many similar stories feature in holy books. However, at present, they have limited opportunities to experience aspects of faiths and cultures other than their own at first hand, through visitors and leaders from other faiths and visits to their places of worship.

RE is effectively monitored by governors who observe lessons and meet with staff and pupils. Purposeful training from the diocese has substantially improved teacher confidence and subject knowledge. This is reflected in the consistent quality of teaching and improving standards and rates of progress.

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

The impact of the change of status and the excellent leadership of the principal cannot be over-stated. All members of the school family agree that together, they have inspired a complete transformation. The principal's Christian vision informs and directs all that is achieved in school. Together with the vice-principal, she has united the staff team, driven up standards and re-established the school's Christian distinctiveness. As a result, all work together to create the best possible learning environment to meet the needs of pupils, many of whom experience disadvantage. Exceptionally strong, supportive relationships, based on core Christian values, abound across the school.

Governors are passionate and well-informed. They support and challenge the work of the school through effective monitoring and evaluation. They visit regularly, meeting with staff and pupils, observing lessons and worship. Governors have secured very strong leadership for both RE and collective worship. Both are well-resourced and meet statutory requirements. Governors ensure that the needs of all children are met through the effective use of financial and human resources. The school supports vulnerable pupils and their families effectively and compassionately. The provision of a learning mentor is an example of the way in which leaders strive to ensure that all pupils flourish and achieve.

Self-evaluation processes ensure that church school issues are prioritised within whole school improvement planning. Issues from the previous inspection have been addressed and the impact of changes evaluated. Strategic planning is highly effective, so the future leadership of the school is secure.

The partnership with the diocese, through CDAT is impressive. It has been instrumental in raising standards and improving outcomes for pupils. Partnerships with other local schools, the diocese, churches and the community support aspects of school improvement and pupils' personal development. Pupils know that their opinions are valued and acted upon. They are aware of global issues such as injustice and refugees. 'Everyone deserves a chance,' stated a Year 6 pupil, 'so we try to help those less fortunate.'

SIAMS report February 2017, Edgeley St. Matthew's CE Primary School, Edgeley, Stockport, Cheshire SK3 9EA.