

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

### Smallwood Church of England Primary Academy

School Lane, Sandbach CW11 2UR

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Chester</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	Academy conversion 1 August 2014
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	N/A
Date/s of inspection	3 May 2018
Date of last inspection	31 January 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 111257
Headteacher	Caroline Mander
Inspector's name and number	Joanne Abram 931

#### School context

Smallwood C E (VC) Primary Academy is a smaller than average school in a rural catchment area in East Chester. There are 158 pupils on roll. There are six classes with all Key Stage 2 classes having mixed ages. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils or those with special educational needs is well below the national average. There have been significant changes since the last SIAS inspection with the appointment of a new headteacher in January 2017. The school is linked to St John the Baptist Church.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Smallwood C E Primary Academy as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The headteacher provides strong Christian leadership and a vision that is articulated by all leaders and is fully supported by the local church and vicar. The vision contributes to the school's Christian distinctiveness and to pupils' spiritual growth.
- There are deeply embedded Christian values that strongly influence pupils' exemplary behaviour and remarkably positive attitudes to life and learning.
- The relationships between pupils and the staff are based on mutual respect, where children are given and take second chances and are nurtured in a caring, close-knit community.
- The links between the school and church are strong and meaningful, bringing the members of the community together.

#### Areas to improve

- To formalise the way in which the school evaluates its distinctiveness as a church school in order to evidence the impact of the Christian vision.
- Provide experiences through which pupils can further deepen their knowledge and understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural global faith.

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

The school's mission statement, 'A torch is a beacon, a light in the darkness, a light to guide others,' focusses on children 'developing an understanding that they walk in the light of Christ' and that their goal is 'to reflect the glory of his name'. As all stakeholders collaborated on the development of this vision for the school, all can articulate its meaning and explain its impact on school life. Christian values such as respect, forgiveness, reconciliation and friendship are at the heart of all the school's aims, objectives and its philosophy. Biblical teaching, through religious education and collective worship, underpins the values, and the pupils are particularly knowledgeable of their basis and can give examples from the bible where the Christian values are explored.

All pupils are challenged to be high achievers, to 'always aim high, to achieve all that they are capable of, in a happy, resilient and determined way'. There is a clear commitment to providing all pupils, regardless of their background and ability, with the very best education firmly rooted in a Christian ethos. All pupil groups are given equal focus and priority, and as such, the school performs very well and achievement is good or better by the end of all key stages. The school actively promotes good attendance, supporting families to ensure that percentages are above national average. There have been no exclusions since the last inspection.

The Christian ethos is pertinent to the exceptionally strong relationships within school. This results in very high standards of behaviour and self-discipline where children receive rewards for positive behaviour. Children actively live out the Christian values of forgiveness and reconciliation, as they are given and take second chances, and speak positively of the support given to those who find school challenging at times. The genuine care that all staff demonstrate for the pupils is highly evident, not only in the interactions between adults and children, but the efforts that staff will go to, to ensure the wellbeing of the pupils. This is reflected in parents' comments who state that 'nothing is too much trouble' for the staff. Parents speak of only positive experiences of the school, where they value the initial warm welcome from the school's administrator. They state emphatically that staff 'go the extra mile' for their children and the headteacher is approachable and proactive.

There are lots of opportunities for this small community of learners to develop an understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) education which underpins a broad and balanced, creative curriculum, supported by a wealth of extra-curricular activities. The headteacher holds a weekly prayer circle which all pupils are invited to attend. It is here, in addition to collective worship, that pupils are taught the value and meaning of collective and personal prayer. Their prayers include school-related issues, as well as local, national and global concerns.

Pupils are taught to be outward looking, 'contributing as global citizens to the environmental and social issues of the day, sharing their talents willingly and compassionately'. Citizenship has a strong focus across the school, with the eco council meeting regularly to discuss matters concerning their immediate environment as well as selecting national and global charities that they wish to financially support such as MacMillan coffee mornings and the Samaritan's Purse. Enquiry based RE contributes to the Christian character of the school, as the children learn about the Christian faith in a relevant and reflective way. Pupils are able to make links with other world faiths, but there is some confusion between faith and culture that needs further exploration. Experiences in school, and in the local church, such as the harvest festival, the Easter parade and the christingle and carol services support the pupils on a journey of faith with their close-knit community. These events are an opportunity for the school to serve its community whilst forging strong, positive links with the local church.

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

Collective worship has a pivotal role in affirming some pupils in their own faith, developing the Christian vision, values and ethos and providing all pupils with the daily opportunity to encounter God in a relevant, child-centred way. It is 'at the heart of school life' and is seen by governors as an essential part of all pupils' education, therefore giving it the highest of profiles. There are opportunities provided for pupils to take part in and lead acts of worship. Working collaboratively with the local church, and after consultation with all stakeholders, the school has developed the opportunities to worship in church, with regular 'Family Worship' on Fridays. This has extended to include monthly Family Services on Sundays which are led by the clergy, and supported by some staff and pupils with bible readings and drama. Parents are invited to join the school in both of these services, and some parents expressed the positive impact this has had on their own and their children's church attendance.

Pupils are given the opportunity to visit places of worship including both the Anglican and Catholic Cathedrals in Liverpool and a Sikh Gurdwara, providing them with first hand experiences that enrich and enhance their spiritual and cultural development. Worship in school is regularly delivered by the vicar as well as the local New Life Evangelical Church's outreach group named 'Open the Book'. This demonstrates that the school community, including the local church, gives worship a high profile as it unites the school and the wider community. Children gain a good understanding of Christian teaching because acts of worship in school follow the Anglican Christian

calendar and also acknowledges all other major world faith festivals and celebrations. This helps to develop SMSC and inform behaviour and attitudes towards diversity. Christian values and clear biblical teachings are explored through thought-provoking planning provided by the collective worship leader. Pupils have a good understanding of the trinitarian nature of God through the delivery of pertinent collective worship plans. Both pupils and staff are engaged and inspired beyond the daily acts of worship and speak of the positive impact it has on their spiritual lives. Worship is evaluated by the worship council; its impact on the school community is discussed leading to developmental planning for improvement. Responsibilities for those who want to take part in or lead worship in either of the family services in church are allocated, and engaging drama is developed, ensuring that worship is accessible to and engaging for the school's youngest pupils. There are reflection areas in each classroom, prayer stones, prayer and worry boxes strategically placed around the school and quiet prayer and reflection spaces in corridors. These provide all pupils with valuable opportunities to develop their own personal prayer life and celebrate their growing faith should they wish to access them. They provide necessary 'time out' for pertinent pastoral care if it is needed. Pupils are encouraged to write their own prayers and are given the chance to read them aloud in classes or in collective worship. The awe and wonder of God is explored through engaging, enquiry based activities, the Forest Schools activities and other enrichment opportunities such as wellie walks. One teacher expressed that 'being close to the earth here helps children see that God is everywhere and everything is given to us by him'.

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

The headteacher's strong Christian leadership and clear Christian vision is at the centre of the school. Since her appointment, she has engaged all stakeholders effectively to work collaboratively to further develop the school's existing Christian vision and ethos. The staff, governors and the vicar fully support and bring to life this vision, ensuring that it is implemented at every level. The impact of this collaboration is evident in the pupils themselves. They are able to articulate what it means to the school as a whole, and to them as individuals to be part of a church school with values that are taught and developed and extend beyond the school day. Relationships are key to the success of this small, close-knit community where all adults work hard to create a nurturing environment where all are equally valued.

The senior leaders of the school ensure that RE maintains a high profile and is well led. As such, RE is driven by a very passionate and knowledgeable subject leader who confidently supports the teachers with the planning and delivery of the RE curriculum. RE, collective worship and the wider curriculum are central to the school's teaching of SMSC and Christian values and each contributes to the pupils' attitudes and behaviour. RE is well resourced and, as the RE leader has developed strong links with neighbouring church schools, opportunities for ideas and resources to be shared and developed even further are provided and explored. Clear Christian values influence key policies and practices and all decisions have the school's ethos at their core. Parents speak of their appreciation of the Christian values that are taught and the confidence they have in the school to help their children understand and develop them. They appreciate the way in which older pupils support younger pupils throughout the day, particularly with the use of the 'buddies' system which ensures that all pupils feel included. The church service at the start of the year, where older buddies escort the new reception children and light candles, introduces the new families to the school's Christian vision in a very meaningful way. It also helps to forge positive relationships from the very beginning of the children's school life and spiritual journey, where the youngest pupils and their parents feel part of the close-knit community.

The governors are committed to their role, recruiting staff who fully support the school's Christian vision and ethos. They are clear of their roles as governors, but also of their chosen commitment to find ways to support St John's church, helping to develop family services and increase families' engagement. This has resulted in a strong school and church link, as both are at the hub of this rural community. The governing body are aware of clear areas of focus in the school development plan, including the focussed areas for development from the last SIAS inspection. They use self-evaluation to drive school improvement, ensuring that targets are fully met and that continued professional development for the headteacher and teachers facilitates school development. The headteacher has been instrumental in developing staff, mentoring NQTs and senior leaders alike and succession planning is secure. All staff fully support the school's Christian ethos and vision and feel equipped to develop SMSC through the curriculum and beyond. Outcomes for pupils in RE are reported to governors as they receive termly reports from curriculum leaders. Governors are well equipped to hold the school to account through questioning and in providing appropriate challenge during governors' meetings as well as during more informal learning walks. The vicar of St John's Church, who is also a foundation governor, attends the school weekly, and supports pupils' spiritual development through his engaging and child-centred worship.