

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St George's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Buxton Road, Heaviley, Stockport. SK2 6NX

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Chester
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Stockport
Date/s of inspection	1 February 2018
Date of last inspection	21 February 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided Primary 131306
Headteacher	Debbie Grindrod
Inspector's name and number	Carol Berry 324

School context

St George's is a larger than average voluntary aided primary school of 388 pupils. It is situated in an urban area in Stockport. Most pupils are of White British ethnicity and are drawn from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (27%) is more than usual. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (23%) is below average. The headteacher was appointed in September 2016 and since then there have been significant changes to the senior leadership of the school. The church is adjacent to the school. The school holds the RE Quality Mark (REQM) Gold.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St George's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Christian values inform relationships, decision making and the restorative approach to behaviour management. They infuse the curriculum. The school is a warm and welcoming family, which nurtures pupils and staff through its commitment to meeting the needs of each valued individual.
- The headteacher and other leaders live the Christian vision. The exceptionally close partnership with the church means that the vicar also makes a significant contribution to the leadership of the school. She is a much-loved friend who enriches worship, contributes to the development and implementation of the Christian vision and provides pastoral support.
- A range of creative prayer activities, both in school and in church, have contributed to children's rich understanding of prayer and the way many of them turn to prayer in times of joy or difficulty.
- The school is an inclusive community where everyone is valued as a precious child of God and diversity is celebrated. Religious education (RE) fosters a spirit of respectful enquiry about faith and supports this through a range of visits and visitors. Pupils of all faiths are confident in sharing how their families celebrate festivals, including Christian celebrations from different cultures and festivals from other religions.

Areas to improve

- To involve pupils in taking responsibility for the leadership of acts of worship. This is to help them to more fully understand the purpose of different aspects of worship.

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

St George's is a joyful learning community where each individual is loved and valued because they are seen as precious to God. Christian values are at the core of the school's thinking and actions. Relationships between all members of the school community are excellent and children often relate their choices to what Jesus would do. Behaviour management is restorative, with an emphasis on starting afresh when something has gone wrong. Children know they are valued and work hard to do their best. This contributes to good achievement and progress. Children demonstrate profound understanding of Christian values. They readily relate these to the way they behave, their compassion for those in need and the need to be good stewards of the world. They explained links between perseverance and a range of Bible stories, including the way Jesus 'accepted his fate and kept going, even when Judas betrayed him'.

Spiritual, moral, cultural and social education is enriched by the school's distinctive Christian character. Teachers have a sound understanding of how to support spiritual development. They often pause to relate learning or behaviour to Christian values or for reflection. Learning in RE plays a significant role in determining planning for the creative curriculum. The current whole school topic of conservation was launched with an inspiring visit to Chester Zoo. Innovative planning links the visit to worship themes, RE and other curriculum subjects. As a result, all children are bubbling with enthusiasm for the need to conserve the world God made.

RE makes an excellent contribution to children's attitudes to different faiths and cultures. Visits to places of worship and visitors, such as a Muslim teaching assistant, result in pupils developing enthusiasm for learning about diversity. Children relate their respect for people of different faiths to the teaching of Jesus, explaining how the parable of the Good Samaritan challenges prejudice. A pupil said, 'The hero was supposed to be an enemy and was from a different culture'. All children, including those who joined the school recently with English as an additional language, feel welcome. They contribute to the learning of other pupils by sharing their own family celebrations.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship inspires children and adults. It provides them with space for reflection and prompts them to take action for those in need. It is vibrant and engaging, rooted in the Bible and relates faith to life. Children sing with joy and enthusiasm. They say worship is fun. Staff say worship helps them by providing space for reflection at the start of the day. In a whole school act of worship, children were inspired to act to take care of the world. They relished the experience of the whole school singing in parts. They were engaged through interactive activities and the headteacher's role play when she pretended it was acceptable to throw rubbish around the church. Children enjoy participating in worship, but they do not at present take responsibility for leading acts of worship themselves.

Collective worship is greatly enriched by the close partnership with the local church. The church provides an awe-inspiring venue for worship several times each week and this special environment for worship is valued by students and staff. It is also used for special celebrations which are much appreciated by parents. They say the Remembrance Day service, when poppies dropped from above, was particularly moving. The vicar and members of the congregation give time and creativity which makes a very positive impact on worship. During the Easter Experience, run by members of the congregation, children re-enacted parts of the Easter story including the entry to Jerusalem and the Last Supper. As a result, children are able to explain important beliefs about Easter with insight and understanding.

Children are able to understand important Christian beliefs and festivals as a result of the range of themes encountered in worship throughout the year. They explain God as a caring father who keeps you safe, like a parent. They describe the Holy Spirit as 'God being always with you' and having the power to 'break down your walls'. They have a mature understanding of the importance of prayer, gained through a range of creative prayer activities. These include use of the reflective corners in each classroom and the beautiful prayer room. All children took part in the recent prayer week, when members of the church supported prayer stations, including the use of a reflection tent and prayer trees. They spoke with understanding about how this developed their thinking about prayer. For example, a Year 5 boy described the way he had used the forgiveness prayer tree. He said, 'God always forgives you and always loves you.'

Leadership of collective worship is very effective. Planning is closely linked to the wider curriculum, with the result that children's thinking in worship continues throughout the school day. Acts of worship are evaluated as a matter of routine and pupils contribute to evaluation. This evaluation effectively informs development planning.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE provides children with a safe space where they are able to explore big questions and discuss their ideas in a respectful environment. Lessons are exciting as they deploy a wide variety of learning strategies, including use of the arts, information technology and drama. Teachers have high aspirations for achievement and children make excellent progress. Teaching is consistently good and often outstanding. Steady progress is secured by excellent systems for assessment. Challenging learning outcomes underpin lesson planning and are used to assess pupils' progress on a termly basis. Staff use assessment in RE with confidence as the result of support given in staff meetings when pupils work is discussed.

The curriculum is well-planned and builds understanding of key concepts coherently across the key stages. Making use of the 'Understanding Christianity' materials, children revisit important beliefs about Jesus as they move through the school. Children in Year 2 explore the nature of the Kingdom of God through artwork and children in Year 6 consider ways in which Christians could build the Kingdom of God through their actions. As a result, children use a wide theological vocabulary, including words such as salvation, resurrection and incarnation, with confidence. Learning in RE makes an impact on the wider curriculum and children often express ideas in RE through art or creative writing.

Children have a sound understanding of diversity within Christianity and other religions. Their understanding of other cultures is enhanced by the way in which children share their own family celebrations. They learn that it is acceptable to be different and disagree with each other respectfully. A pupil who recently joined the school from Spain shared the way he celebrates Epiphany. Muslim children confidently discuss their own faith. They explained, 'Muslims believe Jesus is a prophet, but for Christians he is Son of God.' Understanding of diversity is enriched through visits, for example, to a Baptist church, a mosque and a synagogue.

Leadership of RE is outstanding and continually drives improvement. One of the RE leaders is qualified as an REQM assessor. This means she brings back good practice seen in other schools. Leaders are well-supported through professional development and support from the diocese.

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

The Christian vision for a welcoming and inclusive family, founded on Christian values, permeates everything the school does. The school recently reviewed the vision and mission statement and all members of the community talk about the way in which children are valued. The headteacher lives the vision in the care she provides for pupils and staff. All speak warmly of the way her door is 'always open'. Leaders and staff provide strong role models, with staff and teaching assistants demonstrating positive role models as they work as a team within each class. A teaching assistant described how coming to school had helped her when she faced a difficult time, 'I love it so much, the family feeling and community helped me to get through.' Prayer is an important way in which support is given, with church and school praying for each other's needs.

Governance is effective, with foundation governors providing practical support and inspiration. The vicar contributes to the leadership of collective worship and the implementation of the Christian vision. The response made to the focus for development from the last SIAS inspection has contributed to school improvement. Evaluation of the school as a church school is secured by regular reviews of planning being incorporated into the school improvement cycle. All stakeholders are involved in evaluation which feeds into strategic planning. RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements. Senior leaders are committed to investing in future leaders of church schools and good professional development opportunities are available to the leaders of collective worship and RE. Following Christian leadership training, one of the deputies is about to take up a headship.

There are strong partnerships with the local community and the school makes contributions through a range of charity work, regular coffee mornings and visits for the choir to sing at homes for the elderly. There are close links with Stockport County football team who regularly support training in school. They also contributed to worship when Christian members of the team visited to share their faith with pupils. Pupils think as global citizens as a result of their charity work and work about other countries in class. However, the school does not currently have any global partnerships and is actively engaged in setting up a partnership with a school in another country through the British Council.

SIAMS report February 2018 St George's Voluntary Aided Primary School Stockport SK2 6NX