

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Paul's Church of England Primary School, Withington

St Paul's Road, Withington Manchester, M20 4PG

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Manchester
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Manchester
Date of inspection	19 October 2017
Date of last inspection	October 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary controlled 105498
Headteacher	Jan Sorohan
Inspector's name and number	Nigel Castledine 652

School context

This larger than average Church of England primary school is an integral part of its local community, situated in a distinctive urban area of south Manchester. The local parish church is close by the school buildings.

The school serves the local diverse population which has a high proportion of minority ethnic families. A third of the pupils speak English as an additional language. The school has double the national average of pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans and has just under the national average percentage of disadvantaged pupils.

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

- The inspirational leadership of the headteacher and the commitment of her staff has ensured that the school's Christian ethos has supported and enhanced the sustained educational attainment of all groups of pupils. They make sustained good progress through school so they achieve and often exceed national expectations by the end of Year 6.
- Supporting and caring relationships between all members of the school community, modelled by the staff, have an affirmative influence on the pupils' thoughtful behaviour and respect for others.
- Pupils with additional needs are given individualised care and educational support by the staff that enables them to overcome potential barriers to their learning. This ensures that they can benefit fully from school life.

Areas to improve

- Deepen pupils' spiritual development by using the school's growth mind-set approaches to explore and discuss the awe and wonder of their learning within the 'One Voice' groups.
- Enable pupils to independently plan, lead and evaluate school worship in order to deepen their spiritual lives and to ensure pupil voice is a regular part of worship planning and delivery.

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

St Paul's school offers a caring, stimulating learning experience for all, irrespective of personal lifestyle, faith, ethnicity or spoken language. Pupils are immersed in an education of the highest quality with Christian belief and practice as its foundations. Accordingly, a significantly high percentage of pupils attain at or above national expectations and progress is at least good within all groups of pupils. These levels have been sustained over recent years. The school supports its pupils to develop a 'growth mindset', which inspires them to persevere and strive for the best possible outcomes. Teachers enable pupils to enjoy their learning and to want to adopt positive learning behaviours. Because of this, pupils want to be in school as they relish its challenges and excitement. This leads to rates of attendance that meet national expectations.

The Christian nature of the school ensures that there is a supportive focus on the significant number of pupils with additional needs, including those with English as a second language. They are helped to make good or better progress by targeted learning interventions, alongside supportive links to external support agencies when required.

The school's six chosen Christian values encourage pupils to develop their understanding of the significance of faith. These gospel values comprise love, hope, forgiveness, thankfulness, respect and justice/peace. They underpin the school's Mission Statement's aims and objectives, and are embedded in school life so that pupil and adults use them as reference points. Pupils learn about their significance and biblical context in both religious education (RE) and collective worship, for which they are regular themes. Their relevance is seen in the positive observation of an older pupil who commented, 'There is always something to be thankful for. Life is an adventure!'

The school offers learning opportunities through which pupils are able to grow spiritually. RE in particular provides pupils of all faiths or none with experiences of spiritual awe and wonder. The school has also developed a weekly time for pupils of a mix of ages to meet with a staff member in a small group. These 'One-Voice' times include discussion on thought-provoking subjects for pupils of any age to share their views and to consider those of others. However the school has not yet explored the wider potential of these groups to enhance the development of pupils' spirituality.

RE is taught as a core subject of the school, with pupil progress and attainment matching that of other core subjects. RE learning is also integrated within the wider school curriculum and is highly influential within collective worship. Pupils are able to refer back to their RE learning when considering worship themes and the school's chosen Christian values. A pupil observed, 'Jesus told the story of the Samaritan helping the stranger. He wants us to help others, not just our friends.'

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The development of school worship was an action point from the last inspection. Since then, worship has become more inclusive, pupil-orientated and meaningful. Daily worship now provides richly varied opportunities for pupils to perceive that all are valued by God. Thoughtful planning by the senior leadership team ensures worship has relevance for all, irrespective of personal faith or no particular belief. Built into worship planning are the school's six core Christian values, so pupils can perceive clear links to Christian teaching and the Bible. Additionally, built into worship plans are clear links to the RE curriculum. The themes of worship reflect the Anglican calendar of Christian festivals and seasons, with inclusive reference made to the special events of other major world faiths.

Worship in school is co-ordinated by a designated lead teacher who ensures its delivery and administration run smoothly. Pupils benefit from the variety of worship leaders who include the vicar, senior staff and class teachers. However currently pupils do not plan and lead the collective worship independently and have little involvement in its evaluation. This prevents pupils' views on worship from influencing future worship plans.

The vicar is very active in the life of the school for which she is a governor, making the school welcome for worship in the nearby parish church. Church worship gives pupils of all faiths or none an opportunity to experience the atmosphere, liturgy and traditions of an Anglican church setting. These services, with much of the liturgy led by the pupils, celebrate the major Christian festivals of the year. They attract an inclusive attendance of parents and family members who come from a variety of major world faiths or have no particular faith. Governing board monitoring of worship is carried out by governors who are available to attend daytime school worship. Worship also provides opportunities for the school to celebrate pupils' achievements through Christian thanksgiving and praise.

Pupils respond to school worship by listening carefully and willingly responding to the engaging and inspirational themes. They enjoy participating in worship songs, drama, readings, prayers and reflections, showing enthusiasm and due reverence. Prayer and reflection are always an essential part of collective worship and pupils are encouraged to contribute their own prayers, and to use prayer within their personal lives.

An appropriate worship atmosphere is created through the focal point of a worship table. Placed on this, three candle flames are lit. Liturgical responses help pupils to link the three flames to the Christian Trinity of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Involvement in Easter and Pentecost interactive learning experiences in the church also help pupils to deepen their age-appropriate theological understanding of the Holy Trinity.

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

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors lead by personal example and commitment, providing clear guidelines that ensure planning and policies reflect and uphold the school's Christian values. The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing board all demonstrate high levels of drive and ambition to further improve the school. They recognise and ensure that the Christian distinctiveness of the school is the major stimulus to the high levels of pupil progress and attainment.

Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and development areas of their school. Their overview includes an understanding of the impact of the school's Christian ethos in sustaining improvement and pupil well-being. The recent Ofsted inspection recognised the strengths of the school's Christian values in 'helping pupils to become well-rounded individuals'.

The Christian values also underpin the school's behaviour policy with its emphasis on forgiveness, respect and justice/peace. Each day in school gives all pupils a fresh start and restorative justice ensures that issues are resolved. Because of this Christian emphasis, behaviour throughout school is of a very high standard. Pupils show inclusive trust, fairness and respect for all, irrespective of ethnicity or lifestyle. They also show Christian service to others by taking on responsible roles in the life of the school. Pupils' Christian compassion for the needs of others is seen in their support for local and global good causes. Bullying is a rare event which is resolved swiftly with compassionate support. This calm and caring school atmosphere has a transformational effect on pupils who join the school having previously struggled within other educational settings. A parent commented, 'Our school is nurturing and safe for every child. Every child at St Paul's is valued highly and made to feel special.'

The staff are provided with opportunities to develop their personal understanding of the school's Christian values and assisted in developing skills to explore these effectively with pupils. The effective lead teacher for RE is supported in her role through course attendance and is given time to lead RE in-service training for colleagues. Continuous professional development for all staff is provided to ensure that pupils' educational and well-being needs are fully met. The headteacher perceives the value of appropriate senior staff attending Christian leadership courses, which support succession planning for leadership within church schools.

Supportive links with the diocese include the visit of the diocesan director of education on his pilgrimage around the schools of the diocese. Links with the local community are mutually positive and strengthened by involvement with the congregation and worship of the parish church.

The value placed on the positive support given by staff to all parents and carers promotes the school's ethos of Christian inclusiveness, explained by one parent as 'no them and us at this school'. Conversations at home reveal the impact of the school's Christian values which pupils use in the home setting as a reminder to think of the needs of others. A parent explained, 'My child says she is happy with her friends because they care about her. It's the values they learn in school that makes this happen.'

SIAMS report October 2017, St Paul's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Withington, M20 4PG