

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Paul's Church of England Primary School

Waterworks Road
Ryhope
Sunderland
SR2 0LW

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Durham and Newcastle
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Sunderland
Name of multi-academy trust / federation [delete as appropriate]	N/A
Date/s of inspection	24 November 2016
Date of last inspection	16 November 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	I08836
Headteacher	Natalie Fountain
Inspector's name and number	David Taylor 895

School context

St. Paul's Church of England Primary School (VC) is an average sized primary school, with 228 pupils on roll. Its nursery was added in 2006. It is located in an area where socio-economic conditions are marginally above national average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The number of children from an ethnic minority background is well below the national average, as is the percentage of pupils with an identified special educational needs and disability (SEND). Since its last SIAS inspection the school has appointed a new senior leadership team.

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

- The strong Christian ethos of the school is lived and breathed by members of the school community and has impact in the wider community. This impacts directly and positively on the quality of pastoral and academic provision leading to an improvement of standards and a nurturing, caring community atmosphere.
- Leaders have placed a high priority on collective worship and religious education (RE) since the last SIAS inspection. As a consequence the school has made significant improvements in the provision and impact of these aspects of school and community life.
- Links with local churches and the wider community are of substantial mutual benefit. Not only do they enrich pupils' understanding of Christianity and enhance their learning of Christianity and other faiths, but they also play a highly valued role in the local community bringing people together in worship and in community activities.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that the role of governors is formalised as part of the school review process and that they are increasingly proactive in driving forward the school's Christian ethos.
- Ensure that the information and policies on the school website fully reflect the school's strong Christian ethos and values.

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

The Christian ethos of the school permeates every aspect of the school community and distinctively Christian values are central to the life of the school community. Staff, pupils and governors are consistently enthusiastic in citing the Christian values without prompting and readily articulate ways in which these impact their lives. 'Respect' helps pupils to succeed academically, because 'it makes you listen to the teachers and other pupils' and 'you are not scared to put up your hand to ask questions'. 'Forgiveness' helps in the building of friendships and in addressing unkind words or behaviours amongst pupils. Typical pupil comments on forgiveness relate this directly to Jesus Christ who 'forgives us all' and 'forgave people who had done bad stuff'. 'Compassion' is given context in the warm and open interactions between teachers, pupils and the wider school community. 'Service' is seen in the charitable activities of the school including their work with the Shoe Box Appeal (which pupils linked to 'sharing love'), Red Cross, Salvation Army and the Elim Pentecostal church. There is a strong acknowledgement of the need to give pupils the understanding of other faiths and cultures. This is within the context of the school's almost exclusively White British demographic. Pupils are taught about and explore other faiths and cultures through RE, assemblies and visitors, for example the parent of Sikh pupil who explained aspects of his faith. Pupils demonstrate a respect for and understanding of those of other faiths including Islam, Sikhism and Buddhism. Pupils comments such as 'We know how other people of different faiths live their lives now' exemplify this. Pupils engage and value a wide range of experiences in RE, collective worship, assemblies and church services. These experiences develop pupils' and staff's own spirituality based on the Christian faith. The physical environment of the school reflects the Christian faith in its display work across the whole school. Pupils are excited and challenged by RE lessons and find value in it, for example a pupil explained in RE that 'God guides you through life'. RE lessons help develop the cultural, social and moral understanding, for example the 'Feelings Table' provoked deep thinking on social injustice with references to homelessness and the work of the Salvation Army. The nurturing environment and warm relationships based on explicitly Christian values directly influences pupils' engagement with school. As a result attendance is above national average and there have been no exclusions in the last five years. Typical pupil comments include 'Jesus wants us to follow in his footsteps and that helps us to behave well.'

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Pupils' engagement in and enthusiasm for collective worship transmits to their life both within and beyond school. It is clear that collective worship is greatly valued and woven into the fabric of school life and the local community. Pupils actively volunteer to be part of whole school worship and treat these occasions with reverence. They are able to articulate their understanding of biblical references, confidently give Bible readings and sing songs based around Christian themes with gusto. Pupils and staff derive comfort from and ascribe value to prayer which is typically considered 'part of the norm' by those across the whole school community. Collective worship is firmly rooted in Christian traditions and has been developed in partnership with St Paul's Church around the Christian and church calendar. It gives learners an experience and understanding of Christian traditions and the seasons of the church. Pupils learn about the Holy Trinity in RE and collective worship as evidenced by a typical pupil explanation 'God the Father and Son are God in the human form but the Holy Spirit is God in spirit form.' The pupil voice is strong in the evaluation and shaping of collective worship provision, through the school council system. Parents state that they are 'delighted' with collective worship and feel that their views are listened to and acted upon. Staff, governors and clergy have helped shape provision. This whole school input has in turn led to a significant improvement on the impact of collective worship in delivering the Christian message. Pupils have a rich and varied experience of worship which is enhanced through regular services held at St Paul's and Sunderland Minster. This is further enhanced through a range of clergy assemblies and visitor, class worship and visits. Collective worship experiences develop the personal spirituality of pupils and staff. Pupils clearly see the value of public prayer and reflection. Prayer spaces are used extensively across the school which encourage pupils to write and display their own prayers and questions. Their messages demonstrate a development of personal spirituality. Examples include, 'Dear God, thank you for letting Jesus light up our world' and 'God, are people happy in heaven?' Since the last inspection there has been considerable improvement in links with the local community and churches. This enriches the experience of pupils, as well as increasing attendance to local churches as parents engage with worship alongside their children. The vicar of the local St Paul's Church and chair of governors is known well around the school and village and seen as a key figure. This has strengthened links between the church and school and brought benefit to the wider community. He relayed, for example, how the 'Harvest Festival collection box is always the biggest of the year' as a consequence of the school holding its service there. Parents speak of their children often bringing home Christian stories and songs. Typically a parent relayed how their child had 'told us all about Easter over tea', shortly after attending an Easter service at Sunderland Minster. Another parent shared how 'He loves his Bible and wants a story every night now', following a Bible dedication service at the school.

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

Leaders live out and role model strong Christian values and 'walk the talk' creating an inclusive, nurturing and caring school environment. Their passionate leadership and Christian vision for the school has led to substantial progress in Christian distinctiveness and collective worship since the last inspection in 2011. This is commendable and shows the strength in depth of the leadership team. A whole school staff and governor training day in September 2014, centred on Christian values and ethos is indicative of importance placed on the distinctively Christian ethos. The development of staff as leaders in church schools is enhanced through its role as a strategic alliance partner of the Prince Bishop Teaching School Alliance (PBTSA). This is typical of the collaborative work with other schools to train teachers and leaders of the future and in order to sustain improvement. The school conducts thorough self-evaluation which leads directly to improved provision. Governors, parents and staff talk of the significant positive change that the strengthening of the church ethos and community links has made over the last three years. A typical comment from a member of staff was 'It's like a new school in terms of its ethos'. A parent commented on the Christian distinctiveness of the school and their perception of change over last few years stating 'It might not have been visible before but it certainly is now.' The impact of the Christian ethos on the behaviour of pupils is typified by the example of six pupils from the school choir; they gave a special performance to a patient at St Benedict's Hospice as it was felt he would pass away before the full school choir performance was due. This and similar acts are explicitly linked to the school's Christian character. Christian and other religious themes are used across the curriculum. This helps to deepen understanding whilst contributing to overall pupil attainment. For example, Anne Frank's Diary was discussed and pupils considered Anne Frank 'beginning to doubt the existence of God'. Governors have an active and increasingly developed role in the evaluation of provision, and talk of staff 'going the extra mile, in the Christian tradition'. There is an 'open door' to governors for discussion and sharing of ideas and this helps sustain a strong Christian ethos. As a direct consequence of the chair of governors' input, for example the concept of lectionaries has been introduced to the school with pupils 'walking through the church seasons' and readily identifying with the colours of each season. The church benefits from display work produced by the pupils used within church and the greater community participation and support for St Paul's church from parents, staff and pupils. The wider community contributing to the school is exemplified, for example, by ordinands from Cranmer Hall, a local vicar training college, working with pupils at the school. This had a positive impact on both the school and the wider church community. It is clear that the passion and efficacy of the leadership team suggest a desire and capacity to sustain improvement.

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