

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

<b>St. John's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School</b>	
Brook Lane Walsall Wood Walsall WS9 9NA	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	Lichfield
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Walsall
Date of inspection	10 November 2016
Date of last inspection	October 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 104228
Headteacher	Andrew Mills
Inspector's name and number	Reverend Alison M. Morris 759

### School context

St. John's Church of England Primary School is a larger than average primary school with 370 pupils aged from 3 to 11 years. The school is situated near to a private housing estate and serves the community of Walsall Wood. It is both popular and oversubscribed. Most pupils are from White British heritage with 10% from minority ethnic groups. The school is a Beacon School within Lichfield diocese. Links exist with the wider community especially with the church, foundation governors and clergy. The most recent OFSTED inspection in October 2011 was judged 'outstanding.' The school has been awarded Teaching School status.

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

- A Christian leadership and vision which is confidently lived out and promoted by all leaders is instrumental in the creation of a distinctively Christian school that is inclusive, welcoming and harmonious.
- Exemplary pastoral care and intervention strategies that overcome barriers to learning and enable pupils to realise their potential within a safe and stimulating Christian community.
- The significant link between the incumbent and the school enhances pupils' attitudes to collective worship, faith and their subsequent spiritual journey.

### Areas to improve

- Through development of the Worship Team, engage pupils with the incumbent and governors to add more rigour and formality to the process of monitoring and evaluating collective worship for church school development.
- Deepen pupils' knowledge of the Trinity as part of the Anglican tradition and provide pupils with clear reference points for understanding in the daily worship.
- Foster more partnerships and strategies which will allow pupils to encounter different faiths and cultures to deepen pupils' understanding of a multi-faith and multi-cultural world.

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

St. John's has exceptional Christian distinctiveness, Anglican character and a positive ethos which is immediately apparent. Christian values are deeply embedded into the school's life and work. This is expressed in documentation, including the inspirational displays and visual statements around the school. Explicit core Christian values which are rooted in biblical teaching, shape and support the holistic approach to meet the needs of each pupil. This vision is shared by all stakeholders. Core values, which are based on the fruit of the Spirit, are particularly seen in the outstanding pastoral care and its impact to remove barriers for learning with pupils. Pupils feel secure and are supported to face life's challenges and are cared for through times of difficulty. St. John's special 'family' ethos is underpinned by Christian values which is common to all pupils whatever their faith or background. A pupil observed, 'the school accepts everyone, listens to us and everyone knows everyone else.' Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development (SMSC) is also nurtured and challenged by core Christian values. SMSC is very well promoted in religious education (RE) as well as in high quality spiritual experiences within worship and the classroom. Highly effective intervention programmes and excellent SEND (special educational needs and/or disability) provision have a direct life-changing impact on all pupils and particularly those with deep seated needs. This enables them to make good progress. Standards of behaviour are exemplary and supported by the management approach of 'Choice, Decision, Instruction.' Christian values underpin the clear guidelines and expectations for pupils to reach their potential. High expectations and aspirations by all staff have a positive influence on pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships, ensuring that pupils mature spiritually and personally. Harmonious staff relationships provide excellent Christian role models which are attributed to both the school's Christian character and values. The school is a happy, inclusive Christian environment with excellent attitudes shown by pupils to their learning. Pupils love learning and are keen to attend school and so absence is minimal. As a result, pupils make excellent progress and achieve impressive standards of attainment which are well above national averages. Diversity is embraced as pupils from all cultures feel welcomed and their beliefs are respected. One pupil said, 'I believe that God created us all and we are equal'. They understand what it means to be a pupil at a church school and make the link to Christian teaching in the Bible. Both the work of the school council and the charity fund-raising encourages responsibility, maturity and team work. The new RE curriculum makes a very significant contribution to the Christian character and SMSC development. It also fosters a deep respect for Christian values and beliefs. One parent said, 'Children leave here with a deep knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith'. Pupils are excited by RE which is well planned and which has a high priority in school. Pupils who are part of the local Sikh community have provided opportunities to enhance RE through sharing of their faith and experiences. Classrooms have Christian symbols, and reflection corners, which, when used for reflection and prayer, make a very significant contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Exemplary displays using Christian artefacts and Bible stories throughout the school and entrance hall express the school's Christian distinctiveness and encourage spiritual growth. The school is an excellent environment, in which all pupils thrive academically and socially in a creative, friendly environment.

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

Worship is distinctively Christian and evokes a sense of believing and gathering in God's presence for worship. It has a strong focus on the person of Jesus Christ with a developing understanding of the Trinity. It is inclusive, aspirational, and accessible to all pupils. Worship which is pupil centred aims to meet the needs of all pupils and provides meaningful experiences which are appropriate and significant to the pupil's lives. As a result it makes an outstanding impact upon reinforcing and embedding both the Christian values and the vision of this Anglican school. Storytelling, music and prayer are used very effectively to enhance the experience of collective worship. Visual images, symbols and lighted candles are used appropriately to encourage awe and wonder. It is distinctively Christian in character and firmly based on Christian values and Bible teaching. Worship is very well planned, thematic and recorded by an excellent co-ordinator. It also carefully follows the church's liturgical year using a variety of leaders, worship styles and settings. Foundation governors ensure that Christian values are reinforced using a wide range of Anglican traditions and practice. Pupils enjoy worship and are attentive and affirmed throughout. They speak confidently about Jesus and his teachings. One child remarked how he believes that Jesus's teaching explains 'how the world works'. Additional activities such as 'Messy Church' and the Christian Club greatly enhance worship experiences in both church and school. As a result, attitudes to worship are very good because through moral messages, worship encourages pupils to relate their learning to their own behaviour and life, fostering responsibility and respect. Pupils' behaviour, attitudes and belief are influenced by Christian distinctiveness. They are encouraged to question belief and faith with reflections on the 'Big Questions' of life. Through the new Worship Committee, pupils are beginning to plan and lead worship in church and school. Pupils are also involved in setting up, selecting music, planning and engaging, with some evaluation through pupil interviews which provides feedback for further development. Key Christian festivals such as Harvest and Christmas are celebrated in St. John's Church which reinforces the historic link between the church and school.

Parents also respond positively to the invitation to worship such as through the 'café' style Family Services. These strong links with the parish, diocese and foundation governors ensure Christian distinctiveness always has a high profile in school. Reflection time for pupils is woven into school life and enriched through visual statements, as well as prayer corners which visually stimulate pupils' faith development. This is encouraged and nurtured through the Children's Communion Project. One pupil remarked, 'I look forward to being confirmed. It is a big decision as a child.' Spirituality mapping across the curriculum has resulted in activities which deepen pupils' understanding of their faith. As a result, pupils' spiritual development is exemplary. This is fostered through engaging activities which are built into the curriculum in addition to acts of collective worship such as the weekly Eucharist for year 5 and year 6. One pupil said, 'I enjoy this service as we are blessed and made to feel welcome'. Prayer is an integral part of school life. Pupils are given time to be still in an atmosphere of peace. For example, pupils visit 'The Millennium Garden'. Response to prayer is enthusiastic with pupils speaking of how they feel personally when engaging with faith and prayer. One pupil said, 'It is chance to say that I am thankful for my friends and family.' They also use familiar prayers including The Lord's Prayer, school grace and their own school prayer. Evaluating the impact of collective worship on pupils to inform future planning is developed further through the worship committee. The school correctly identifies that this needs to be more formally embedded by foundation governors, so that the quality of worship continues to be of high quality.

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

The headteacher, well supported by governors, staff and parents, has a strong personal vision and commitment to this Anglican school. His experienced leadership which is rooted in his personal faith, together with a supportive leadership team provide a clear and focussed direction. Since the last inspection a distinct Christian vision has been embedded and is lived out in every detail of this inspirational place. The school has a strong identity as a church school. All stakeholders understand and ensure that Christian values and ethos pervade throughout this school. This is reinforced through the effective work of the foundation governors. Governors and staff are committed through policy and practice to the embodiment of Christian distinctiveness. This results in a caring ethos where all pupils are valued and feel included. Central to the heart of the school is Jesus's teaching, 'Let the children come to me' which epitomises the inclusion and commitment that the school has for all pupils in their care. Through the outstanding work of the incumbent, a distinctive Christian difference is made to this school. This nurtures the very close links that exist between the church and school communities which are interwoven in purpose to serve the community. This is well supported by all staff, governors, and parents and is already recognised by the pupils and in the wider community. Parents are fully committed to the school and many choose it because of the Christian ethos and faith demonstrated by school leaders. They also enjoy the welcoming and open atmosphere where communication is clear and informative through the school newsletter named 'Two Way Street'. The inclusive approach is much valued by parents of all faiths, who have confidence in the school and recognise how Christian faith underpins their child's education. Parents believe the pupils' academic and personal needs are being met and their progress accelerated through learning experiences. One parent stated that the staff worked 'beyond the call of duty'. Theatre visits, cooking workshops and the 'Rio Olympics Day 2016' have provided insight into the wider world. They also appreciate the extra – curricular activities which contribute to pupils' personal development. Statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are met. Both have a high priority and are led inspirationally with an enthusiasm which radiates through to the staff and pupils. A well-planned structured RE scheme fosters and enhances self awareness and a deep respect of Christian values and beliefs. It also develops a deeper understanding and knowledge of other world faiths such as Sikhism. School evaluation of RE is excellent with pupils' books checked and standards monitored by senior leaders. Self-evaluation means that governors have an honest and challenging view of the future developmental needs of this school. Robust and rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's impact on pupil achievement are in place. They are particularly supportive of the strategic drive to improve even further the academic progress and well-being of all pupils, and to maintain the exemplary Christian distinctiveness. Insightful succession planning and identified professional development means that staff are given appropriate training to support the school's needs. Governors plan strategically and their decisions are consistently informed by the school's Christian mission to the community. Excellent support and in-service training has made a difference to teacher's personal and spiritual development too. Purposeful partnerships and a very strong reputation within the local area enhance the links between the diocese, external agencies and the wider community. Pupils have a very strong sense of Christian belonging and identity. They also value diversity and are provided with activities to think about being culturally aware of their wider responsibilities. For example, pupils participate in visits to the local Gurdwara and have international links with Wahoto School in Uganda. However, the school acknowledges that further planned activities for pupils to encounter lifestyles with people of different faiths are important for pupils' understanding of a diverse society.