

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Paul's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Coronation Street, Cambridge, CB2 1HJ	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Diocese	Ely
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Date of inspection	13 December 2017
Date of last inspection	18 September 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided Primary 110839
Headteacher	Jo Chrich
Inspector's name and number	Judith Ruff 528

School context

St Paul's is a smaller than average primary school, currently with 200 pupils on roll. It is located in the centre of the city serving a diverse community of both socio-economically advantaged and those families who experience hardship and deprivation. 41%, a significant proportion of pupils, have English as an additional language. Numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals and those receiving special educational needs support are below national averages. A new headteacher was appointed from September 2017. The deputy headteacher was appointed the year before. The church of St Paul's is within walking distance from the school.

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

- A strong Christian ethos is demonstrated through practical outworking of inclusivity and service, where every child is known and valued as precious in God's sight.
- There are deep levels of understanding and respect for diversity and difference including the celebration of the many church and faith communities which form part of the school. This enables all faiths and cultures to feel valued.
- High quality religious education (RE) displays show clearly the developing confidence of both staff and pupils to learn through an enquiry based approach.

Areas to improve

- Embed the emerging Christian vision for the school, taking account of both the Church of England and diocesan visions for education.
- Develop a clear understanding of spirituality across the school and provide high quality experiences across the curriculum that support and enable pupils to develop a personal sense of spirituality.
- Ensure that RE outcomes from teachers' assessments and judgements on progress are collated annually and communicated to governors, enabling them to ask relevant and challenging questions where necessary.
- Develop a systematic, formalised process for monitoring and evaluating collective worship, so that all stakeholders are part of the process. Ensure that outcomes from this in terms of raising the quality of provision are fully understood and communicated.
- Increase the capacity for all governors to contribute to the strategic development of the school as a church school by ensuring that discussions on Christian distinctiveness at full governing body meetings are regular and comprehensive.

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

The welcoming inclusivity of the school community based on a strong Christian ethos is identified by all stakeholders. Christian values have developed recently from being implicit, described as 'caring', 'kindness' and 'being happy' by parents, through to enabling pupils to identify their three core values on which to build their school community. This they have done and 'friendship', 'respect' and 'perseverance' have been selected. Linking these values to biblical sources is in early stages of development. Pupils do understand that perseverance at learning tasks frequently leads to success. They also know that respecting diversity and difference enables understanding and appreciation of beliefs and cultures to grow. Standards within the school are variable. Although outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2 were strong, those at Key Stage 1 were not. Attendance is below the national average, with the vulnerable pupils' attendance being currently the weakest. The role of the family liaison worker has been developed over a two year period. Trusting relationships between home and school are improving through her efforts to maintain a high visible profile with parents. There has been one fixed term exclusion in the previous academic year. There is some understanding of spirituality amongst school leaders. However, opportunities for spiritual development are not always clearly identified in the curriculum or in other areas of school life. Therefore pupils are not supported to reflect on the many contexts of their own beliefs and views. Pupils' moral and social development is good. They enjoy opportunities to take on responsibilities such as buddying younger children and being 'helping hands' or librarians. Cultural development is a strength of the school. The ethnic diversity within the school is built upon across the curriculum, in RE and the study of other languages. The cultures and countries of origin are celebrated through displays around the school. Pupils' behaviour is mostly good and relationships are built on developing friendships through the three aims of the school's vision. This is to 'grow confident learners', 'to nurture every child' and to 'build supportive communities'. Pupils are encouraged to think of those less fortunate and charitable giving extends to a local food bank and a night shelter for the homeless. The understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith is still at early stages of development. Pupils' awareness of the diversity within the Christian faith is supported through visits to the local Catholic and Baptist churches and a unit in RE on the work of the Salvation Army. Pupils enjoy their RE lessons and are learning to understand the importance of faith and belief in people's lives. The close links with St Paul's church enable them to see and observe a Christian community in action.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Collective worship is recognised as an important part of the school day, although often it is referred to as 'assembly'. The development of setting a worshipful atmosphere as pupils and staff enter the school hall is still a work in progress. Pupils do not yet recognise the specialness of the time and noise levels detract from opportunities to focus on the potential spiritual dimension that worship offers. School values are shared as themes for the worship and relevant Bible stories enable moral messages to be delivered which support pupils' knowledge and understanding of friendship and building positive relationships. Staff recognise whole school collective worship as an opportunity to experience a shared sense of belonging to a community. They state that the messages delivered 'can make you stop and think'. Pupils contribute their talents and skills to worship by playing recorders or by being part of the school choir. Applause for singing or playing during worship gives it the air of a performance and tends to disrupt the flow of the theme being delivered. At times, pupils do write their own prayers for use in school or church worship, but pupils felt that these opportunities were limited. The collective worship on the day of the inspection was on the theme of Advent. It was well prepared, giving pupils opportunities to assist forming a human Advent ring. The lit candles gave all present the opportunity to think about Christians waiting for the 'light' to come into the world. The draping of the green cloth on the hall floor to represent God's love was lost on the majority of people as it could not be seen by most present. The opportunity to reflect on peace, joy, hope and love was well done. The message that although waiting for something special to arrive is frequently hard, it is worth waiting patiently for, was a key one. The worship concluded with an appropriate Advent prayer. Pupils' understanding of the Trinity is at an age appropriate level. Pupils do enjoy participating in worship. This is made possible at the half termly church services, where they have taken a lead in readings, prayers and role play activities. Church services are regular and offer opportunities to recognise occasions such as new joiners to the school as well as to say 'farewell' to leavers at the end of Year 6. A parent spoke of the vicar being a well-known and 'distinctive' figure within the school. Through his weekly leadership of worship, he has gained a knowledge of pupils and uses this ability to offer opportunities to engage pupils within the acts of worship appropriately and sensitively. Planning for collective worship is present, but not sufficiently detailed. The collective worship leader is new to the role and is just beginning to look at monitoring and evaluation strategies such as pupil voice and observations of worship, both in school and church. New members of staff have not yet accessed any training for leading collective worship. Although foundation governors are supportive and have attended collective worship, there is currently no systematic, formalised process for monitoring and evaluating worship provision. There is insufficient evidence that governors have a secure understanding of the current strengths and areas for development in collective worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

Standards of attainment for the majority of learners are in line with the expectations of the local RE syllabus. Pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points. Evidence in books shows that, in some classes, there are significant gaps between pupils' recording their RE outcomes. The school believes that this is often when lessons have been based around drama and discussion activities. Where there are instabilities in teaching staff, this also is having an impact on pupil outcomes in some classes. This term, teachers are launching a new assessment system linked to the 'Understanding Christianity' resource. This seems to be working well, although it is in the early stages of development and no overall RE outcomes have been collated. At present, information on attainment and progress is not analysed into a form that can be communicated to governors, thus enabling them to ask relevant questions and challenge outcomes where necessary. Teachers' marking is inconsistent across the year groups. It is mostly positive, often marked against literacy objectives and very rarely identifies next steps for pupils as to how to improve their work. Presentation also varies in books, with the outcomes weaker for lower ability pupils. Written learning tasks are not frequently adapted to meet the ability ranges within classes. This term's focus on the 'Understanding Christianity' resource has brought a significant improvement, both to pupils' work outcomes and the teachers' confidence to 'have a go' at teaching the chosen concepts. Teachers and pupils have both enjoyed learning about the concepts of 'Creation' and 'Incarnation' and produced high quality classroom displays, which are both inter-active and thought provoking. The school has many different faiths within its community. Parents from these faiths have been used to talk about their religious practices and visits have taken place to both a synagogue and a mosque. The school has identified that improving teacher subject knowledge in the teaching of other world faiths is an area for further development. This is a focus for the RE development plan. Teaching in RE is judged by the school to be good as an outcome of classroom observations carried out by both the previous headteacher and RE subject leader. The RE learning walk undertaken during the inspection supported this judgement overall. Pupils have benefited from visits to a number of the local city churches. They have participated in a number of stimulating first-hand learning opportunities. For example, a recent Nativity journey activity at St Clement's. Under the leadership of the newly appointed RE leader, the profile of RE has risen across the school. She has both supported and encouraged staff to try out the new Christianity materials. She provides a listening ear and subsequently is developing a cohesive and mutually supportive team of teachers who are growing in confidence to teach RE. Pupils are being given greater opportunities to question and share ideas. The governor currently with responsibility for RE has a specialist RE background. She has made one monitoring visit and already her expertise is proving to be useful.

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

Since the arrival of the new headteacher in September 2017, there has been some very useful work carried out with stakeholders on revisiting the school's vision and associated values. At present, it is not clear how this vision is theologically underpinned, nor how it links to the Church of England and diocesan visions for education. Leaders are committed fully to serving the diverse local community, building a culture where all are welcomed and included. There is a strong belief that all members of the school community deserve to be treated with respect and love, as each is precious in the sight of God. Christian values are seen as important ways in which pupils can grow as whole people with opportunities to develop themselves both academically and personally. These are beginning to become more explicit within the school and to be used in both RE and collective worship. The school's SIAMS self-evaluation is accurate, but has not been widely shared amongst governors in particular. Progress against the previous inspection areas has been satisfactory, although tracking progress through written evidence has been weak. Parents are very supportive of the school and have relished the recent opportunity to work on the school vision and values. A group of parents have worked hard to produce a plan to develop the external areas around the school, including looking at the potential to develop spiritual spaces. Parents interviewed commented that 'the school instils a caring, social ethos, which is linked to the church foundation'. The inspector agrees with this comment. Partnership with the local church of St Paul is strong. The vicar is a well-known, familiar figure to pupils through his weekly leadership of worship. He has provided good levels of pastoral support to the new headteacher. The school is part of the 'Church Schools of Cambridge Trust' and this enables good levels of networking and sharing of ideas. Although governors are clearly committed to the school's church foundation, there is little discussion on this at full governing body meetings. This results in no obvious collaborative strategic vision for the school as a church school. The leaders of both RE and collective worship are new to the role. They are already beginning to make an impact, particularly in RE. The impact of a leader who is passionate about the subject and wants to spread this passion to others is showing itself in terms of growing confidence and pride in lesson outcomes. Succession planning for church school leaders is not yet in place. Links with the diocese are effective, with the diocesan RE adviser visiting the school and producing a good, detailed report of how provision could be further improved. Pupils at the school visit Ely Cathedral and have made banners as a contribution to the worship.