

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St James' Voluntary Aided Primary School

West Malvern Road
Malvern
WR14 4BB

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Worcester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Worcestershire
Date of inspection	21 November 2016
Date of last inspection	23 November 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 116903
Headteacher	Gemma Martin
Inspector's name and number	C. Ann Stone NS812

School context

St James' VA Primary School is situated in a rural location with 106 children on roll. The vast majority of children are of white British heritage. The number of children entitled to Pupil Premium and those with special educational needs is below national average. The school has close links with the parish church of St. James'.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St James' Voluntary Aided School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

- The ability of all stakeholders to articulate and promote a vision for the school which is rooted in Christian values with the result that every child feels valued.
- The awareness of the children that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith which encourages them to have respect for the diversity and difference within the church and other faith communities.
- The great value placed on worship which is linked to Christian teaching and values and impacts positively on the life of the pupils and staff.
- The religious education lessons which challenge children to think for themselves leading to outstanding spiritual, moral and social development.
- The centrality of spiritual development in school which is embedded in the whole curriculum and life of the school.

Areas to improve

- Enable children to gain more detailed knowledge of the Eucharist so they can talk about it with a greater degree of understanding.
- Ensure that a systematic and theological approach is incorporated into religious education (RE) planning in order to ensure that children develop a greater understanding of the life of Jesus Christ and Christianity.

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

Christian values, rooted in the teaching of the Bible, permeate the whole life of the school. This creates an ethos in which children are enabled to achieve because children of all abilities are nurtured to help them to flourish in their potential. The motto of 'Learning Together: Caring Together' and the Christian caring values are clearly understood by all members of the school community and children are able to link these to the understanding that with God's help all is possible. Children are able to talk about the impact that Christian values have on their daily lives and confidently explain links to Christian teaching. An example given by the children was that they care for each other in school just as Jesus cared for all people through his miracles. The behaviour of the children is of the highest standard and all stakeholders link this to the Christian character of the school.

There is a highly developed interpretation of spirituality shared across the school community. An example given of opportunities to develop spirituality outside the classroom was Ascension Day when the whole school met to celebrate at the top of the Malvern Hills which enabled children to experience the awe and wonder of the world around them. The children describe how important the reflection garden and Forest School are to them, enabling them to make their own links between beliefs, practices and Christian values.

The relationship between the local community, parish church and school is strong and is characterised by mutual respect and a genuine sense of community. Examples of this are the involvement of the school in the local 'Well Dressing Festival' and taking part in an art competition organised by the local gardening club. The school has a close link with Majani Mapana School, Tanzania and artwork, class names and artefacts throughout school reflect the involvement of the children in this project. This results in children appreciating and respecting global diversity. In all these ways, the Christian character of the school has an impact on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all children.

Parents comment that the school feels like 'one family' where everyone is welcomed and their views valued. The care and support shown to one family during a difficult time in their lives was directly attributed, by the parent, to the Christian caring values of the school. Christian values and Bible stories studied in religious education lessons are regularly discussed at home and parents believe this can be directly attributed to the Christian distinctiveness of the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

Collective worship at St James' is central to the life of the school and its impact on individuals is readily and clearly articulated by all. Children speak with confidence about the way in which worship shapes their thoughts and actions and can articulate the link between Christian values and Bible stories.

Collective worship is carefully planned around the monthly 'Christian caring value' and links are effectively made in the classroom through teaching in other areas of the curriculum. The impact of collective worship is monitored and evaluated by governors and provides an insight into how worship influences the life of the school community and leads directly to continuous improvement.

The RE and collective worship group (CREW) meet regularly and are involved in planning, delivering and evaluating worship. The 'Trinity Project,' supported by the parish priest, culminated in the children creating their own design to represent the Trinity thereby demonstrating an understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

A 'Reflective Journal' is used by children to reflect and comment on acts of worship. As a result feedback gathered provides an insight into how worship has a direct impact on the life of the school.

Symbolic Christian artefacts, for example candles, are displayed on a worship table and children are able to articulate what they mean to Christians. The Swahili welcome greeting used in worship reinforces the understanding of the need for appreciating and respecting global diversity. Children are asked to bring something into school which depicts God's wonderful world to display on a 'WOW' plate. This is then shown in worship and the children are able to celebrate the awe and wonder of God's world.

A range of worship leaders offer children a rich and diverse experience of worship. The parish church is used weekly for 'Friday Celebration' and also to celebrate other major festivals, thereby enhancing the school's distinctive Christian character. Parents are invited to the weekly celebration praise which acknowledges achievements of all and reinforces the Christian values needed to succeed. Worship makes a significant contribution towards the spiritual development of children by challenging them to ask questions about the meaning and purpose of life and reflect upon their own experiences.

Children have a clear understanding of prayer and prayers written by children are used regularly in worship. Prayer leaves are displayed on a branch and parents, staff and children are encouraged to use them to pray, reflect and ask

questions. Children are able to talk about different types of prayers and state that if they have a problem God will always try and answer their prayers. An example given was 'It is important to talk to God because he can help you.' Regular use of 'The Lord's Prayer,' the school prayer written by the CREW group and learning about Jesus Christ enable children to make links between the Bible and lessons for their own lives. Children are unable to talk with confidence about the Anglican practice of Eucharist and this has been identified an area for development.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.

Religious education has a very high profile within the curriculum. It is recognised by staff, governors, parents and children as being of great importance to the life of the school. RE lessons for the whole school are timetabled to follow the weekly act of worship in church and staff and children state how the church service prepares them mentally for their RE lessons.

Parents remark upon how often children talk about their RE lessons and regularly want to explore their learning further at home. The school welcomes parents, visitors and governors into lessons to talk about their faith and answer questions. Visits to a range of places of worship feature in long term planning. As a result, children's knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other cultures and faiths are of a high standard.

The RE subject leader is passionate, knowledgeable and attends diocesan training regularly. She passes training onto staff when appropriate and offers support and advice when needed. She has a good knowledge of the 'Understanding Christianity Project' and her long term action plan highlights opportunities to incorporate it into the agreed syllabus. Lessons are creative and varied which enable children to question and deepen their understanding of the impact that religion has upon themselves and others. They actively engage in their learning and this is also evident from discussions with other stakeholders. Children recognise that RE contributes to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through experiences offered during lessons.

Assessment procedures are rigorous and judgements secure, thereby effectively informing future planning. Children learn well and a significant number attain higher than national expectations for the subject. Data shows that children with special educational needs often make better than expected progress in RE. The RE subject leader undertakes scrutiny of planning, book trawls and learning walks and has critical discussions with the foundation governor responsible for RE. As a result there is a clear understanding of the schools performance and distinctiveness.

The school acknowledges the importance of the Christian caring values and has incorporated 'Values Mornings' into the teaching of RE, ensuring that children have a clear understanding of the importance of Christian values in their daily lives.

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

Under the inspirational leadership of the headteacher and with a highly supportive team of staff and governors, there is a clear Christian ethos within the school which is subject to continuous review and development. The understanding of all adults of how Christian values and spiritual development make a difference ensures that these are at the heart of the school's vision and school improvement. The governors clearly understand their role as strategic leaders of a church school and accept the challenges governance brings. The Christian values shared by all leaders and staff contribute well to pupil behaviour and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Parents know that their concerns are dealt with efficiently and sensitively and link this to the Christian distinctiveness of the school. They know their views are welcomed and valued and state they feel privileged to be part of the school. Members of a well - established 'Friends Association' volunteer their time and talents as well as giving financial support to the school enabling the parents to become totally involved in the life of a church school. An example of this is the creative literacy wall display designed and painted by a father and appreciated by all the children. The development of all staff and governors is achieved through individual support, attendance at diocesan training and the mentoring and support of each other which leads to a positive impact on the Christian distinctiveness of the school. The parish priest is also a foundation governor of the school. He has an effective pastoral role within the school which is valued by staff, governors and children thereby strengthening links with the school and church communities. Mutual respect and support between the parish church and school enable both to flourish and fulfil their mission to the school, the local community and beyond. Leaders and governors ensure both worship and religious education meet statutory requirements. The supportive relationships between all members of the school community are clearly rooted in Christian values, providing an excellent example of a school which is both distinctive and highly effective.