

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St George's Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

Stevenson Avenue,
Redditch.
B98 8LU

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| Current SIAMS inspection grade | Satisfactory |
| Diocese | Worcester |
| Previous SIAMS inspection grade | Outstanding |
| Local authority | Worcestershire |
| Date of inspection | 4 April 2017 |
| Date of last inspection | 23 January 2012 |
| Type of school and unique reference number | 116843 |
| Headteacher | Caroline Redfern |
| Inspector's name and number | C. Ann Stone NS812 |

School context

St George's First School is situated in an ethnically diverse area of Redditch, with families belonging to a wide range of faiths; the majority belonging to the Muslim faith. It has 227 children on roll with the majority having English as an additional language. The number of children with special educational needs is higher than national average and attendance is below the national expected target. There have been significant staff changes since the previous inspection. The school was inspected by OFSTED in November 2016 and placed into Special Measures.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St George's First School as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- Children have a good understanding of the school's distinctive Christian values of respect, responsibility, compassion, honesty and forgiveness and seek to live these out in school.
- The awareness of the children that Christianity is a multi-cultural faith and the respect shown for diversity and difference within other faith communities.
- The great value placed on worship which is linked to Christian values and impacts positively on the life of pupils and staff.

Areas to improve

- Improve the progress made and standards achieved by all groups of learners through a continued focus on improving the quality of teaching and assessment consistently throughout the school so that pupils make rapid progress and outcomes become good.
- Further develop the outside 'Spiritual Garden' to provide a place of reflection for children which will increase the existing opportunities offered for them to deepen their personal spirituality.
- Enhance the use of the classroom 'Reflection Areas' to create an area where Christianity and other world faiths are recognised and celebrated and children are provided with stimuli to assist them with creating their own prayers.

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

Christian values permeate the whole life of the school and create an ethos that enables children to feel valued and respected. The good behaviour of the children and the strong relationships evident within the school community are consistently attributed to the Christian nature of the school. Attendance remains an issue but strategies have been introduced and an increase in attendance has been reported. Children are aware of the need to attend school regularly and spoke enthusiastically about the 'Donkey Derby' which acknowledges the class with highest attendance of the week. The core values of respect, responsibility, compassion, honesty and forgiveness are understood and articulated by all stakeholders and children are beginning to link them to ways in which God cares for them. One child explained that, 'Jesus wanted us to have forgiveness and honesty. He died on a cross to take away our sins'.

Pastoral care and nurturing of children, parents and staff are strengths of the school. Parents appreciate the support given by the school and children know their worries or concerns are always dealt with sympathetically. The 'stay and play' sessions are well supported by parents who acknowledge the importance these have in the social development of the children.

Fundraising supports local, national and global charities, although the understanding by the children that Christian values are at the heart of their fundraising still needs to be developed.

Parents, governors, staff and children were all involved in creating the school definition of spirituality. One child explained that spirituality 'calms you down and creates peace on earth'. Opportunities provided in Forest School, the curriculum and worship allow children to deepen their understanding of spirituality, enabling them to make their own links between beliefs, practices and Christian values.

Religious education (RE) makes a good contribution to the distinctive Christian character of the school. The RE subject leader ensures that standards are high and lessons challenging. Children enjoy their RE lessons and are beginning to question and develop their understanding of the impact religion has on others. Children understand that RE contributes to their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development through experiences offered during lessons. They are clearly aware that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith and are developing a deep understanding of the diversity and difference within and between other faith communities. Each classroom has a child friendly Qu'ran and a Bible which are respected and regularly used by the children. The school library recorded that the most popular book borrowed by children was the Qu'ran.

Children are not yet achieving the standards expected of them in English and Maths but the quality of teaching is improving and the percentage of children working at age-related expectations is rising.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is important to the life of the school and is seen to contribute and support the school's Christian distinctiveness. It is planned using a variety of resources linked to Bible stories, Christian values, festivals in the Anglican church and other major faith festivals which lead to a rich and diverse experience of worship. Staff, the parish priest, an 'Open the Book' team and children regularly deliver worship.

A Bible, cross and candle are displayed on a worship table and children can explain what they mean to Christians. A coloured stole to represent the seasons of the church year is also used and some children can explain the significance of this. Yet to be developed is an understanding of the Eucharist and the part it plays in the lives of Christians.

Children can recall a good range of Bible stories and are able to describe the content of these with some detail and explain how they influence their beliefs, attitudes and relationships to each other. One Muslim child was very keen to state that some Bible stories are also found in the Qu'ran. An example given was the story of Abraham and Isaac. Following an 'Area for Development' from the last inspection a Faith and Belief (FAB) committee was formed. This team of children now have a major role in the development of worship. They prepare the worship table daily, write and deliver prayers and regularly monitor and evaluate worship. Children are confident in their knowledge and responsibilities and state they regularly report to the collective worship leader. Governors also monitor and evaluate collective worship and report their findings to the governing body.

Children have the opportunity to say prayers at different times throughout the school day and this leads to them having an understanding of prayer. Children are able to talk about how prayer teaches respect for each other. One child explained, 'It is easy to pray in school because there is one God who just has different names.' Reflective areas in all classrooms and a 'Spiritual Garden' outside enable worship to extend beyond a set time and place. These are not yet used to their full potential which would allow children to continue their own personal prayer journey.

The parish church is used to celebrate major Christian festivals, which are supported well by parents and governors, thereby enhancing the school's distinctive Christian character. Visits to an ecumenical centre offer children a greater experience of Christian worship. Children also have the opportunity to visit places of worship of other major faiths.

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

In November 2016 leadership of the school was graded inadequate by OFSTED. Immediate action was taken by the senior leadership team to develop an action plan which would enable the school to improve. They have already demonstrated exceptional focus and determination to build a confident team, empower staff and realise their potential. The understanding of the leadership team of how Christian values make a difference ensure they are at the heart of all areas of development. Acknowledged by the leadership team and governors is the need to show Christian care to all their staff who have been treated with respect, compassion and honesty during this difficult time.

Governors have always been very supportive of the school but in the past were not adequately involved in monitoring the school's performance. They are awaiting an external review of governance but have already carried out an audit of their own skills. They are now receiving regular feedback and information from the headteacher and subject leaders and as a result have the confidence to ask searching questions that offer challenge as well as support. A new chair of governors has been appointed. Governors know the school and articulate well their understanding of the role as strategic leaders of a church school.

Parents know their views are welcomed and valued and state the ability to speak to the class teacher, a senior leader or headteacher to ensure that any problems are dealt with sensitively and immediately. They believe that the Christian values shown by staff contribute to pupil behaviour and their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

The development of staff as leaders in this church school is achieved through individual support, attendance at diocesan training and support of each other. School leaders and the governing body ensure both worship and RE meet the statutory requirements.

The very capable RE subject leader has developed the RE syllabus to incorporate the 'Understanding Christianity' resource, supports staff with planning and monitors standards with the same rigour as is expected for Maths and English. This has already impacted on the quality of teaching.

The supportive relationships between all members of the school community are clearly rooted in Christian values and will enable the school to implement new strategies to lead the school to one which will become a distinctive and highly effective church school.

SIAMS report April 2017 St George's VC First School, Redditch. B98 8LU