

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St. Thomas Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	
Mattox Road Wednesfield Wolverhampton WV11 3TG	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Lichfield
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Date of inspection	22 March 2018
Date of last inspection	26 March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled Primary 104363
Executive Headteacher/ Head of School	Helen Morris/ Aidan Edmunds
Inspector's name and number	Reverend Alison M. Morris 759

School context

St Thomas's is a one-form entry primary school situated on the edge of Wednesfield. The school is federated with St Albans's Church of England Primary school with which it shares an executive head teacher and a governing body. It has 198 pupils on roll aged from 4- 11 years. Most of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are 18% in receipt of pupil premium funding and 17% of pupils receive provision for special educational needs and/or disability. A substantive head of school was recently appointed. The school has close links with St. Thomas's church.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. Thomas's as a Church of England school are good

- Commitment and dedicated leadership by the executive headteacher and head of school is instrumental in the creating a distinctively Christian vision and school that is inclusive, welcoming and harmonious.
- The significant link between the incumbent and the school enhances pupils' attitudes to collective worship, faith and their subsequent spiritual journeys.
- Significant and purposeful relationships throughout the school and its community reflect how Christian values are being embedded to foster the Christian distinctiveness.

Areas to improve

- Build upon existing aims and values to develop a clearer distinctive Christian vision that will inform aspirations, decisions and actions throughout the proposed multi-academy trust.
- Enhance the celebration of diversity and difference through visits to places of worship.
- Ensure that governors undertake appropriate training and development which will support them in their duties and responsibilities to be effective critical friends within this church school.

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

This is a good school which is rapidly improving. Supported by governors, staff and diocese the head of school is developing a fresh approach to further embed the school's Christian distinctiveness, Anglican character and ethos. As a result, the revitalised and re-energised vision is more explicit and accessible to all pupils, through use of specific visual signs, statements and documentation right through to improved classroom practice. Core Christian values, such as trust and respect, which are rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ, have a significant impact upon pupils' lives. Such explicit values and distinctiveness foster a safe and secure atmosphere where pupils are starting to enjoy learning and aspire to do well. The mission statement of 'Growing, Learning and Shining together with God' adds to the Christian vision and the values that emanate from this which enhance pupils learning. As such, pupils are starting to recognise a distinctively Christian dimension in the school that is beginning to make a difference to their learning and personal development. This represents a significant step forward for this school within the federation. However, the school acknowledges that further embodiment of distinctive Christian character is vital to the development of St. Thomas's.

Effective intervention strategies and very good pastoral care supports pupils in their personal and academic development. The Christian character underpins the school's approach to pupils learning through its attempt to meet the holistic needs of each child with a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils benefit from a strong sense of family and unity within a welcoming and inclusive Christian community. They feel they can succeed, no matter what their ability or background. Pupils are treated with respect and dignity to be fully nurtured and challenged in this happy Christian environment. Relationships are positive, based on mutual respect and trust as staff and pupils work co-operatively together. For example, effective work by the family support worker has impacted upon the emotional needs of specific pupils and their families to optimise their learning potential. As a result, pupils' progress and attainment are improving.

Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) development is nourished and challenged through Christian values. Religious education (RE) also contributes to pupils' SMSC development, as belief matters in this school. Older pupils understand what it means to be a pupil at a church school and make the link to Christian teaching in the Bible.

Because of pupils' motivation and keenness to do well, attendance figures are rising and punctuality has improved. This is supported by a positive approach to behaviour management and a reward system underpinned with Christian values. As such, behaviour has significantly improved as well as the pupils' attitudes to learning. This is due to a rich and varied curriculum delivered with improved teaching techniques. Pupils are respectful, courteous and happy. An effective pupil leadership team allows the pupil voice to contribute to decision making. They participate in service to the wider community through fundraising and charitable giving. For example, donations to Save the Children show the pupils attempts to put the school values into practices. It also raises their understanding of global issues.

RE makes a sound contribution to pupils' SMSC development and to Christian distinctiveness. Most pupils are aware that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith. They have some understanding and awareness of other faiths such as Islam and Sikhism. Specific activities encourage pupils to celebrate diversity and to be globally and culturally aware of their responsibilities within a multi-faith and multi-cultural society. Effective strategies include Black History themed day, diversity displays and Diwali workshops. However, the school has identified the need to introduce a wider programme of visits to a variety of places of worship.

Classrooms have developed Christian focus areas and worship tables which, when used, make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Focussed displays around the school, for example, Noah's Ark and Christian artefacts in the foyer visually express the school's Christian distinctiveness and encourage discussion. A peaceful and purposeful atmosphere is promoting a learning environment which has the capacity to raise achievement and embed a new vision.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is of vital importance to the whole school community. It is distinctively Christian with a strong focus on the person of Jesus Christ and developing emphasis on the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It evokes a sense of gathering together the school community in the presence of God within a developing spiritual atmosphere.

Worship uses Bible stories which are shared in a creative way which reinforces pupils understanding of biblical teaching. Attitudes to worship are very good due to use of appropriate resources which are significant to pupils' needs, age, development and interests so it captures their attention. Pupils engage in a variety of worship settings which uses a clear structure which carefully focuses upon the Christian value for the half term. As a result, pupils enjoy worship and speak positively about it. One pupil said, 'Worship and prayer calms me down.' However, the school has recognised the need to further develop the use of gathering responses by pupils within worship.

Worship makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development through the reinforcing of Christian values. Pupils' behaviour, attitudes and relationships are influenced by the values and moral messages explored in worship

time. During worship, a range of experiences such as prayer, silence and music stimulate pupils' attention. Artefacts such as lighted candles and Bible are used to foster prayer, reflection and spirituality with a sense of awe and wonder. Worship is well planned to follow the liturgical calendar combined with threads of Christian values and beliefs using biblical material. The school has introduced a newly formed worship leadership team to foster purposeful pupil responsibilities such as reading of prayers, bible and music preparation. However, the school does identify that pupil involvement needs to be developed further, including more engagement in the evaluation process.

Prayer spaces and reflection areas such as the prayer tree are appropriately used around the school and encourage pupils' personal spirituality. Pupils understand that prayer has a purpose and is very important in the life of a worshipping community. One pupil said, 'Worship makes us be thankful that God made the world'. They regularly write their own prayers sometimes with use of a 'prayer bag' which contains artefacts to help their writing. For example, pupils have been involved with the writing of a new school prayer that is used in worship in the school and church. They use familiar prayers, such as The Lord's Prayer, and show some understanding of its meaning.

Key Christian festivals, such as Easter and Harvest are celebrated with the clergy at St Thomas's Church which nurtures a well-established relationship. Parents respond very positively to invitations to attend special services and to share in celebration worship. Anglican traditions and practices are used in worship which reinforces pupils' knowledge.

Evaluating the impact of collective worship on pupils to inform future planning is being developed. Governors correctly identify that evaluation needs to be more rigorous and consistently applied by the whole community. This ensures that the quality of worship remains engaging and relevant to pupils' lives and their spiritual development.

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

The task of forging a federation between two existing schools has been challenging in that the school has faced specific challenges in maintaining its identity as a church school and nurturing a distinctively Christian approach to the pupils' education.

Clear and decisive leadership by the executive headteacher and the new head of school has strengthened the capacity for school improvement. Together, their motivation and vision are taking the school forward to establish its position as a church school and to improve academic standards through accurate self-evaluation. They understand the importance of putting structures in place for improvements to become secure. As such, the head of school has worked hard to successfully re-establish the Christian vision and values within a Christian family atmosphere.

Governors are very committed to actively support this new re-energised Christian vision. This is having a substantial difference to how the school operates as a church school daily and helps to stabilize the reputation of the school in the community despite difficulties within the federation. However, governors acknowledge the need to demonstrate their capacity to continue the momentum for church school development. They are beginning to deepen their understanding of church school development through training so that they can be more effective as critical friends. For example, plans exist to implement more formal and robust monitoring schedule on monitoring of RE, collective worship and ethos. Currently, this is not in place. They are also very supportive of the strategic drive to improve academic standards for all pupils. As a result, improved systems of monitoring and evaluating with accurate assessment of data and performance are beginning to be in place for pupil achievement. Issues identified in the previous inspection have and are being addressed.

Statutory requirements for both RE and collective worship are met. Both areas are led well, conveying enthusiasm to both staff and pupils. The Wolverhampton Agreed Syllabus for RE provides an effective learning scheme so that pupils have a deeper respect of Christian values and beliefs, whilst also developing an understanding of other faiths. School evaluation of RE is being developing by both school leaders and governors. RE has a high priority within the school but needs further subject development to be more effective. For example, the school acknowledges a need to integrate RE curriculum with the Understanding Christianity resource.

Effective partnerships exist with the diocese, multi-agencies and the wider community all contributes to meet pupils' needs. Exemplar links between the school and the incumbent actively support and nurture the partnership which positively impacts on the school's Christian distinctiveness.

St. Thomas's is a welcoming school where all members of the community feel valued. Positive partnerships exist between the school and parents which enhances pupils' learning. An example of this is seen in the extensive work of the Friends of St. Thomas's (FROST). Parents are more confident about the future of this school due to a stable school leadership which is having a positive impact upon their child's education. Pupils' needs are met both in lessons and through a wide range of extra-curricular activities such as gymnastics and football. Parents appreciate the re-establishment of Christian distinctiveness and its significant impact upon their children. They spoke of how their children have begun to talk again about their relationship with God and Jesus. For example, one parent explained how her child regularly said, 'Jesus is my friend and He is yours too!' Parents also acknowledge the successful appointment of the new head of school which has made a substantial difference to how the staff lead and manage learning in the

school. One parent said, 'You can see the school has returned to its church roots.... this is now a good church school.'

SIAMS report March 2018 St. Thomas's Church of England Voluntary Controlled) Primary School WWII 3TG