

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

### St Oswald's Church of England Primary School

Heslington Lane, Fulford, York YO10 4LX	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>York</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	City of York
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	N/A
Date of inspection	23 June 2017
Date of last inspection	8 June 2009
Type of school and unique reference number	VC Primary 121535
Headteacher	Rupert Griffiths
Inspector's name and number	Lucy Jordan 910

#### School context

St Oswald's CE Primary School is larger than average, serving pupils from Fulford, on the southern outskirts of York. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals and with special educational needs is lower than average. A significant number of pupils from service families attend, the majority of these being Nepalese with a parent serving in the Army, based at nearby Imphal Barracks. A larger than average proportion of pupils have English as an additional language. There are plans for the school to join with other schools, including community schools, from the South York Partnership, to form a multi-academy trust in the future.

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

- Deeply Christian values of Compassion, Trust, Justice, Friendship, Service and Respect permeate every aspect of school life enabling relationships at all levels to flourish.
- Regardless of how long they have been a pupil, every child is nurtured in such a way that they can fulfil their potential as a 'child of God'.
- The Christian character of the school makes a significant contribution to the achievement of pupils currently on roll, especially those with identified special educational needs and those who only spend a short time at St Oswald's.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their involvement in planning and leading collective worship in partnership with the church and wider community and can clearly articulate the relevance of Biblical stories to their own and others' lives.

#### Areas to improve

- Create a permanent place for quiet reflection in the school grounds so that members of the school community who wish to, have the opportunity to pray and reflect beyond collective worship.
- Develop children's understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith.
- Continue to develop leadership in a church school context so that the school's distinctive Christian character can continue to flourish in the future.

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

Since the last inspection, St Oswald's has been on an impressive journey to review its Christian character. Six values chosen by the whole school community are now so deeply embedded that they inform every aspect of school life and make a significant impact to both daily lives and outcomes for everyone, but especially the children. Personal and academic achievement sit side by side at St Oswald's. Children are supported to 'live out' the school's Christian values of service and compassion, for example, by volunteering with members of St Oswald's Church at the Village Café, providing a significant community service on a regular basis. Pupils who spend only a short time at the school or who have identified special educational needs, flourish at St Oswald's, making strong progress from their varied starting points. Changes such as the 'Super Learner' initiative, implemented following weak attainment and progress at the end of KS2 in 2016, are helping to drive up standards and accelerate progress throughout the school.

The exemplary behaviour of all pupils and relationships between all members of the school community are key strengths of the school. Pupils, staff and parents feel a great sense of belonging to the school community. This is especially important given the high pupil mobility. St Oswald's is a school which 'welcomes everybody'. Although attendance is high, requests to visit family members in Nepal, from where a significant minority of the pupils come from, are handled in a way that reflects the school's Christian character.

The school's Christian character impacts very positively on pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development. 'Big Questions', introduced half termly, provoke rich, often enduring, discussion throughout the school, nurturing children's spiritual and moral development very effectively. Pupils comment that they are still discussing their thoughts around the question 'Do you trust your friends and do your friends trust you?'. Beyond collective worship, children place high value the opportunity for personal prayer and reflection, speaking with conviction about the importance of its place in their lives. A temporary reflection area within the gazebo was well used by children who would now love a permanent outdoor place of quiet for spiritual reflection. The rich diversity within the school population is celebrated and children at St Oswald's have a very good understanding of faiths other than Christianity and different cultures. By explicitly articulating the school's distinctively Christian values and linking these to everyday activities, for example, against photographs of active children on the Sports Board, pupils see how they impact on all aspects of their lives.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional as a result of outstanding work in Religious Education (RE). One child commented, 'RE lessons really get you thinking.' In one KS2 lesson, children of four different faiths volunteered eagerly and spoke with confidence and conviction about the place of prayer in their lives. Their understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith is more limited. Pupils learn and play well together. St Oswald's is a harmonious place in which to learn and grow with relationships at all levels being a key strength. What could be a challenge due to the school's high mobility, has been turned into an advantage: new families settle quickly at St Oswald's because, as one parent put it, 'You are always made to feel welcome'.

Children's spirituality develops securely in subjects such as RE in which pupils discuss openly and with great conviction what prayer actually is and what it means on an individual level. The Golden Book and Caring Tree afford tangible opportunities for pupils and staff to articulate examples of how others have 'lived out' the school's Christian values for example showing compassion when another children was upset. The Values in Actions plan makes clear links between the school's Christian values and key school events. It is a key driver in ensuring that the school's Christian character is not a bolt-on but is integral to every aspect of school life.

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

Collective worship is valued highly by all members of the school community. Children relish taking an active part in worship, whether by planning and leading it or be participating in it. They say it helps them: 'If people are sad, they can speak to God and be happier'. Frequently including Biblical material and thoughtfully planned around the school's core Christian values, children confidently articulate links between the two. For example, they link the Parable of the Bread and Fishes to compassion saying 'There's a lot of compassion going on in our school because people are kind and share things'. Children's understanding of the centrality of Jesus Christ in the Christian faith is strong as a result of hearing Biblical material. They know Jesus is 'special' and that it was important that 'Peter knew Jesus trusted him and had faith in him.'

The Friday Celebration Assembly is a highlight of the week, when individual achievement is celebrated in a highly personalised way. Children value the 'Oswald's' certificates highly. Presented by their class teachers, they affirm the school's motto 'Learning for all, caring for each other, preparing for the future' and help to raise aspirations of every child. The invitation to pray, read the prayer displayed or spend time in personal reflection reflects the inclusive nature of collective worship at St Oswald's.

Supported by clergy and members of YoYo Trust, members of the very enthusiastic School Worship Team evaluate the impact of earlier acts of collective worship before planning their assemblies and church services. As a result, they are developing a secure understanding about what they feel will 'work' and plan engaging and inspirational assemblies that are valued highly by peers. As one child said, 'We are showing different ways to pray, to talk to God'. Children enjoy the wide range of worship leaders, be they pupils, staff or visitors.

Through use of features such as liturgical colours on the altar cloth, the cross and candle, children clearly identify aspects of Anglican practice. The significance of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is at a basic level of understanding. Music is a key part of collective worship at St Oswald's, bringing together the whole school community and setting an appropriate mood. The uplifting singing from the choir is inspirational and parents speak of how it unites the school community, bringing 'everyone together'. Governors and staff evaluate worship effectively from views gathered from the whole school community. This has helped to inform future planning, for example, ensuring that children regularly plan and lead worship.

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

The school's vision and aspirations for every pupil is deeply rooted in universally understood Christian values and the Christian distinctiveness of the school has strengthened significantly as a result. Children flourish at St Oswald's because they are 'embraced by the Christian values' which the headteacher, governors and other leaders readily and explicitly articulate. Achievement is viewed in its widest sense with leaders unequivocal in their commitment to develop 'the whole child'. Established evaluation processes ensure leaders have a very clear understanding both of the school's performance and its Christian distinctiveness. The school's own performance data indicates that the significant changes leaders have implemented in order to raise academic standards and accelerate progress, are having a positive impact, especially in reading, writing and mathematics. A Governor audit of the school's Christian character has led directly to improvements, for example, in the school's physical environment which now more explicitly reflects its Christian character through the inclusion of Biblical quotations linked appropriately to displays. Governors and school leaders see the children's role in self-evaluation as critical. The very positive impact of collective worship on everyone is as a direct consequence of children's robust evaluation and subsequent improvements to it.

St Oswald's vision and values are woven throughout the whole curriculum. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary with sincere and respectful relationships the norm because leaders have ensured the Christian vision of 'Learning for all, caring for each other, preparing for the future' is seen in action. Staff development is prioritised with 'home grown' staff attaining leadership posts either at St Oswald's or in other schools. All staff, including those who are not directly employed by the school, are happy and 'feel lucky to work in this school'. Standards in RE are very high because leadership in this subject is prioritised and the RE leader has the time to ensure outcomes are strong in this subject. Leaders at all levels are well prepared to sustain and grow the school's Christian character when the school joins the South York Multi-Academy Trust in the future. They are proactive in securing ways to do this, working with colleagues in other Church of England schools to strengthen and grow the school's distinctive Christian character further still.

Partnerships with the church, other faith groups such as YoYo Trust and the community are strong and mutually beneficial. Members of St Oswald's congregation are Reading Guardians, supporting children with developing reading skills through regular visits and benefitting both parties. Children love attending and leading church services and there is a recognition that the School Worship Team 'is not held in the walls of the school' but extends to the church itself.