

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Paul's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

St Paul's Terrace, York YO24 4BJ	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	York
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	City of York
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	N/A
Date/s of inspection	12 October 2017
Date of last inspection	3 December 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary Voluntary Controlled 121474
Acting Headteacher	Fiona Bennett
Inspector's name and number	Lucy Jordan 910

School context

St Paul's CE Primary School is a smaller than average, with 171 pupils on roll, and serves the local community close to the centre of the city of York. Most pupils have English as their first language and most are of white British heritage. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is low as is the proportion of pupils with identified special educational needs and/or disabilities. Attainment on entry is average. The school has recently had significant changes to the leadership team. The deputy headteacher is acting headteacher following the retirement of the headteacher in summer 2017. A newly appointed headteacher will start in January 2018.

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

- The school's deeply Christian character underpins all aspects of school life with the highest priority placed on enabling all pupils to flourish and achieve well.
- Pupils link their exemplary behaviour to the school's Christian values of friendship, respect, determination and forgiveness and sincere relationships at all levels reflect the school's Christian character.
- Opportunities for prayer and personal reflection both within collective worship and beyond are highly valued by pupils and staff.
- Leaders articulate and live out the school's distinctive Christian values very effectively and are determined these will continue to flourish in the future.

Areas to improve

- Develop pupils' understanding of diversity and difference within the Christian church and other local, national and global faith communities.
- Extend the range of people from whom feedback about collective worship is gathered so that a deeper understanding of its impact can be ascertained which leads to further improvement.
- Increase the impact of self-evaluation of the school as a church school by ensuring all groups within the school are or represented.

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

Without exception, all members of the school community speak of the school's welcoming and inclusive ethos. Parents say, 'The level of care children receive knows no bounds.' Pupils speak of their teachers as being 'really caring' and 'with us every step of the way'. The school's Christian values of friendship, respect, determination and forgiveness and the positive impact these have on their daily lives of all pupils, whatever their ability or background is clearly articulated by pupils, parents and staff alike. Christian values are lived out in the day to day life of the school, for example, showing their determination to do their best in all aspects of their work. Children demonstrate exceptional attitudes to their work, relishing the opportunity to use 'purple polishing pens' to edit their writing and say, 'We feel proud of our work.' Attendance is high and the school manages requests for term time holidays robustly yet sensitively, in line with its Christian character.

The excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners is strengthened by the school's Christian character. Pupils value opportunities to develop their personal spirituality, within religious education lessons and through initiatives such as a Prayer Spaces workshop which 'taught us everyone has their different ways of praying'. They articulate clearly the plight of homeless people and show compassion for those who are forced sleep in cardboard boxes, linking this to the story of the Good Samaritan.

The behaviour of pupils is exceptional. Within the limited space of the school building and playground, they demonstrate genuine respect and kindness towards each other, the older children 'look out' for the younger children and speak of their school as 'one big family' in which 'we don't leave anybody out'. Pupils make way for their peers in the narrow staircases and politely thank them for doing so.

Children of all ages demonstrate enthusiasm for religious education (RE). The youngest children learn about God's promise through the story of Noah's Ark. Great thought is given by these pupils to the promises they wished to make and they discuss them at length with their teacher. Older pupils enjoy grappling with big questions such as 'What do you believe about God?' and are respectful of the diversity of other faith communities. Discussion about Rosa Parks raises pupils' awareness of civil rights and pupils speak with confidence and conviction about this. First-hand experience of places of worship other than St Paul's Church is limited and this hinders pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith and their understanding of other faith communities. None the less, RE makes a significant contribution to learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Joining together to worship as a school community is highly valued by all groups at St Paul's. Adults describe collective worship both as 'a lovely, reflective and calm time to think' and 'uplifting'. It is creative and inspirational. Biblical material enables children to understand the school's Christian values. Children recount how Bible stories such as Zacchaeus the Tax Collector enable them to see that Jesus forgives and how David showed great determination when facing Goliath. Pupils are encouraged to respond to questions raised in collective worship such as 'What could you give?' by writing down and posting their responses, for example 'love' and 'being a friend'. This is extended to a wide range charitable work undertaken by the whole school as part of their commitment to 'thinking about others', with a display providing a photographic record of some of this social action. Music is an important part of collective worship for children who love to sing along with their peers, creating a joyful atmosphere.

Personal spirituality is encouraged to grow through the inclusion of a period of quiet reflection within worship, during which time a candle is lit and there is a period of calm silence. Prayer has a high priority at St Paul's, both within and beyond collective worship. School prayers, recited at key points in the day, enable pupils and staff to 'make a fresh start'. Specially trained midday supervisors help children to be thankful for their lunch and create an oasis of peace so that the lunchtime prayer carries real meaning. Pupils find prayer helpful saying it 'tells you God loves everybody. He'll give you a second chance.' Although space restricts the provision of a reflection area in every classroom, the children are clear that there are places both inside school and outside that they could go to undertake personal reflection. They recognise that, 'You could pray anywhere.'

Learners understand most of the main Christian festivals and the seasons of the Church's year. Regular attendance at services held at St Paul's Church enables them to recognise local Anglican practice. Through exposure to a wide range of Biblical material in worship, children understand the importance of Jesus Christ, however their knowledge

of the trinitarian nature of Christianity is limited.

The Worship Squad relish their role in choosing songs and prayers for worship. They particularly value the opportunities to participate in special church services during the year and are looking forward to planning and leading the next act of worship. This is a flourishing group within the school and their enthusiasm is boundless! A wide range of staff volunteer to plan and lead worship, following a theme but interpreting this in a way that is relevant to those participating. A key focus of collective worship is the creative worship display, developed by different staff members in rotation and sited so that children can refer to it during acts of worship. This provides children of all ages with a meaningful opportunity to reflect on themes both within and beyond collective worship, enabling them to gain a deeper understanding of core Christian values. For example, within the theme of generosity, children write pledges to share 'my friends', 'love' and 'kindness' on slices of paper 'bread' and place these in a basket in front of a large image from Feeding the Five Thousand.

Monitoring takes place regularly and follows a clear structure, but its impact is limited by the small number of people from whom feedback is gathered. Leaders recognise the potential of the Worship Squad from monitoring, and this has led to their greater prominence in the school.

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

The consistent articulation by leaders, of the school's core Christian values and their relevance to life at St Paul's impacts positively on all groups within the school. The school aim to 'Aim high, enjoy the challenge and meet with success.' is borne out in achievement data. By the time pupils leave St Paul's, attainment is higher than national and pupils have made progress that is at least in line with national measures in writing and mathematics and securely above national measures in reading.

Areas from the previous inspection have been addressed. In particular, the policy for SMSC development has ensured this has become 'an integral part of (pupils') daily lives'. Children enjoy the opportunities within the curriculum to debate issues around homelessness, for example, after reading Billy the Kid and as a result develop insight, empathy and a respect for those different to themselves. Leaders promote a Christian approach to supporting the development of behaviour and attitudes right across the school with the result that both behaviour and attitudes are outstanding.

Leaders, 'guided by the example of Jesus' ensure that the school's Christian values maintain the highest priority whilst the school has an acting senior leadership team in place. A shared conviction by leaders that '**Everyone** is different and **everyone** is important.' ensures that children are treated as individuals, each capable of achieving success. Aspirations are deliberately high and pupils are encouraged to live out the Christian values, demonstrating determination in lessons and friendship and forgiveness on the playground.

Whilst leaders are aware of the school's main priorities, the link between these and self-evaluation is not always clear because a systematic approach to evaluating the impact of the school's distinctive Christian character that involves all groups in the school community is not established. Governors recognise this as an area for development for the school. The RE and Collective Worship Leaders are extending their skills because of training and involvement in monitoring and evaluation activities with senior leaders. This in turn is improving practice in these areas, for example in ensuring the new Agreed Syllabus for religious education is implemented effectively and plays a major role in determining the Christian character of the school. The arrangements for collective worship meet statutory requirements.

Partnerships with the church, other faith groups such as YoYo Trust and the community are very strong and mutually beneficial. School productions and holiday clubs, requiring large space are held in the church. The Community Gospel Choir meets in the school and staff love listening to the singing at the end of the day. Children love attending and leading church services and there is a recognition that the 'the church is seen as another part of the school' and 'feels as one with the school'.

A high priority is placed on developing future leaders. In appointing a new Headteacher, governors sought someone with 'a clear vision for the school as a Church of England school', recognising fully the benefits this will bring to the whole school community.