

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Old Church Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	
School Street, Darlaston, Wednesbury WS10 8DL	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Lichfield
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Walsall
Date of inspection	29 June 2017
Date of last inspection	12 July 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	VC primary and nursery 104224
Headteacher	Davina Clacy
Inspector's name and number	Rosemary Woodward 583

School context

Old Church houses 360 primary and nursery pupils in modern buildings situated in the industrial urban area of Darlaston. Most pupils live locally and the majority are of white British heritage, although there are significant numbers of a variety of other ethnicities. The school's deprivation indicators are well above national average. The headteacher is new to post since the previous inspection. St Lawrence's parish church stands some distance from the school – not an easy walk across the town centre.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Old Church Primary School Darlaston as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Caring nurture and support that allows every pupil to feel special, valued and included and so enables them to flourish as individuals and make significant progress in all areas of school life including the academic.
- The inspirational leadership of the head teacher who works together with a very committed leadership team to realise their shared vision and embed Christian values and relationships in all areas of school life.
- Strong and supportive links between the school and the local church, who together reach out to share Jesus' love with the local community.
- The pupils' secure understanding of the key concepts and beliefs that lie at the heart of the Christian faith.
- Lively and relevant worship that inspires and is valued by the whole school community.

Areas to improve

- Encourage pupils to take an increasingly active lead in planning and leading prayer, worship and interactive reflection areas, so involving them in their journey towards spiritual independence.
- Celebrate the links between the school's Christian values, Jesus' teaching and the Bible more explicitly in displays, policies and discussions in school.
- Extend opportunities for the governors to explore the pupil voice directly, and respond to their findings.

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

Explicit Christian values underpin all areas of Old Church primary school where the aim of 'Building Better Futures' drives the desire for pupils to achieve personally, spiritually and academically as they prepare to become citizens of the future and know life in all its fullness. Each of the nine acrostic values of Objective, Loyal, Dependable, Caring, Honest, Understanding, Resilient, Committed and Helpful are clearly linked to Bible passages and consistent teaching that has its roots in the values in Jesus' teaching. The values were chosen by staff and pupils together, enabling pupils to own them for themselves. 3D images designed by pupils with a professional artist and clear 'rainbow rules' add to the impact of the school's powerful vision which is modelled by the whole community, As a result behaviour is consistently excellent, and any conflict or bullying are dealt with in a very proactive way. Pupils have a real pride in their school and speak with passion about the school's care and loving support, and how they enjoy being there. Forgiveness and an assurance of a fresh start are key to the strong relationships which ensure pupils see the school as a safe and secure place to be. Pupils explain that it is like a 'second home' where they learn to trust each other and the teachers and coming to school 'cheers you up'. The underpinning Christian values help to break many of the barriers to learning. One pupil declared that, in school, 'God is always by our side'. Progress data, tracked from pupils' entry to the school is very strong and pupils are very well supported on their learning journey. The curriculum is effective in actively promoting pupils' spiritual and moral development. There is a desire to provide a 'wow factor' to enrich lives which are often challenging. Adults know children extremely well and plan work which is effectively matched to children's individual needs. Achievements are valued and celebrated very well, and parents are actively involved in their children's learning. Pupils, past and present, feel loved and supported and link this care to the Christian character of the school. Children are taught to develop as responsible citizens, including sharing in many opportunities for generosity and service, including working alongside Christian and Sikh charities.

Well planned religious education (RE) lessons offer good opportunities for deeper study of Christianity and an exploration of the other faiths, including those represented within the school community, in particular Sikhism. The new Understanding Christianity resource is already developing pupils' ability to debate the 'big questions' of life and this is having a significant impact on their learning.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Well planned and structured worship is central to life at Old Church school and has a key role in developing and inspiring the pupils' personal spirituality. Whole school and class worship ensure that the content is relevant and age appropriate so that children can participate fully. Children are confident in discussing the importance of worship and discuss what it has taught them. The school's Christian values are constantly referred to within worship times, to reinforce their importance and root them within biblical teaching. Although children sometimes find it difficult to make direct links between the values and stories of Jesus' earthly life and teaching, pupils are very confident in talking about the meaning of the Christian faith and who Jesus is, as well as recounting the stories and meaning of many of His parables. They also have a very good understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity, explaining that God can be known as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three in one, with different characteristics like the seeds, flesh and skin of an apple. Older pupils confidently explain that Jesus' death and resurrection offers forgiveness and hope. The school hall celebrates this Christian truth by proclaiming 'Jesus is Saviour' above the worship focus table and screen. All pupils very much enjoy singing and praise and clearly link the songs' content to the Christian message. This joy is encouraged by the strong music traditions of the school, including the choir. Pupils also have a very good knowledge of a wide range of Bible stories. The school strongly values the place of prayer and reflection. In each classroom prayer bags provide aids to individual prayer. Effective strategies evaluate the impact of worship in the school. Pupils' opinions are regularly sought by staff and then acted upon. In response to an assertion that pupils did not find the former prayer wall helpful, the new prayer forum on the pupil learning platform allows pupils to write and share their prayer requests and responses in an interactive way. Pupils' prayers are also shared in worship times and pupils have some

opportunities for participating and taking a lead, but these opportunities could be extended. They are confident in using and understanding the Lord's Prayer. The pupils' understanding of the Anglican tradition is good because of the strong partnership with the local church. They have a very good understanding of the principle Christian festivals, including Pentecost, and of the use of liturgical colours. Celebrations of festivals and Education Sunday, shared by church and school, are very well attended by parents. Pupils have some understanding of Christianity as a worldwide faith, but the diversity of Christian worship could be further explored.

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

The headteacher has a very clear vision, fully endorsed by the whole staff team and governing body, for the school as a community reaching out with Christ's love to all. Dedicated staff work hard to ensure that the vision becomes reality. However, one member of the leadership team reminded others that 'God runs this school, not Davina' while others explain how it can be humbling to be part of the journey. The school's Christian values, strong church links and Christian foundations are clearly proclaimed, although the link is not always explicit within documentation or displays. Governors are aware that the challenging setting of the school means that staff often care in a way described as 'above and beyond the call of duty' and this can have an emotional cost. They are proactive in their care and support for the whole community. Governors are very active within the life of the school, and are involved in the school's self-evaluation process and taking a role in strategic planning for its future. They discuss the impact of the school's Christian effectiveness with confidence, but opportunities for governors to explore the pupil voice directly are limited. Staff are supported very effectively and given good opportunities to develop professionally. The church works extremely closely with the school. The vicar and other church members actively participate in school life, and pastoral care for staff and families is given high priority. Pupils see the vicar as a trusted friend. Parents recognise and celebrate the strong partnership between school, church and parents. They speak extremely highly of the school and church community's care and support for, not only pupils, but the whole family. They affirm that every pupil is seen not just as a child but as a unique individual. Parents explain that the vicar is an approachable and caring friend. Messy church and holiday club activities also clearly proclaim the shared mission of church and school as they work together with local families. The school is very well supported by the Diocese, and other local church schools. Staff and governors benefit from their training and resources. Partnerships beyond the local area could further extend the drive to develop this distinctive, caring and inclusive community.

SIAMS report June 2017 Old Church CE (VC) Primary School, Darlaston WS10 8DL