

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

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

Sion Avenue Kidderminster DY10 2YL	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Worcester</b>
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Local authority	Worcestershire
Date of inspection	13 February 2017
Date of last inspection	2 March 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 135058
Headteacher	Joel Marshall
Inspector's name and number	Lynn Gill 848

#### School context

St Oswald's VC CE Primary School is a smaller than average sized primary school, with 187 pupils on roll and a further 35 children in nursery situated in an urban setting. The vast majority of children are of white British heritage and numbers of children with special educational needs and those known to be eligible to receive Pupil Premium funding are higher than the national average. The school serves a mixed socio-economic catchment and supports many vulnerable children and families. The headteacher has been in post for four years and there were further significant changes to the senior leadership team in September 2016. Issues around staffing and governance have been consistently challenging in recent years.

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

- The headteacher's inspirational leadership and commitment to lead the school as a distinctive and effective church school is modelled for the whole school on a daily basis
- The dedicated staff work tirelessly to ensure that all children are strongly supported in their personal wellbeing through the inclusive Christian vision of the school
- The excellent relationships between all members of the school community can be attributed to the Christian character of the school
- Worship is highly valued, linked to the school's Christian ethos and rooted in the teachings of the Bible. This has a positive impact on the lives of the pupils and staff as demonstrated by the attitudes and behaviours of the whole community.

#### Areas to improve

- Ensure that the shared interpretation of spirituality across the school community enables staff to plan for a range of high quality spiritual experiences for all learners in all areas of the curriculum.
- Enable pupils to independently plan, lead and evaluate complete acts of worship in a variety of settings, so that their own spiritual journeys can be enhanced and strengthened.
- Improve pupils' understanding that Christianity is a multicultural world faith through the implementation of the Understanding Christianity resource

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

At St Oswald's CE Primary Christian values permeate the whole school and create an ethos that enables all children to flourish in their potential as unique individuals. The school motto of 'Inspire, Embrace, Succeed' is clearly understood by all stakeholders and is central to the life of the school. The staff have high aspirations for all pupils from Nursery to Year Six, and work tirelessly to ensure that all succeed irrespective of their backgrounds. This aspiration and the resulting interventions for vulnerable individuals and groups have not yet had sufficient time to have a notable impact upon the school's academic performance data. Their excellent knowledge of every pupil's needs enables them to provide extra support and to nurture vulnerable pupils and families. The vicar commented, 'The staff now see themselves as gatekeepers and good shepherds as they live out the school values in their role as teachers; they go the extra mile so that children can be freed from the labels they have got.' The 'Values in Practice Squad', (VIPS), a group of Year Six pupils, play an important part in promoting the values and are responsible for collecting evidence of them in practice. Children appreciate the awards they give to those who have demonstrated the values that week.

Children and staff readily acknowledge the impact of the school's Christian values on their daily lives and confidently explain the links to Christian teachings. For example, one child said, 'Jesus showed the values throughout his life. There are lots of stories in the Bible based on them.' During collective worship children were confident to share their own examples of when they had shown this term's value of courage, demonstrating that the values are linked to their everyday lives.

The outstanding relationships between all members of the school community are attributed to everyone living out the Christian values on a daily basis. The influence of Christian values is also seen in the excellent behaviour shown by the pupils and is reflected in the recently revised Effective Behaviour Management policy. This shows a strategy that is relentlessly positive and rooted in the value of forgiveness and the resulting consistent approach results in pupils working well together and making the right choices. Staff say that the strong sense of belonging and being valued supports them in their work and personal lives, and gives them a focus to work as a team.

There is a shared understanding of spirituality throughout the school community. Although opportunities for reflection around 'big questions' such as 'How did God put the rocks there?' arise, allowing children to become more curious about the world around them, they are currently not planned for on a regular basis.

The recent re-organisation of religious education (RE) lessons so that teachers now teach RE to their own classes has resulted in lessons that are enjoyed by pupils. Through RE children have a good understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. One child said, 'We learn about other people's beliefs and respect them.' Another commented, 'Everyone is special in this school, everyone is equal. They have the same rights no matter how they look or speak or what they believe.'

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

Collective worship at St Oswald's has a significant impact on the life of the school. It is a special time when 'everyone comes together' to gain a greater understanding of Christian values and the teachings of the Bible. The teaching of values, attitudes and prayer are built up over time leading to a greater awareness of God and the life of Jesus. Worship is engaging and interactive and gives children the opportunity to contribute their own ideas. Class worship develops the main theme at an age appropriate level and allows time for reflection and quietness. One child said, 'Class worship is practical and fun; you can express how you feel.' Pupils of all ages have an excellent knowledge of the Bible and its teachings about the life of Jesus. Children of all ages were able to speak confidently about the story of the Last Supper when discussing a picture displayed in the Learning Zone.

Symbolic artefacts such as three candles, a cross and coloured cloth linked to the church calendar, are displayed on the worship table and children are able to articulate confidently what they mean to Christians. A Year Two child commented, 'When we are looking at the candle we know Jesus is our light.'

Children are confident in their use of prayer both in worship and their own lives saying the school creed and the Lord's Prayer with confidence. Children enjoy using the school Prayer Tree which enables them to add personal prayers they want to be read out in collective worship. Children have a developing knowledge of the Trinity. Commenting about the gathering prayer at the beginning of worship a child said, 'We light the three candles to remember the three people of God – God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.'

Reflection areas in all classrooms enable children to think about worship messages throughout the school day. A Year Four child said, 'We can go to the reflection area when we feel sad or worried.' In addition, Forest School and the Smelly Garden, as well as being places of quiet and reflection, have been catalysts in teaching the children about the responsibility they have as stewards of nature.

A range of worship leaders, both from the school and the local churches, deliver worship following well-structured, long-term planning. The VIPS take responsibility for setting up worship sessions and plans are in place for them to have a greater role in planning and leading worship.

The effectiveness of collective worship is regularly and thoroughly monitored and evaluated by the collective worship co-ordinator and pupils and this leads to significant improvement. Governors are regular visitors to the school and attend worship to observe improvements being made.

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

The committed and inspirational headteacher leads the highly dedicated staff and governors, working together as a strong team, to ensure that the focus on Christian values defines and informs all that they do. The clear Christian ethos is confidently articulated by all stakeholders and permeates all areas of school life demonstrating a caring and nurturing community. The school motto 'Inspire, Embrace, Succeed' comes from its distinctively Christian vision, which is rooted in John 10:10, 'I came so that they may have life and life to its fullest'. Displays of the vision around the school remind all stakeholders of its importance to the life of the school. A Year Six child said, 'If Mr Marshall left, he has left his stamp on the school with John 10:10.'

School leaders have an excellent understanding of the school's performance based on the knowledge of every pupil's needs and recognise the areas that now need to be developed for all children to succeed academically. Governors know the school well and are able to articulate their role as strategic leaders of a church school. Through their monitoring programme they evaluate the impact of the Christian vision and values on school life and their findings are fed back to staff and pupils.

The clear vision of the school community is modelled through the way adults lead, inspire and shape its life and is lived out through the Christian values. A Year Five pupil commented, 'Our school is special. The adults don't just tell us about the values, they live them every day.' Parents comment that they are welcomed into the school and know that their concerns are dealt with effectively and sensitively and that the school had helped them in times of need. The partnership between the school and the parish church is very strong. The vicar is a regular visitor to the school and takes an active part in the planning and leading of collective worship. He also provides guidance on RE teaching and has contributed to lessons providing a deeper understanding of the Anglican traditions. He gives pastoral support to staff and his 'reflection times' are very much appreciated by the staff who say they 'give them time to rest and recover'.

High priority is given to the leadership of RE and collective worship. The strong leadership of RE and collective worship, by the deputy headteacher, has resulted in the creative and well-structured implementation of the new Worcestershire agreed syllabus for RE. Staff and governors regularly attend diocesan training and are well placed to take initiatives forward leading to improvement as a church school. One example of this is the planned implementation of the Understanding Christianity resource to improve children's understanding of Christianity as a multicultural world faith. Collective worship and RE meet statutory requirements and issues from the last inspection have been addressed.

SIAMS report February 2017 St Oswald's VC CE Primary School Kidderminster DY10 2YL