

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St. Andrew's Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School	
Hopton Lane, Nesscliffe, Shrewsbury, SY4 1DB	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Lichfield
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Shropshire
Date of inspection	8 December 2016
Date of last inspection	11 November 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 123477
Headteacher	Nicola Bond
Inspector's name and number	Allyson Taylor 768

School context

St. Andrew's Church of England Primary School is a very small school with 51 pupils on roll, taught in three classes. It serves the village of Nesscliffe. In January 2015, the school joined with West Felton Church of England Primary School to create a hard federation, known as the Westcliffe Federation. An executive headteacher and one governing body provide leadership for both schools. An assistant headteacher supports the executive headteacher in managing the day to day life of the school. The number of children with complex special educational needs is well above the national average. Almost all pupils are of white British background.

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

- The distinctive Christian character of St. Andrew's enables all children to flourish in academic and personal terms.
- Exceptionally caring leadership builds positive relationships with families and the wider community.
- Collective worship plays an important part of affirming the Christian ethos of the school.
- Christian values have supported governors to create an effective leadership structure for the Nesscliffe federation which has improved academic standards at St. Andrew's.
- Exemplary support for children with additional learning and personal needs means that all ages and abilities are helped to achieve.

Areas to improve

- Establish formal systems for governors to monitor Church school aspects so their findings drive continuous improvements to worship and religious education (RE).
- Revisit the vision statement, the website and key documents so they more accurately reflect the caring Christian character of the school.
- Agree a definition of 'spirituality' to support teachers to plan this element of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the curriculum.

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

The distinctive Christian character of St. Andrew's creates a safe haven for its pupils, staff and families. Christian values of love, friendship, courage and respect are so deeply embedded that they provide a secure basis for all that the school does. As a result, the school's core values have a marked impact on learners' progress in academic subjects, personal development and wellbeing. One child said: 'God forgave people who did bad things, so we should.' Another stated that the school's values: 'feel like a plaster, that heals our hearts.' Christian values are carefully linked to British values. The headteacher stated that God's sacrifice in giving his son demonstrates the value of protecting individual liberty. Learners are in a positive frame of mind, feel confident to support each other and to face challenges in their learning with equanimity. As a result, academic progress and attainment are improved to the extent that the local authority judges the school to require only minimum support. All members of staff are united in their deeply held commitment to ensure children are nurtured. As one said: 'we don't give up on a child.' Testament to this is the fact that some children who have experienced difficulties in other schools are welcomed and soon feel at home. The reputation of the school as a centre of excellence for those with additional needs means the number on roll with such needs has risen. Yet, these children are so well integrated and accepted in the small community it is hard to distinguish them from their peers. Inclusion and sensitive support are without doubt why those who need specific help achieve progress from their individual starting points. More able pupils are challenged to think for themselves and to make connections between subjects. An RE lesson on carols showed how children are able to relate topics to their own experiences and interests in modern music.

The sense of nurture is palpable and this leads to extremely positive relationships across all ages. Behaviour is excellent and readily attributed to the family feel created by constant focus on the Christian values. Learners of different ages help each other completely naturally. Parents appreciate this and state that the school gives their children a strong moral compass, which in turn helps with family life. Attendance is excellent and great care is taken to work with families who struggle with this at times. RE plays an important role in giving learners a sense of their place in our multi-cultural society. The subject strongly reflects the Christian character of the school and strengthens its foundations. Staff are acutely aware that learners benefit from connections with the local area and beyond. The curriculum is enriched by opportunities for reflection and this supports spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school has a growing understanding, but not a clear definition, of what is meant by 'spirituality' in the context of a small rural school. With the rich opportunities the outdoor environment offers the school is ready to take further its commitment to using the natural world to increase spiritual development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship binds this small community together. Staff and pupils find it exciting and uplifting with themes which capture current events as well as the main celebrations in the Christian calendar. As a result of worship, all members of the school community feel part of an extended, loving family. Acts of worship regularly reflect stories from the Bible and the life and teaching of Jesus. This enables learners to have a good overview of the most important Christian beliefs. The introduction of the 'Values for Life' materials have made the chosen values more explicitly understood as Christian in origin. Learners are enthusiastic leaders of worship, devising puppet plays to retell Bible stories and linking these to their values wherever possible. This was an area for development in the last inspection which has been met, although there is potential for it to develop further. Younger learners express a wish to also take a more frequent part in leading worship. Class led worship is well-received and popular with parents and family members who are invited to attend. Staff support planning of these events and it is clear that children gain much from the experience of working together to deliver and present themes. As such, worship plays an important role in affirming the strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the life of the school.

Despite the distance from St. Andrew's parish church the school celebrates the main festivals in the church's year there. Other special events are marked in the community, for example honouring those who have fallen in the service of our country at Remembrance. These acts of worship enable children to understand their part in the local community and to gain a sense of their place in history. Local clergy make a valuable contribution to acts of worship and to curriculum enrichment. For example, workshops run by clergy on prayer, and specific events like Christingle, enrich children's spiritual life. Learners, therefore, have a good understanding of Anglican traditions, festivals and worship songs. At this time, involvement from both Anglican and Methodist communities, via a governor, means that children are developing awareness that Christianity has different denominations. Learners are also aware that Christians believe that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Prayer and time for reflection are key elements of worship and increasingly, learners lead these. Spiritual development is part of outdoor activities and the school is considering extending the use of the outdoor area for worship, once it is rebuilt following recent storm damage. Plans for developing shared worship across the federation are at an early stage.

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

There are clear benefits to the leadership structure developed through the federation. Staff at St. Andrew's feel valued and supported. They find it helpful to have colleagues at West Felton to work with and this enables staff to feel less isolated in a very small school. Honouring the Christian character of the school is a key motivation in the federation and governors said the shared vision and values between both schools was essential in forming the federation. It is clear that the executive headteacher provides exceptionally strong and compassionate leadership. Her knowledge of individual children and their families sets the tone of nurture and gives parents confidence that children's individual needs are met. The headteacher is ably supported by talented staff, notably the assistant headteacher whose role has developed considerably in recent years. He is a 'rock' on whom other staff lean. The leadership structure shows governors' commitment to developing future leaders of church schools.

Leaders know the school well and are direct school improvement plans. While the focus on improving standards has been driven by Ofsted, leaders are well aware that they need to refocus on the Christian character of the school. However, it is clear that their shared Christian vision and values have sustained them through challenges and guided their decisions. Governors are very involved in the daily life of the school and so feedback on their involvement is given to the full governing body. More formal systems to enable governors to monitor and evaluate the Church school ethos, RE and collective worship are not yet in place. Consequently, distinct improvements as a church school are not as evident as improvements in academic standards. The website and key policies do not fully reflect the vibrant Christian character which is lived out in the school. Leaders are, nevertheless, mindful of their statutory duties and requirements for RE and worship are met. The school benefits from high quality support from the diocese and this has developed how pupil feedback on worship is gathered.

Partnerships with parents, the local church and community are cohesive and mutually supportive. Local community members support their school with pride and a determination to see it flourish in the future. Parents very much appreciate the difference the school makes to their children, particularly those with additional learning or social needs. One parent described her total confidence that staff will listen and respond sensitively whenever an issue arises. This is the hallmark of the school; leaders set the tone, staff live out the vision and so every child is loved and enabled to develop their unique talents. St. Andrew's is living out its vision of loving and valuing all God's children.

SIAMS report December 2016 St. Andrew's Church of England Primary School, Nesscliffe, SY4 1DB