

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

Town Head, Alton, Stoke on Trent, ST10 4AW

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese / Methodist District	Lichfield
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Local authority	Staffordshire
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	The Saints Federation
Date/s of inspection	17 November 2016
Date of last inspection	November 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	VA First, 124328
Headteacher	Anna Bennett [Head of School]
Inspector's name and number	Lizzie McWhirter 244

Context

St Peter's First School currently has 52 pupils on roll and 12 in the nursery. It is in the third year of belonging to The Saints Federation with two other church schools. St Peter's is the only aided school within the federation. The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium finding or who have special educational needs is below average. There is an executive head and a head of school. Religious education [RE] is led by the head of school. There are strong links between the school and St Peter's Church.

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

- This is a Christian family community which nurtures each individual person. As a result, children and adults thrive emotionally and spiritually in an encouraging environment, underpinned by the Christian values of love, respect and friendship.
- The partnership with St Peter's Church enriches the worshipping life of this church school.
- These young pupils have a very positive attitude to learning. Behaviour and relationships are very good because the children look out for each other with a strong sense of empathy in belonging to this church school family.

Areas to improve

- Extend the monitoring of RE by the governors in partnership with the RE subject leader so the governors are better informed of this key aspect of Christian distinctiveness.
- Embed the assessment of RE, with its focus on deeper meaning and key Christian concepts, so the school is better informed of the standards of achievement.
- Enrich pupils' experience of Christianity as a worldwide faith and enable them to meet people of faith more frequently to enrich their spiritual and cultural development.

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

St Peter's is undoubtedly a safe and caring Christian environment which has a 'friendly family feel where the children are nurtured and they nurture each other'. Indeed, the children's unique personalities are encouraged to develop and grow. Consequently, children look out for each other and demonstrate a strong sense of empathy. Behaviour

and relationships are very good. The children's chosen values of love, respect and friendship underpin all school policy and practice. As a result, staff comment, 'this is an atmosphere we can all thrive in'. Attendance is very good because of the nurturing atmosphere in this school where children respect each other. All children make rapid progress, with any vulnerable groups receiving very good support with differentiated interventions in order to close any gaps in learning. Consequently, pupils who have special educational needs or those in receipt of pupil premium funding make good progress and achieve well. The school attributes this to aspirational targets resulting in pupils still believing they can achieve. The school's Christian vision is that every child is treated as a precious individual so all feel valued. Moreover, achievement rosettes are awarded for out of school activities, such as sport and music and are displayed on a life size model horse in the school hall for all to see. In addition, the foundation governors very much see themselves as a team and have a very important presence and engagement in the school. Excellent examples include the vicar working with the most able group in mathematics whilst a foundation governor comes in every Wednesday to help with pupils of lower ability in mathematics. St Peter's pupils are helped to grow in their understanding and awareness of Christianity as a global faith through the school link with Kenya as well as their charity fundraising, such as Operation Christmas Child. Pupils are helped to be aware of the diversity of different cultures and communities through their RE work, which sometimes includes visiting such places as the Derby faith trail. More locally, pupils use St Peter's Church and the local Methodist chapel as a curriculum resource. However, the school is mindful of extending such experiences to enrich pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

St Peter's pupils are young but they are actively engaged and inspired by worship which is carefully planned and linked to themes based on the lectionary. They do have a concept of God and Jesus and are growing impressively in their understanding of God as Trinity as part of their regular worshipping life. They speak of 'God being the Son, Father and Holy Spirit, all in one. Jesus died on the cross. He took away all our badness. He is the Saviour of the world because he saved us.' The vicar and governors help them to understand how The Trinity works and apply it to their level. As a result, pupils speak of 'Jesus as a form of God because God sent Jesus, a person, down. Jesus knows what it feels like to be a human.' Pupils know that Jesus is the Son of God, the light of the world and understand more about the Holy Spirit through the story of Pentecost and Jesus' baptism. Consequently, pupils relate, 'the dove is a sign of the Holy Spirit. It's got wings and the Holy Spirit's got wings.' They go on to say, 'the Holy Spirit's invisible, but you never know, he might be in this room right now.' Prayer and reflection is an important part of daily life. Pupils know the morning prayer, lunchtime prayer and end of day prayer. Many value prayer as the most important aspect of worship for them. Consequently, they say they like to 'reflect and forget everything I'm worrying about for a few minutes'. Pupils like writing their own prayers and say, 'if you don't pray you feel you have just missed out on something and God won't do anything.' Pupils make good use of prayer jars in class worship areas, the reflection benches outside and enjoy using the creative cabin to sit, read books and reflect. They value church worship. One of the hallmarks of St Peter's is that children are admitted to communion before confirmation. Consequently, pupils can explain the symbolism of the bread and wine and recall Jesus' Last Supper. Pupil voice is gathered to inform future planning and practice. As a result, Year 3 and 4 pupils lead worship independently of adults every three weeks. For example, Year 3 recently led whole school worship on the theme of The Lost Sheep with its message that 'everyone is precious to God'. Plans are in hand to increase this responsibility and extend it to Year 2 pupils, mindful of succession planning. Pupils enjoy such leadership roles which also nurtures their spiritual lives.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

RE has a high profile at St Peter's and is led by the head of school. Indeed, staff say 'we all teach it religiously every week.' Pupils enjoy RE and are excited and challenged by this key subject 'when we learn about God and Jesus and all the Christians'. They say, 'we get to find out more about Jesus' life'. As you might expect in a church school, pupils also learn about other faiths and welcome more visits and visitors as part of their learning in RE. This supports their spiritual and cultural development well. Teaching and learning in RE is consistently good, with pupils encouraged to go deeper and apply their learning to daily life. Consequently, pupils' religious literacy is good. For example, Year 3 and 4 pupils are already using the Understanding Christianity units and ask questions such as 'Why do Christians give presents at Christmas time?' They know the word incarnation, saying 'Jesus came down to earth as he wanted to know what it felt like and the baby was special as it came from the Holy Spirit.' Early Years Foundation Stage are extending their religious vocabulary and explore the wedding ring as a symbol as a symbol of everlasting love. They relate this to God's love which has no beginning or end. Year 1 and 2 focus on prayer which they link to their Christian value of friendship. All pupils know the story of Peter, the fisherman and disciple, after whom their school and church is dedicated. Tracking and assessment of RE is in place. As a result, standards in RE are in line with core subjects and sometimes exceed these. Next steps include embedding the Understanding Christianity resource and ensuring RE has its own section in the school development plan as well as embedding

assessment in RE.

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

Here at St Peter's 'every success is celebrated. Staff say, 'It is a lovely place to come to work each day.' This is because it is an encouraging Christian environment where children grow physically, emotionally and spiritually. Moreover, the wellbeing of the whole community is important so that staff comment, 'we look after each other as well as the children.' Consequently, the school's Christian character results in good academic and personal development. Governors are very committed to the school and all areas from the previous inspection have been addressed, They ensure that RE and collective worship meets statutory requirements. However, they acknowledge that more frequent monitoring of RE in partnership with the subject leader ensures that the profile of this key aspect of Christian distinctiveness remains a high priority with all governors. The collective worship leader works across the Saints Federation and meets regularly with the vicar so that the best practice, mindful of pupil voice, is consistent and constantly evolving. The partnership with St Peter's Church through the vicar and members of the parish community is strong. The vicar and foundation governors are welcome and regular visitors to school. Parents testify to this small, friendly school where 'you feel like your child matters because the school is welcoming to everyone'. Parents speak highly of the church services, saying they 'feel part of Alton Church through the school'. They also relate the impact of the school on the church and the church on the school and praise the confidence their children find in taking part in church services. Parents speak highly of all the staff, including those members of the non-teaching staff, and of everyone working together and valuing each other in a true spirit of love, friendship and respect. Community and village links are strong, especially at such times as Remembrance, and extend beyond church and school. A good example is these young children's generosity in giving clothes to the local women's' refuge. St Peter's features regularly in the 'Parish News'. This school community is committed to serving and supporting others as an example of living out Jesus' commandments.

SIAMS report November 2016 St Peter's CE VA First School, Alton, Staffordshire ST10 4AW