

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Shustoke Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Forge Road, Shustoke, Birmingham B46 2AU

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Diocese

Birmingham

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

Warwickshire

Date of inspection

5 April 2017

Date of last inspection

November 2011

Type of school and unique reference number

VC Primary 125684

Headteacher

Michele Wall

Inspector's name and number

Lizzie McWhirter 244

School context

Currently there are 187 pupils on roll in this one form entry rural primary school. The school is predominately White British, with pupils coming from the local villages and further afield. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or who have free school meals is below the national average. There is an experienced senior leadership team. Currently, the parish church of St Cuthbert's is in an interregnum and at a distance from the school on a road with no footpath.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Shustoke as a Church of England school are outstanding

- This is a welcoming and accepting Christian family community where faith is lived out. Christian values, such as forgiveness, respect and equality are demonstrated daily by pupils and adults.
- The dedication and commitment of the headteacher, the religious education [RE] subject leader and the staff ensures the Christian character of the school permeates all school life. As a result, pupils grow in self-belief and achieve very well.
- Pupils are enthusiastic learners and regard it as an honour to be involved in the worshipping life of this church school. Consequently, they have a good knowledge of the Christian story of salvation which nurtures their spiritual lives.
- The partnership with the school in Malawi enables pupils to develop a good understanding of Christianity as a worldwide faith.

Areas to improve

- Embed the systematic monitoring of collective worship and RE by the governors to inform the future direction of these two key aspects of Christian distinctiveness.
- Build on the achievements of the worship council to extend pupils' involvement in planning and leading collective worship. In addition, enable them to deepen their knowledge of key times in the church year, such as Pentecost, to enrich their spiritual journeys.

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

This is a welcoming and accepting Christian family community where faith is lived out. This is because Christian values, such as forgiveness, hope, respect and equality are daily demonstrated by pupils and adults alike. Such values underpin the life and work of this school. Consequently, relationships and behaviour are impeccable. For example, the buddy reading scheme is a very popular way to strengthen relationships, with older pupils reading to younger ones. Attendance is very good and there are no exclusions as pupils love coming to school and are proud to belong. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and achievement is very high because all efforts and successes are valued and celebrated. Disadvantaged pupils have traditionally done very well as they are given support. As a result, they build up strength of character and are enabled very well to do the best they can. The school attributes the successful achievement across all groups of pupils to the encouragement to persevere and the hard work to obtain results. This takes place within the context of Christian belief and practice in which each individual is prepared both academically and spiritually for life in a rapidly changing world. Consequently, pupils see the impact of learning and the smiles on their faces testify to the fact that they 'keep believing in themselves'. This is a very important part of the school's Christian ethos. Equality is promoted here and pupils know you can be different from your friend as everyone is important and valuable and made in God's image. A local trust, which is very supportive of families in need, helps pay for residential visits and outdoor adventure weeks enjoyed by Year 4 and Year 6 pupils. This ensures such activities, which give pupils confidence, are available to all. The partnership with a school in Malawi makes a good contribution to pupils' global awareness and understanding of different communities and cultures as pupils 'learn about the school in Malawi'. Pupils' perspectives are widened by special events, such as the Malawi enterprise week and Daffodil Day. For example, in partnership with the diocese, following a visit to the cathedral, the members of the worship council organised the planting of daffodil bulbs by all pupils in school. Such activities enrich pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural [SMSC] development, enriching their spiritual and cultural awareness. Pupils also visit other places of worship, such as the mosque, the gurdwara and the pagoda in Year 1 and Year 5. Pupils and parents enjoy such visits, which make a good contribution to pupils' SMSC development. Pupils say they are excited and made to think by RE, which includes the study of Buddhism Christianity, Islam and Judaism. There is a focus on key Bible stories and respect for other faiths. For example, they say, 'sometimes it is quite challenging as you have to think deeper about things such as what Jesus felt when he was crucified and about Daniel's prayer to God'. RE is seen as exciting and relevant, using new resources, such as 'Understanding Christianity'. This is reflected in recent displays in the hall, celebrating creation and Bible stories, miracles and parables, such as The Good Shepherd. Consequently, pupils know the Christian story of salvation very well. They can relate the Easter story, with its symbolism, and reflect on how to be a modern disciple. They explain, 'when Jesus was alive again, he went up to the top of the hill and ascended into heaven, which is called the Ascension.' However, whilst they can talk about the saints to whom their local parish churches are dedicated, they are less secure in their knowledge of Pentecost, which the school acknowledges.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship provides prayer, praise and reverence which inspires pupils and enriches their understanding of Christianity and the Bible. Pupils say, 'the most important part of worship is when we get together and we worship.' One pupil went on to say, 'I love the song 'When I think about the cross', as I love praying and it really reflects praying and it's about Jesus.' Another pupil added, 'Hot cross buns remind us of Jesus dying

on the cross, He gave up his life for all of us, showing real courage and determination.' Pupils and parents enjoy worship in St Cuthbert's Shustoke or in St Michael and All Angels in Maxstoke. One pupil reflected, 'the stained glass windows in church remind you of Bible stories and Jesus.' Worship themes inspire pupils to take action in the life of the school, such as their generosity in fundraising for charities. Pupils see it as an honour to lead worship and would like to plan and lead worship more frequently, particularly on core values, such as honesty and courtesy. The school has already identified this as a future priority. The formation of the pupil worship council has already made 'such a difference' to the worshipping life of the school. Reflecting on the worship themes and values has developed pupils' thinking. For example, the worship council recently introduced prayer boxes into classrooms. Pupils comment, 'Prayer helps to remind you about other people in other countries who do not have enough food and water.' Pupils worked with the previous vicar to write the current school prayer. Pupils value 'showing respect and working as a team as teamwork leads into lots of other things'. Currently, Year 3 plan the Easter service and Year 6 the Leavers' service. Adults, including staff also lead worship regularly, with worship being led by a retired priest during the interregnum. Pupils have also worked with the priest from St Peter and St Paul's Coleshill and St Michael and All Angels, Maxstoke to plan and lead a Remembrance service. These experiences of planning and leading worship make a rich contribution to the community's worshipping life and pupils' experience of leading worship. The school has already identified that future members of the worship council will continue the links with the cathedral. Those who work and worship in the cathedral crafted daffodils for the worship council to wear to mark their commitment to organise the planting of daffodils of hope in their school grounds. This made a deep impression on the pupils, who were proud and also humbled by the part they played, sharing their experiences in whole school worship. Pupils are growing in their understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For example, they know 'Christians believe God is three people. God is the Father of everyone. God the Son came down in the form of Jesus and God the Holy Spirit lives with us.' They go on to speak about the symbolism of The Trinity as expressed by the parts of an orange, saying that 'the skin is God the Father, the flesh is God the Son and the pips are God the Spirit.' One pupil added, 'worshipping God is important and it is important that we worship all of God so I think of The Holy Trinity.' Pupils contribute their thoughts on collective worship in written evaluations which are used to inform the future direction of worship in this church school.

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

The dedication and commitment of the headteacher and her staff shines through, ensuring the school's Christian foundation is celebrated daily. Parents speak highly of the Christian values which are upheld here, saying that they too feel part of the family community, which gives their children a firm foundation for life. They especially praise the headteacher and the staff who 'know each child by name and show their love and care for the children'. They cite that 'welfare and happiness is the school's highest priority in this caring little family.' This is because the school puts each child's individual development and the wellbeing of the whole community at the heart of all it does, with the school's Christian values underpinning academic standards and personal development. Parents are very supportive and value the 'sense of community with the church services as the school does church services and festivals so well. For example, the nativity was prefaced and ended with a passage of scripture.' Good community links extend beyond the parish churches and cathedral, such as the school featuring in the local 'Tidings' magazine. Further examples include pupils' fundraising for charities, such as Christian Aid as well as the distribution of Harvest baskets and the carol service for grandparents. The latter began three years ago and was the initiative of the RE subject leader. RE is held in high esteem by pupils and adults alike. It is very well led, managed and resourced, as is collective worship, and both meet statutory requirements. RE has its own action plan, with the headteacher presenting a report termly to the governing body. The governors' standards and curriculum committee go on learning walks and meet with pupils. Currently, they monitor RE and worship informally, but recognise they need to monitor the key aspects of Christian distinctiveness more regularly and rigorously. Whilst the governors have addressed areas from the previous inspection, they are mindful to build on the good work achieved by the worship council and increase their responsibility. They support training and the professional development of the staff as well as themselves. Consequently, the head and RE subject leader attend training provided by the diocese with other schools in the cluster, sharing best practice

collaboratively. This benefits all staff. The school leadership values and encourages the talents of all staff. This inspires them to make their contribution to the life of the school, such as the offering of art work depicting the Holy Family. Staff value this school family which 'nurtures a desire to learn and achieve'. They feel it encourages pupils to feel special, important and know they can and will make a difference. One member of staff said, 'the essence of our school community is one of nurturing caring and compassion. One of our strengths is that we strive to live, teach and work by our values and celebrate the uniqueness of everyone.' Another staff member reflected on the school being like a woven mat, with aspirations, challenge and praise, underpinned by faith and values. One of last year's leavers has an abiding memory of the school, saying, 'I learned that everyone is different, and to always give my best in everything. You helped me to be the person I am.'

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