



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Paul's Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

School Lane

Coven

Wolverhampton

WV9 5AD

Previous SIAMS Grade : Good

Diocese: Lichfield

Local authority: Staffordshire

Dates of inspection: 19 May 2016

Date of last inspection: 21 June 2011

School's unique reference number: 124245

Headteacher: Karen Roberts

Inspector's name and number: Reverend Alison M. Morris 759

School context

St. Paul's Voluntary Controlled Church of England First School is a smaller than the average sized first school. The school which serves the village of Coven and surrounding areas has 164 pupils on roll aged 4-9 years. Pupils are predominantly White British and almost all speak English as their first language. There are very close links between the school and the parish church. The school meets current government floor standards, which is the minimum requirement set for the attainment of pupils at the end of key stage 2. In October 2014 the school was judged to require improvement by Ofsted. Since then, there have been a significant number of staff changes. The acting head teacher took up the substantive post as headteacher in April 2016.

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

- Christian belief, commitment and dedication by the headteacher based on Christian values are effectively transforming the school's distinctive Christian identity.
- Significantly improved relationships between the school and church now enhance the exemplary work of the vicar to nurture pupils' and staff attitudes to faith and their personal spiritual journeys.
- The governing body is having a profound effect and positive impact by supporting an innovative Christian vision for what the school can offer its pupils and the local community.

Areas to improve

- Embed the effective monitoring practice that evaluates the Christian distinctiveness, ethos and values of the school in the light of the new vision and strategic direction offered by the headteacher.
- Explore more creative ways for pupils to experience other world religions so that they are prepared for life in a multi-cultural and multi-faith society.
- Increase provision for pupils to experience a wider range of Anglican tradition and practices through the development of the worship committee.

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

Christian distinctiveness, character and ethos at St Paul's are immediately apparent. The motto *'Inspire! Achieve! Believe!* reflects the Christian teaching and beliefs which are at the centre of the school's Christian vision. Christian values, including friendship and peace, which are rooted in the teachings of Jesus, are beginning to have a significant impact upon pupils' lives and their learning in school. These Christian values enhance pupils' learning. Staff model core Christian values in their working relationships and have high expectations of their pupils. This has resulted in attainment which is now above national expectations in all areas of the school's work. Effective interventions to help disadvantaged pupils have led to improved expected levels of progress for this group of pupils as well. Good pastoral care and welfare support underpin the school's approach to personal and academic development. As such, pupils have good and improving attitudes to learning. They are treated with dignity and valued so that individual pupils' needs are met and they achieve their potential. Pupils' uniqueness is recognised, builds up their self-esteem and encourages their self-confidence. Older pupils understand what it means to be a pupil at a church school and make the link between core beliefs such as the Trinity and their theological meaning as expressed in teaching from the Bible. They also understand what it is like to show care and compassion through opportunities for taking on responsibility, for example, involvement in fundraising and charitable activities to support organisations such as Christian Aid. An effective school council allows pupils' voice to contribute to the school's decision making processes. Pupils are now keen and eager to attend school because the quality of teaching and learning has improved. Pupils enjoy their lessons, and so, attendance has improved as a result. Good behaviour is supported by a praise and reward system based on Christian values. Pupils have very clear guidelines to support their good behaviour and the expectations placed upon them. An innate sense of right and wrong is developed within an environment where all feel happy, safe and secure. Pupils are courteous and polite with a good sense of self-awareness. They are also resilient. Both pupils and parents now feel welcomed and valued within this inclusive school. They are confident of support structures to help them and say that issues are dealt with quickly and fairly. One parent said, *'They care about each other and provide good things'*. Parents do appreciate extra-curricular activities in school that their children enjoy, such as dance. Religious education (RE) contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as faith and belief go together and are regarded as important in this school. The well-structured RE syllabus encourages knowledge and understanding for Christianity and there is a developing understanding and increasing knowledge of other religious faiths and belief structures such as Islam and Judaism. Creating planned opportunities to meet people from other faith communities is the next important step. Classrooms have Christian symbols and worship tables which, when used, make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Focused displays and artefacts in the foyer also visually express and encourage deeper understanding of this school's Christian distinctiveness. A stable and purposeful atmosphere is now promoting a Christian learning environment which meets all pupils' needs and has the capacity to raise achievement for all.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.

The daily act of worship is important in the life of the school and forms the main element of the school's Christian witness. Worship is received enthusiastically by pupils who enjoy it and are engaged and affirmed by it. Pupils are keen to sing, praise and pray within this distinctive spiritual atmosphere. A lighted candle is used as a focal point, with other Christian artefacts and symbols being introduced as appropriate. Opportunities for personal reflection and prayer enable some pupils to experience a quiet, spiritual time during the school day. Prayer is an integral part of daily life supported by use of the Lord's prayer and the school prayer. One pupil commented on the importance of prayer by saying: *'I like it when we reflect on what we have talked about'*. This indicates a developing maturity towards personal and meaningful use of prayer. Records of tracking pupils' spiritual development are effective and these are expressed through a 'Learning Journey' and 'Working on Worship' booklets. Some pupils now belong to the worship team,

and these pupils are being empowered to lead, plan and represent pupils' voice on the organisation of worship, but these contributions are limited. More activities need to be added to enable pupils to make a greater contribution. Worship, through its moral messages, influence pupils' actions and behaviour, creating a purposeful learning environment which enables most pupils to learn well. Worship makes a good contribution to whole school life and pupils' spiritual development. Worship is rooted in the Christian liturgical year and so all major Christian festivals such as Easter and Christmas are now celebrated in church. In addition, the special leaver's service now also takes place in church. These opportunities have reinforced the spiritual link between the parish church and the school community. Worship is based on weekly themes which reflect Christian values, bible teaching and British values. It is well-planned and evaluated by the worship co-ordinator. Renewed and effective links with the clergy ensure that most Anglican traditions are upheld, but deeper understanding and knowledge of the broadness of Christian practice needs further development. Plans for the parish clergy and foundation governors to be involved in worship are at an early stage of development. Parents and foundation governors enjoy and are appreciative of worship. One parent said, *'It brings the school together and you're welcomed into the Christian family'*. Although the impact of worship is evaluated, this needs to be embedded more so that high quality worship which is relevant to pupils' lives can be ensured by leaders.

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

Through energy and urgency, the headteacher has worked hard to promote and improve the Christian vision and values which now permeate school life and the learning community. The Christian values of respect and love are lived out between all to provide an inclusive ethos and atmosphere where pupils learn well. There is now an overarching desire to drive forward the necessary changes for improvement, through effective monitoring and evaluation of the school as a Church of England school. Governors, including foundation governors are very supportive of the strategic drive to improve academic standards and to embed Christian distinctiveness. Leaders and governors are fully aware of the importance of training to improve their skills and knowledge and have successfully participated in several courses. The school is supported well by a diocesan adviser. This is producing more effective school improvement planning and a developing understanding of future needs. The teaching of religious education is managed well across the school by the RE co-ordinator and creative learning activities and teaching enables pupils to learn about, and from RE, with good opportunities for personal discussion and reflection so pupils can think more deeply about issues. A pupil confidently spoke of the parable of the Good Samaritan and how faith in God allows us to help our neighbours. Pupils' knowledge of the Christian story is strong, as well as some understanding and awareness of other faiths and cultures such as Islam and Judaism. Pupils in school now have an emerging local Christian identity and are also starting to think globally and to be culturally aware of their individual responsibilities within a diverse society. Through the ongoing and developing work of the foundation governors, a distinctive Christian difference is being made to this school. Issues identified in the previous inspection have been addressed. Links with the clergy and St. Paul's church are now stronger and purposeful in maintaining this distinctiveness. Regular clergy visits to lead worship and to visit RE lessons nurture the close links between church and school. Relationships are also now much improved through the way the school relates to the wider community and healthy, productive and engaging relationships, based on mutual trust exist between school and parents. A mathematics workshop in which pupils and their parents were involved and a very strong 'school association' are examples of this. Parents enjoy the openness of the school and its warm and welcoming atmosphere. Parents interviewed on the day of the inspection said that they *'believe that the school is strongly going in the right direction'*. Inspection evidence supports this view.

SIAMS report May 2016 St. Paul's Voluntary Controlled First School Coven WV9 5AD