

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

### St John's Church of England Primary Academy

Addison Terrace, Wednesbury, Wolverhampton WS10 7AL

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Lichfield</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	December 2014
Name of multi-academy trust	St Chad's Multi-Academy Trust
Date of inspection	30 November 2017
Date of last inspection	27 April 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	140856
Principal	Sarah Cockshott
Inspector's name and number	Marianne Phillips 586

#### School context

St John's is a smaller than average school with 207 pupils on roll. The numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals is almost double the national average. The school serves a wide range of ethnic groups, 36% come from White British heritage. The percentage of pupils for whom English is an additional language is more than double the national average. The principal has been in post since September 2014. The school became an academy in December 2014 and is part of St Chad's Multi-Academy Trust (MAT), the Lichfield diocesan MAT. There have been many staff changes since then.

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

- The strong spiritual leadership of the principal and the support of all staff and leaders that effectively drives the vision and values and spiritual life of the school.
- The outstanding behaviour of pupils and their commitment to the school's spiritual values that make a difference in their lives and their relationships with other members of the school family.
- The positive systems and structures that have been introduced to empower and develop leaders, to build capacity for the future development of this and other church schools.
- The commitment of church leaders to strengthen the strong links with the school to drive its distinctiveness.
- The effective work of governors and their rigorous monitoring of collective worship, religious education (RE) and the spiritual, moral social and cultural (SMSC) curriculum to support and challenge school leaders to make the school a strongly distinctive church school.
- The passionate commitment of all to the 'beliefs and values' (RE) curriculum, which is effectively developing a clear understanding of the rich diversity of faith and cultures represented by the school family.

#### Areas to improve

- Build on the current leadership skills of pupils to enable them to plan, lead and deliver a complete act of worship to support the future spiritual development of the school.
- Embed the effective 'Understanding Christianity' approaches and assessment strategies to continue to develop pupils' understanding of beliefs and cultures to support the distinctiveness of the school.
- Enable Local Academy Committee members (LAC) to follow the impact of their monitoring to ensure actions are having the desired effect in driving school improvement and Christian distinctiveness.

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

St John's Academy cares for every individual in their family. Their inclusive, welcoming ethos is effective in surrounding each child with nurturing care, encouraging them to 'Believe to Achieve'. As you enter the school symbols of its Christian foundation are displayed alongside the symbols of the three other faiths. This effectively celebrates the community and unity of the school family. Explicit core values, based on the guidance of their patron Saint John the Baptist are displayed. These underpin all areas of daily life. As all pupils questioned explained, 'Our values of generosity, endurance, tolerance and forgiveness are helping us get on with others. They are our goals and they will help us to become better adults.' The six chosen 'GETFAB' values provide stability, security and guidance for all, including adults. 'You're being tolerant today miss', is a quality recognised by children during their lessons. Pupils displaying the values are rewarded during 'memorable Monday' worship. Consequently, behaviour is excellent and relationships are strong. Pupils feel safe, loved and respected and want to attend school. As a result, attendance is high. Pupils, regardless of their faith or background strive to live their values out daily. This outstanding work has been recognised nationally by the achievement of the 'Values based Education' (VbE) quality mark. The worship team and school council are representative of the rich cultural diversity of the school. They explained, 'We are a Christian school but we all share our faiths through our discussions and we believe we are all equal. How you treat others is how you get treated.' These words of Jesus guide pupils' interactions. They believe the work they do is important and that they, 'make decisions from the children's perspective. We are like mini teachers and share views in our meetings.' These comments evidence the sense of community and the shared unity and purpose of all members. Cultural diversity is celebrated and pupils, through the 'beliefs and values' (RE) curriculum are developing an understanding of other faiths and cultures. As one child explained, 'I like sharing my knowledge and faith with my class and my teachers. I feel like an expert in my religion, which is good.' Discussions foster an open-ness and transparency which unites individuals. The principal and her 'team' are passionately committed to the school family. They share the vision to enable each child to 'believe to achieve' their goals and aspirations. They do this through their Christian care and concern. Pupils enter the school displaying skills below or well below national expectations. The consistent, positive approaches and rigorous monitoring systems that have been introduced are effective. They track individual learning to target intervention and support. Pupil progress meetings, 'next steps' marking and pupil conferences lead to actions which drive success caringly and positively. Consequently, all pupils are in line, or above national expectations by the time they leave the school. The accelerated rate of progress, particularly of the most vulnerable, diminishes the gap between them and their peers. This is appreciated by parents. They are regularly invited to 'open-door' lessons or to attend workshops to guide their support. As a result, they confirm, 'Our children have blossomed here. There is a sense of family and belonging which builds confidence. All abilities are challenged and the values make them kinder people.' The curriculum is rich and linked through themes. Extra-curricular clubs expand the learning experiences on offer. SMSC and the 'beliefs and values' (RE) curriculum are key areas of learning that challenge and inspire pupils. They enjoy their learning and their spiritual development is enhanced through their experiences. There are strong links with the church of St Bartholomew. In the absence of a vicar the curate, in his role of spiritual leader and governor, has sustained and strengthened the links. He is fully committed to the spiritual life of the school and helping to drive its Christian distinctiveness.

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

Worship holds an important place in the daily life of school. It brings staff and pupils together as a community to praise God. As explained by the worship council, 'as we enter our hall we turn it into our church. All faiths come together to pray to God, to sing and worship. This is good.' Consequently, there are no withdrawals from worship. The worship observed evidenced the quality experiences offered daily to the school family. The worship group often share the responsibility for leading and are proud of their roles. 'We welcome everyone, light the Trinity candles and lead the responses.' All pupils engage with the responses enthusiastically and confidently. Extending the leadership responsibilities of pupils in worship is a priority for the school. The Bible is the source of stories and teaching to inspire discussion and reflection to help guide daily choices. For example, Daniel in the lion's den is used to illustrate the importance of 'endurance', a core value. The worship group act out scenarios from school life and the congregation are challenged to answer, 'What would Daniel do?' They are encouraged to persevere through difficult times they may meet in their lives. In this way worship is effective in shaping their life choices and relationships. Reflection and prayer, guided by the leaders, create a sense of peace. This is sustained through the sweet singing of the blessing. Pupils understand that prayer is the way they can communicate with God. As a result, individual prayer is a feature in the classroom reflection areas and on the playground 'prayer boards'. They reflect thankfulness, being sorry and requests for forgiveness or help. Through worship experiences pupils are effectively learning about Anglican and other faith traditions. They are developing their understanding of faith and spirituality across a range of religions and cultures. The Open the Book (OTB) team and the curate lead weekly worship. All pupils questioned enjoy worship and the OTB session is a favourite. 'We like Bible stories and acting them out', pupils explained. Parents and pupils regularly share worship in school and at church. Services celebrate the church

calendar at Harvest, Christmas and Easter. Pupils are also invited to participate in communion. The 'belief and values' and SMSC curriculum closely link with worship. Regular, rigorous monitoring is a feature, undertaken by school leaders, staff, pupils and members of the local academy committee. Parents views are also gathered through parents' evenings and questionnaires. Consequently, the quality of worship is ensured and is effective in guiding the spiritual lives of the school community.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

The 'belief and values' (RE) curriculum has a high profile in school. Pupils enjoy their lessons and the challenges they provide to discuss their own and other religions. The worship team and school council are confident that, 'Jesus helps us to understand how we should live. Through our lessons we are learning the link between the Old and New testaments.' Planning is creative and follows the guidance from Telford and Wrekin and Sandwell syllabi. The school also uses 'Understanding Christianity' and guidance from the diocese. Teaching is strong, supportive and meets the specific needs of the pupils. In an effective Year 6 lesson, adults and pupils worked cooperatively to consider Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. A range of strategies challenged pupils' thinking and ensured they remained motivated. Pupils demonstrated a good understanding of Zechariah's prophecy. Also, in a Year 1 lesson the symbolism of the crown of thorns with the Advent crown, and through this understanding were able to talk about God's love for all people. Pupils' books show quality work over time. A learning walk also provided time to celebrate the quality of teaching and learning across the school. As the pre-school class journeyed to Bethlehem, the Years 3, 4 and 5 grappled with questions of faith, the Trinity and, 'Was Jesus the Messiah?' All teaching is underpinned by the core values and themes effectively link worship, RE and SMSC to develop depth and challenge. Consequently, experiences consistently develop pupils' understanding of different faiths and religions. The 'Interfaith Week', and planned visits to places of worship are two examples, contributing to pupils' understanding of global faith. Training underpins teaching and learning. There is also effective networking through the 'Wednesbury Learning Community Trust' (WLCT) that supports leadership, teaching and curricular enrichment. Standards are in line with other core curriculum areas. The subject also meets statutory requirements. Assessment and planning approaches have been reviewed by leaders. The desire to further develop and embed these effectively is a priority for the future. Monitoring of the subject is rigorous and effective in driving standards and sustaining quality. LAC members take their responsibilities very seriously. The principal is working with them to develop a cycle of monitoring to build further success. The subject is effectively and enthusiastically led. It supports the spiritual development of the pupils.

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

This is a listening school that cares strongly about the community it serves. The, 'You said – We did', board endorses this and celebrates the 'team' approach that is inclusive and highly effective. The strong, spiritual leadership of the principal and the support from her team unites the school as a family. The explicit vision and values are shared and understood by all. They are the foundation on which the school guides its decisions and unites in a common purpose to 'believe to achieve'. The loving care of the principal and staff celebrates diversity and nurtures the sense of belonging. 'We live our lives through our values. Our positive strategies and rewards make our values real and shape attitudes, actions, achievement and belief.' These aspirations are effective in shaping and supporting the lives of individuals to be successful citizens and future leaders. The VbE award reflects the quality of the work done. Leaders have worked hard to create a caring partnership with parents, through policies that develop understanding, engage and invite response. The workshops, parents' evenings and open-door learning, together with providing trained support are examples of success. These have raised parental awareness and responsibility and have led to improved attendance and reduced absenteeism. As parents explained, 'The school has inclusive approaches that build understanding. They know what they are doing and all faiths are respected.' Staff and LAC members at all levels are fully committed to raising standards through providing caring support and guidance. They know the strengths of the school and the children and families they serve. Monitoring is rigorous, varied and effective, using lesson observations, learning walks, book scrutiny and pupil discussions throughout the year. As one LAC member explained, 'Talking to children is when you know whether the work done is effective.' The team approaches to monitoring have also ensured pupils experience quality teaching and learning consistently. The rich, creative curriculum, evidenced through the 'beliefs and values' curriculum supports the whole child. Breakfast clubs extend the school day providing additional caring support. Links with the church are strong and support the RE leader, worship and the pastoral life of the school. The school follows diocesan guidance through its relationship with officers and that has strengthened as an Academy. Professional development is a feature, building capacity for the future leadership of the school. The development points from the previous inspection have been met.