

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

### Waterhouses Church of England Primary School

Waterfall Street, Waterhouses, Staffordshire ST10 3HY

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Lichfield</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Staffordshire
Date of academy conversion	1 April 2017
Name of multi-academy trust	QEGSMAT Ashbourne
Date of inspection	3 April 2017
Date of last inspection	31 January 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy, formerly VC 143622
Headteacher	Anne Lockey
Inspector's name and number	Huw D Bishop 344

#### School context

Waterhouses Church of England Primary School is smaller than average primary school and currently has 103 pupils on roll. This has doubled since the last inspection. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged, eligible for free school meals and are supported by additional funding known as the pupil premium is very small. Although there is no parish church in Waterhouses, the school has very strong links with the vicar of the grouped parish of Caulton, Caudon, Grindon, Waterfall and Blore Ray with Okeover. The school became an academy on 1 April 2017.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Waterhouses Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The visionary and focused leadership of the headteacher, staff and governors in establishing clear and distinctive Christian values in school.
- The ways in which leaders and teachers are improving opportunities for groups of pupils to make progress in school, meeting their individual needs within an inclusive and caring Christian environment.
- Strong relationships in a school where pupils are happy, enjoy their learning and grow in confidence.
- Collective worship that is highly reflective of the school's distinctive Christian community and encourages a personal spiritual response from pupils.

#### Areas to improve

- Ensure all governors and leaders at trust level continue to engage in the process of evaluating church school development to check and account for the school's Christian distinctiveness as part of the Queen Elizabeth Grammar School (QEGS) multi-academy trust.
- Explore provision for pupils to experience Eucharistic teaching and practice within the Anglican tradition.

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

This school promotes a strong commitment to Christian values and is recognised in the community for its excellent relationships and the strong, nurturing Christian environment where pupils feel safe and thrive. The school describes itself as a place where the core Christian values of love, trust, hope and respect support everything the school does and this is very clear to the visitor. There are also visual reminders of this around the school and these are understood by pupils. Pupils talk confidently about the importance of the core Christian values that underpin their life in school and understand how they are linked to Jesus's teachings from the gospels and other biblical quotations. Pupils complete a reflection journal each half term which clearly demonstrates their knowledge and understanding of the impact these values have on their personal lives. The school's proclamation of these values is also very evident in the outstanding relationships between all members of the school community. This helps pupils to show Christian values in action and encourages their support for a range of charities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) understanding is outstanding because of this focused Christian ethos and pastoral care. Visits to the Derby faith trail, which pupils enjoy as a part of their curriculum, enable them to be aware of difference and diversity and ensure that they have a clear understanding of and respect for other faith communities.

Academic attainment in 2015 and 2016 was in line with expectations, including some stronger elements. The progress information for pupils in school now shows that they continue to make good and better progress. This is because the distinctive Christian environment creates a learning culture in which all pupils feel secure and supported and encourages them to become confident learners. This success is also closely interwoven with the development of pupils' personal spirituality because learning and worship are linked and pupils talk freely about the importance of their beliefs. Opportunities to reflect in lessons as well as in worship are enjoyed by pupils. This was evidenced well in effective lessons on the day of the inspection when pupils considered happiness, the importance of family and the dangers of stereotyping in PSHE (personal, social and health education) lessons. Pupils reflected carefully on the issues raised and the impact on their own behaviour in school. Pupils say that leaders and teachers listen to their views and respect them. This is because the school's actions to improve pupils' chances are so strongly rooted in distinctive Christian values, that they make sure each pupil is known, valued and encouraged to succeed.

Parents, too, reflected on the importance of Christian values for their children's education and how the school had improved and grown in confidence since the last inspection. They said that they feel they are a real part of the school's family community and they particularly enjoy the many opportunities given by the school to join in worship with pupils. A recent development has been the introduction of Christian meditation for staff and pupils – suggested by a parent and designed to show how prayer supports daily life in all its aspects. Pupils enjoy coming to school and therefore attendance is above the national average. Pupils' behaviour and attitude to learning are also outstanding because they enjoy and appreciate all the learning experiences they are given. Pupils enjoy a broad and rich curriculum which is creative and interactive. This is enriched by attractive displays and classroom reflection areas which link up to Christian values. Christian signs and symbols reinforce the school's distinctiveness and support pupils' spiritual awareness and development. Pupils talk about the significance of these displays with understanding. 'They are not just there for decoration, this is who we are' was the comment of a Year 6 pupil when challenged about the impact of these displays. Pupils know about the Trinity, the seasons and liturgical colours of the church's calendar and the Lord's prayer. Learning in religious education (RE) centres on Christianity and pupils are encouraged to explore, research, think and question a range of important religious issues as well as contribute to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. The vicar of the combined parish is a regular and familiar face in school and makes sure that the school's place in the parish is encouraged and valued. He also contributes to RE teaching, making sure that the curriculum reflects important aspects of the school's Church of England foundation.

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

Collective worship is well-planned and resourced carefully and includes themes based on the Bible, Christian values, and Christian festivals, including events of national importance. This supports pupil engagement, enjoyment and interest as well as encouraging knowledge, understanding and reflection on Christian values. Jesus's teaching is very much at the heart of worship and this helps pupils to understand how His teaching guides Christians in their daily lives. Worship begins with a liturgy to light a candle representing God's presence with the school community on a table clothed with the appropriate liturgical colour. This enables pupils to gain a deeper understanding of Christian belief and Anglican practice and makes a significant impact on pupils' lives because it reinforces their unity as a Christian community. Pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 follow a topic in RE which enables them to explore the Trinity through art. This innovative approach supports pupils' understanding of key elements of Christian doctrine and their relationship with worship. Through this, pupils are very aware of the theological basis of collective worship. Pupils say that Bible stories challenge them to think about their own behaviour as well as learning about being human.

Pupils lead and contribute to worship too and they enjoy these opportunities to take on responsibility and show what they believe. Classrooms have reflection areas too, enabling pupils to understand religious symbolism and its importance for Christians. Prayer is given a high profile in worship and pupils participate fully in public and private prayer in school. Pupils recite the grace before lunch and pupils' own prayers are used during worship in school and in the local churches. This has helped to develop their understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pupils understand how prayer is used to communicate with God and how it can guide them in their personal lives. Pupils sing joyfully in collective worship. The cross is the focal point in the school hall during worship and links to core Christian values are displayed as reminders of, and pointers towards the school's Christian distinctiveness. Pupils designed a very powerful and themed Christian logo in their spiritual garden linking all the surrounding villages in the community which are represented by diamonds, with a wooden cross as central. The range of plants in the garden symbolise pupils as they grow and mature through the school and as they grow and mature spiritually under the protection of the cross. Pupils also designed a mosaic in the entrance hall to reflect the school's Christian values. Pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 could explain the theological significance of these symbols with such maturity, demonstrating a clear understanding of their importance.

Worship is led by senior leaders, the vicar and pupils. The vicar ensures that strong links are nurtured between the church, local community and the school. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their involvement. Pupils are given a range of worship experience and this also helps them to understand the broad nature of worship including Anglican tradition and practice. Parents attend worship, sometimes in school and the local Methodist church, as well as churches within the grouped parish at the principal Christian festivals. Pupils can place prayer requests in a prayer net in the main corridor and these are also used in worship in school and in church. Consequently, the spiritual ties between parishes and school are strengthened. Feedback on worship is obtained from pupils, staff and parents and this is evaluated, discussed and forms part of the school's development as a Church of England school.

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

The headteacher and staff are highly effective in articulating the school's distinctive Christian vision and ethos and in promoting that ethos throughout the school to support effective learning. They are committed to sustaining an outstanding Christian environment in which all aspects of pupils' development and wellbeing are fostered and promoted through biblical teaching and Christian values. This contributes strongly to pupils' improving successes and there is a determination to ensure that this feature continues and grows further as the school begins its new relationship with the multi-academy trust.

Leaders, including foundation governors, model their Christian faith and this is very evident in all aspects of leadership practice in school. Pupils and parents agree and this is made clear through the school's mission statement and support it without reservation. Foundation governors are passionate about their school and have a clear understanding of their role. They are highly committed and support the school in several ways, including regular visits to school. Action plans for Christian distinctiveness are reported upon by the headteacher's report at governors' meetings and are included in the school's improvement planning and discussed and evaluated at governors' meetings. This school has made significant strides in its Christian development since the last inspection and leaders and governors are determined to preserve this for future generations of children in the area.

Leaders and governors conduct termly learning walks to evaluate how the school environment promotes learning, Christian values and the school's Anglican foundation. They also seek the views of parents and pupils in reviewing the school's Christian distinctiveness and are successful in ensuring that the academic, pastoral and spiritual needs of all groups of pupils are met. Issues raised at the last inspection have been fully addressed. RE and collective worship are led professionally and with enthusiasm by the headteacher. There is a genuine desire to find ways to improve the school still further. The professional development of all staff in school is a feature of leadership and this includes succession planning for growth within the partnership of the multi-academy trust as well as with a local teaching school alliance. The school values greatly the support given by diocesan advisers to promote Christian distinctiveness in its school improvement journey. Parents, too, appreciate the dedicated work of staff in supporting their children's personal and spiritual development as well as their academic success.

SIAMS report April 2017 Waterhouses CE Primary School, Waterhouses, Staffordshire ST10 3HY