

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Paul's Church of England Primary School and Nursery, Langleybury	
Langleybury Lane, Hunton Bridge, Kings Langley, WD4 8RJ	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	St Albans
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	N/A
Date of inspection	14 December 2016
Date of last inspection	28 November 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 117417
Headteacher	Sarah Winter
Inspector's name and number	Lilian Weatherley 42

School context

St Paul's Langleybury is a smaller than average, one form entry primary school and nursery with 222 pupils on roll. The school is in the Parish of St Paul's, Langleybury, which had been in an interregnum for several months until 5 December 2016. Pupils are mainly from secure social and economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average as are the proportions of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, those who speak English as an additional language and those who receive free school meals. The senior leadership team has not changed since the previous inspection.

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

- The school fulfils its Christian vision statement with its excellent record of meeting the needs of all pupils. Pupil achievement is high and above the national average for literacy and numeracy.
- Christian values are deeply embedded in the life of the school and have a significant impact on pupil achievement.
- The school's distinctive Christian character and the values studied clearly inform the excellent relationships, pupil behaviour and attendance.
- Links with the parish church are strong and effective. They firmly support pupils' knowledge and understanding of the Anglican tradition and the importance of prayer and worship in their lives.

Areas to improve

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in religious education (RE) in order to raise standards at Key Stage 2.
- Ensure staff receive appropriate training and resources to raise attainment in RE.
- Clarify a set of Christian values for all stakeholders and pupils to have as a sound base that will underpin the life of the school.

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

Pupils at St Paul's enjoy school and show a love of learning. All pupils achieve well in literacy and numeracy and progress is high. Since the previous inspection the school has implemented a range of Christian values and biblical teaching to support these. 'I like how every week we have a different Christian value to learn because then we learn about Jesus' teaching.' This focus on values has been pivotal in improving pupil achievement, behaviour and attendance, which are all exemplary.

Pupils' personal development and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development have a high profile in the school. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to think and reflect on the values studied in worship and in other curriculum areas. Pupils feel safe and value the individual 'worry boxes' found on the 'sacred space' in each classroom. Relationships are excellent and all stakeholders interviewed were eager to explain how the school's Christian character impacts on the pupils at school, at home and in the wider community. There is a highly developed interpretation of pupils' spiritual development and they have regular opportunities to engage in high quality experiences. For example, art, drama and music play a key role in the school and the pupils enjoy the chance to visit the theatre for ballet, opera and orchestral events as well as performing themselves. The Key Stage 1 nativity production of 'Lights, Camel Action' was outstanding. The younger pupils showed an enjoyment, maturity and confidence in speaking, singing and dancing that would not have been out of place in Hollywood. Parents, grandparents and governors were amazed and proud of the pupils and the school.

Pupil voice is a key strength of the school. There is an active school council, eco group and worship group which all contribute to the school's distinctive Christian character. For example, the school council choose the charities for the school to support, such as the 'Local Homeless Project' and all groups lead worship. Prayer and worship underpin the daily life of the school and RE has a high profile. The school has recently been awarded the Religious Education Quality Mark Silver award and is working towards gold. The annual RE week where pupils study a faith different from the Abrahamic faiths of the RE curriculum enhances pupils' understanding of diverse communities and supports their cultural development.

Pupils are polite, well mannered and articulate. They understand that St Paul's is a church school with a distinctive Christian, family character based on Gospel values. In the words of one of the pupils who encapsulated the feelings of all pupils interviewed, 'I'm happy and proud to be at our creative, respectful, peaceful, fun, kind, loving and loads more school'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is 'outstanding'

Prayer and worship are central to the life of the school. The worship, which is based on Christian values, is underpinned by what the school calls 'liturgical teaching' to ensure that the values are not taught out of context. Themes based on Christian values are used to challenge learners and ensure they take responsibility for their actions and reflect on their behaviour. All pupils interviewed were eager to express the importance of prayer and worship in their lives and how the Christian values have had an impact on the way they behave towards one another. 'I like the fact that we come together to reflect and pray in assembly and worship.'

Music, led by the headteacher, is a strength of the school and the choir has local acclaim and is regularly asked to sing for community events. The hymn singing in the whole school worship observed was exceptional. Pupils show obvious enjoyment of worship and singing. Biblical content is strong and pupils all know their school prayer, the Lord's prayer and a range of Christian greetings and dismissals. Pupils interviewed also showed a knowledge and developing understanding of the Trinity.

Prayer and reflection have been a key focus for the school since the last inspection and a weekly 'Reflection Award' is given to one child in each class. Opportunities for prayer and reflection are given throughout the curriculum and the prayer-tables in the classrooms are used regularly by the pupils. 'If we feel like we want to reflect or pray we can go to our prayer table.' Pupils are given a variety of opportunities to write prayers and lead worship both in classroom situations and for whole school worship. The worship group, school council, eco group and house groups regularly lead acts of worship.

Regular assessment and monitoring take place for worship and feedback received from all stakeholders, especially the pupils is effectively used to bring about improvement.

The church is very much part of the school and pupils regard it as important for worship. They say how much they value its close proximity and attending once a month where they celebrate birthdays. 'I like having a church next to our school because we can go down and worship God.' Pupils also benefit from visiting the church for key festivals and an annual school Eucharist at Easter. Parents and governors also appreciate the opportunities to join the pupils at the church for worship and governors meetings all begin and end with prayer.

Although the school has had an interregnum the worship group together with the headteacher, staff and clergy have continued to plan and organise the worship. Visiting clergy have supported the school and by leading worship the pupils have experienced a range of worship traditions. The new incumbent (5 December) is keen to work with the school and further develop the pupils understanding of the Anglican tradition and Christian values.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

Standards in RE vary across the school. Where teaching is good in Key Stage 1 standards are high but where teaching in RE is less secure at Key Stage 2 standards drop. RE does have a high profile in the school and much has been put in place since the last inspection. However, the current scheme of work does not offer sufficient rigour and challenge to what are articulate and bright pupils. In the attempt to be creative and incorporate more opportunities for reflection, teachers at Key Stage 2 are confused as to what constitutes outstanding practice and assessment in RE.

Progress overall is only satisfactory with collective worship having a significant impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding of the Christian tradition rather than the quality of teaching and learning in RE. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of other faith traditions is muddled.

Regular assessment, monitoring and evaluation has taken place but based on the scheme of work and inappropriate work sheets this has been misleading and unreliable. All staff see the benefits of RE. They work hard and plan in detail but the current planning is weak and focuses more on personal social and health education rather than challenging pupils' knowledge and understanding of key religious concepts. Pupils at Key Stage 2 are not able to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do.

The subject leader who has only been in post since January, has attended the 'Understanding Christianity' training and is aware of the shortcomings in the curriculum and the demise of levels for assessment. Training for all staff on 'Understanding Christianity' is planned for January to give staff a deeper, more coherent knowledge and understanding of key Christian concepts on which to plan their lessons and raise standards.

Pupils do enjoy RE, have positive attitudes to the subject and enjoy learning about Christianity and other faith communities. 'I like how we can learn about other faiths and cultures and how different people have different views and behaviours.'

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

The school has a strong staff team and governing body who all work together to promote a clear vision and mission statement 'Nurturing a love for Learning and Faith'. This is lived out in daily practice and underpinned by Christian values. Although all leaders are able to articulate the impact of Christian values on the pupils, there is an element of confusion over the school's core Christian values as outlined in the prospectus and other documentation. Pupils and other stakeholders are not always clear on the four core school values because of the variety of additional values used in worship and the school's learning policy.

The school's Christian vision ensures that the personal achievement and well being of all pupils are central to this school and all pupils achieve above the national average. Parents and governors know the school well and speak highly of the school and its secure Christian foundation. Governors are eager to see the school move forward and strategically monitor and evaluate the school's distinctive Christian character. They are frequent visitors to the school and receive regular feedback from all members of the school community including the school council.

Surveys and questionnaires from parents and pupils are positive and show overall satisfaction with the school as a church aided school.

Self-evaluation and a diocesan health check have led to significant improvements in the school's distinctive Christian character. Prayer, worship and RE all have a high profile and there are two RE governors. The RE Quality Mark Award and the annual 'Spirited Arts' week support this. Unfortunately, the current scheme of work for RE which was brought in to raise standards has proved to be a barrier to attainment and progress for pupils at Key Stage 2. The school does not have an RE specialist but the new incumbent has agreed to support the RE subject leader. He will attend the 'Understanding Christianity' training in January and help implement the programme with the staff. The school has strong links with the local parish church and other churches in the area. Effective use is made of diocesan training including that on aspirant leadership attended by the deputy head.

Community links are also strong and pupils have a clear understanding of the importance of being part of a local, national and global community.

14 December 2016, St Paul's CE Primary School and Nursery, Langleybury, WD4 8RJ