

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

### St Paul's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Victoria Street, Elswick, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE4 7JU

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Newcastle</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Newcastle
Date/s of inspection	12 June 2017
Date of last inspection	29 May 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 108502
Headteacher	Judith Sword
Inspector's name and number	David Tait 887

#### School context

St Paul's is an average sized school voluntary aided primary school situated in the west end of Newcastle with 265 pupils on roll. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through pupil premium funding is above average. The proportion of pupils with disabilities or special educational needs is above average. The school is multi-cultural and multi-faith with pupils from a range of backgrounds. An above average number of pupils speak English as an additional language. Since the previous inspection an acting deputy headteacher has been appointed. The headteacher has been in post for 12 years. At the most recent Ofsted inspection the school was graded 'good'.

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

- Distinctly Christian values are expressed clearly and woven throughout the curriculum. They impact positively in the care and guidance each pupil is given and this in turn enables pupils to grow academically and spiritually.
- Collective worship, rooted in the Bible, is highly valued and central to the life of the school.
- The strong and purposeful Christian leadership of the headteacher and acting deputy headteacher ensures that pupils maximise their personal and academic achievement.
- Effective subject leadership in religious education (RE) has enabled improvements to teaching, learning and assessment which, in turn, has led to standards of achievement rising over time.

#### Areas to improve

- Develop a shared definition of spirituality in order to promote pupils' spiritual development through providing a range of opportunities for pupils to explore spirituality.
- Extend the range of leaders for collective worship in order to offer pupils a rich experience of worship.
- Strengthen links with the local church and wider Christian community in order to benefit both learners and the wide community as they work in partnership.
- Strengthen the role of governors in the self-evaluation process so that they have a direct impact on strategic planning and the improvement of St Paul's as a church school.

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

Christian values are at the heart of this nurturing and supportive Christian community in which the mission statement boldly asserts, 'we seek to glorify God.' These values are worked out in the daily life of the school and lead to positive attitudes to learning as well as having a clear impact on pupils' achievement at each phase of their schooling. Parents speak highly of the school's determined and focused work with families in terms of behaviour and attendance and rightly attribute this to the school's Christian character in which all are valued as made in God's image and likeness. One parent described the school as 'an oasis' and a 'place of light.' Teachers know each pupil as a unique individual and ensure that their academic and personal needs are fully met. Pupils say with confidence that their school is a safe and harmonious place where the beliefs and views of all are respected. Issues arising relating to bullying and behaviour lapses are resolved quickly within a Christian understanding of reconciliation and forgiveness. Pupils' behaviour demonstrates the way in which they put Christian values into practice in their lives: 'we want to be Christ-like' said one child. Pupils have a sound understanding of Christianity as a living world faith, and this together with the way in which the school teaches pupils about other world faiths, leads to a tolerant and harmonious community in which diversity is celebrated within a Christian context. The school encourages both reflection and discussion opportunities. However, the school recognises that pupils need further opportunities for the development of personal spirituality. Children thrive and grow at St Paul's. They are accepted as they are, because in the school all are valued as children of God. This, together with the strong emphasis on care for others, makes a strong contribution to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. Adults are excellent role models and through their interactions with all members of the community live out the school's Christian values. Relationships between all members of the school community are strong. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere throughout the school, where pupils treat each other and all adults with great respect and care. The school's strong emphasis on service leads pupils to raise money for charities and causes close to the heart of the community. The teaching of RE is recognised as important by pupils and contributes to the Christian character of the school because pupils learn how to relate Jesus' teachings to their own situations and are able to transfer messages directly into their own lives and conduct: 'I try to listen to God's word and love other people,' commented one pupil.

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

Daily collective worship is central to the life of the school and valued by the whole of the school community. Pupils enjoy collective worship. They respond positively and participate with enthusiasm in praying and singing. As one pupil commented, 'worship brings me into the presence of God.' Pupils are given regular opportunities to participate in worship, for example, key stage two pupils telling dramatized versions of Bible stories for the rest of the school. Class based worship provides further opportunities for pupil participation in and leadership of worship. The creative use of biblical material ensures that pupils have a clear understanding of the person of Jesus Christ. Stillness and prayer are an integral part of worship, together with worship songs, prayer, drama and space for reflection. The planning of collective worship is effective and appropriate to the context of the community. The headteacher creates the overview focused on biblical material and Christian values. Whole school worship is followed up by class teachers where themes are explored in greater detail. This enables leaders to consolidate previous input and to avoid repetition. Evaluation of worship is undertaken by the headteacher in conjunction with school staff. Evaluations lead to improvements in provision, for example changes to the worship cycle to allow a greater focus on Bible stories for younger children. Pupils' views regarding collective worship are taken into account and opportunities for their participation have been increased in response. Governors often attend school worship, although their evaluations are not regularly formalised. School worship is led by teachers, school leaders and occasional visitors. The incumbent makes a regular input into leading worship. However, the small numbers attending the parish church mean that there is limited scope for additional support for worship and the school recognises the need to extend the range of worship leaders, including those from different Christian traditions, in order to enrich pupils' experiences. There are opportunities for prayer during the school day in addition to collective worship. Pupils respond positively to these and often write their own prayers. This makes a positive impact on their spiritual development. As one pupil remarked, 'prayer is so important- it changes things.' Pupils are familiar with the main Christian festivals and value the services held at Christmas, Easter, Education Sunday and Harvest. Year 6 pupils attend a leavers' service at Newcastle Cathedral. Pupils have a good understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as a result of the Holy Trinity being a regular feature in worship. As one pupil thoughtfully commented, 'the Holy Trinity is God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three in one and one in three.'

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

Pupils enjoy their learning in RE and display positive attitudes towards the subject. A variety of teaching and learning strategies are used and this ensures that pupils believe RE to be of high importance. Pupils believe RE to be 'important for learning new knowledge' and 'making sense of the world.' Teaching is stimulating, develops pupils successfully in their learning and this is informed by accurate assessment. Teachers and support staff are effective in addressing misconceptions and in supporting all groups of pupils in their learning. The RE subject leader is highly effective in driving forward improvement, skilfully identifying areas of strength and areas for development and supporting staff in developing sound practice. Working in partnership with the headteacher, the RE lead has worked with a clear purpose and sense of direction to ensure that RE has a high profile in the school. Consequently, outcomes are in line with those in other subjects and are improving over time. The subject leader provides informed and valued support to other teachers in order to develop assessment systems in RE and, as a result, accurate assessment informs teaching and learning. The RE lead undertakes effective monitoring through lesson observations, scrutiny of work and planning and the interrogation of data. This ensures that plans for improvement are effective. Schemes of work have been developed which are based on the Diocesan syllabus and reflect the school's Christian foundation, but at the same time give due weight to other faiths in the school's multi-faith context. Lessons are well-planned and delivered by teachers who have a sound understanding of the subject. They prepare a series of appropriate activities and experiences to motivate and engage pupils and, as a result, teaching meets their needs. Pupils display a range of skills including reflection, evaluation and enquiry. RE makes a considerable contribution to social, moral, spiritual and cultural development as pupils learn about tolerance and respect of other faiths as well as deepening their understanding of Christianity. Pupils have a very good knowledge of both the Old and New Testaments and teachings of Jesus and are developing a good understanding of the main aspects of Christianity. Attainment and progress are recorded and tracked and assessments are accurate. Teachers' marking and feedback gives clear guidance on how pupils can improve their work by guiding them towards reflection or 'next step' targets related to specific RE skills.

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

The headteacher, supported by the leadership team, staff and governors, provides a clear vision based on her deep personal faith and the Christian values are the lifeblood of the school. As a result of strong and determined leadership, all areas for development identified during the last inspection have been addressed. School leaders are able to clearly articulate the positive impact Christian distinctiveness has on the school's life and work as well as the way in which this has led to improvements in personal development and pupil outcomes. Parents are very supportive of the school and they appreciate the warm, inclusive and caring ethos, in which staff 'go the extra mile,' for children and families, are 'faithful and compassionate in their work' in a community in which 'everyone is known by name'. Parents feel well-informed and fully involved, for example by being invited weekly to Celebration Worship. Governors are committed to supporting school leaders in maintaining the profile of the school as a church school. Governors are well informed about church school distinctiveness. Self-evaluation of the school's performance and distinctiveness by the headteacher and acting deputy headteacher is accurate and has contributed to the improvements since the previous inspection. Governors often visit school and reflect on the distinctiveness of the school as a church school although they are not yet involved in formalised and regular monitoring and evaluation in this respect. Collective worship and RE are well-managed and systems and processes are informed by the school's core Christian values. The statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are met and the leaders of both areas are given effective support in carrying out their roles. The incumbent leads collective worship and has supported the school with aspects of RE. The church members pray faithfully for the school's life. However, links with the local church and wider Christian community require strengthening in order to develop links that are of benefit both to the school and the local community so that they are able to offer their respective gifts in service of one another. The headteacher, staff and governors have participated in diocesan training related to church school leadership, collective worship and RE. The effect of this has been to strengthen the school's Christian distinctiveness and promote a shared understanding and development of the Christian ethos. School staff have participated in development programmes for leadership roles in church schools demonstrating the school's commitment to the development of future leaders of church schools.

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