

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Michael's Church of England (Aided) First School	
Market Place, Penkridge, Stafford, ST19 5DJ	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Lichfield
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Staffordshire
Name of federation	Trinity Federation
Date of inspection	9 March 2017
Date of last inspection	22 September 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	124343
Headteacher	Jayne Grundy
Inspector's name and number	Mark Cooper 425

School context

The school has 142 pupils on roll. This has increased since the last SIAMS inspection. Almost all pupils come from a White British heritage, many of whom live in the village of Penkridge. The school has recently become federated with St Leonard's First School, Dunston and All Saints Primary School, Bednall forming the Trinity Federation. Excellent relationships exist between the school and St Michael's Church.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Michael's (A) First School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The excellent behaviour of pupils which exemplify the school's values of kindness and forgiveness.
- The opportunities that class worship provide creative ways for pupils to explore their own spirituality.
- The teaching of religious education (RE) and the impact this has on pupils' understanding of Christianity and other faiths.
- The headteacher and her team, who ensure that the Christian distinctiveness is given a high profile across the school.
- The strong links between school and St Michael's Church and the opportunities this provides pupils and their families for example through 'Messy Harvest' and 'Messy Easter'.

Areas to improve

- Provide pupils with opportunities to develop their understanding and experience of different Christian traditions.
- Embed 'Understanding Christianity' within the RE schemes of work so that pupils have opportunities to deepen further their understanding of the Christian faith.
- Amend the evaluative procedure on worship so there is a focus on pupils expressing how the worship theme could impact on their life in and outside of school.

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

Christian distinctiveness and values are a strength of this school. From the moment you walk into it there is a sense of calm and peace. Parents commented on the 'family feel' of the school and its nurturing atmosphere which they attributed its Christian distinctiveness. The school has a strong sense of togetherness and cooperation that truly fulfils the school's motto, "Together we learn! Together we achieve! Together we believe!" Pupils talked about the kindness of their teachers and how they helped them to learn. They talked about how they enjoyed coming to school and their learning experiences. They felt happy and safe. There are, therefore, no issues with pupil attendance. This all has a very positive impact on pupils' excellent academic progress, personal development and well-being. Pupils understand the Christian values of the school well and why they are important. They talked about how these were explored in worship, particularly class worship, and in their RE lessons. One pupil talked about forgiveness and the forgiveness of God saying, 'God will always show forgiveness no matter what' and relating this to forgiving one another in school. Another talked about trust and how in the miracle of the paralysed man he had to trust Jesus to heal him. Pupils' behaviour and relationships with one another is excellent. Parents commented about this and how the school's Christian value of kindness had a positive impact on relationships and friendships in school. Pupils confirmed this by saying there was no bullying in school and if there were disagreements these were quickly sorted. One pupil used the value of self-control to explain this, saying that this value taught them to be calmer so that they wouldn't hurt anyone. They also talked about the importance of faith and said that this helped them to never give in, never give up and always believe. Pupils have further opportunities to explore and deepen their understanding of the Christian faith through Explorers Club. This is very well attended by pupils, who said they enjoyed the activities and the Biblical stories they learn. Pupils had a good understanding of the importance of helping others and could relate this to the parable of the Good Samaritan. They talked about the school's charity work and how they were involved in choosing an annual charity to support, such as the teapot charity. They understood the importance of helping others less fortunate than themselves, with one pupil saying, 'God would like us to help people'. Pupils' understanding of global Christianity and diversity are explored through the school's links with a school in Kenya called the Malinda project. Pupils talked about a forthcoming visit of the headteacher from this school with excitement. They understood how fortunate they were in their own school experiences and opportunities in comparison to their peers in Kenya. Pupils' awareness of the diversity of other faiths and the importance of acceptance and tolerance was well-explored through the RE curriculum. Parents also felt that the school helped their children to have a balanced view on life, to be accepting, caring and show understanding of others.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The school has a very well organised and varied worship diet for pupils to experience. This includes Anglican lectionary themes, special days and festivals as well as exploring the school's Christian values. There is a mixture of whole school, class and celebration worship which allows pupils to explore their spirituality in a variety of different ways. Pupils particularly value class worship, which gives them an opportunity in a smaller intimate setting to lead worship. They particularly enjoy the variety of ways class worship is delivered. Each class has its own reflection area which forms a focal point for pupils to explore their personal spirituality and engage in prayer. One pupil talked about how prayer helped them to think about a member of their family who had passed away, another that it was an opportunity to ask God to look after their parents. Pupils are encouraged to write prayers that focus on people they meet inside and outside of school such as their dinner ladies, the police, nurses and firemen. Pupils do this spontaneously leaving prayers in one of the main reflection areas of the school. Pupils also talked about the Lord's Prayer and how they are taught to learn this through singing and actions. Pupils value the opportunities to pray. One pupil said that prayer was a 'chance to quiet down and think seriously.' The school provides spiritual spaces inside and outside where pupils can go to be quiet and reflect. The act of collective worship during the inspection was led by the Rector of St Michael's Church and involved the whole school. Pupils were calm, respectful and reflective. They clearly enjoyed the experience, engaged in the singing enthusiastically and were keen to answer questions posed by the Rector. This worship was also used to highlight the different Anglican liturgical colours for each season. Pupils clearly understood that the current colour of purple was associated with Lent which led to the festival of Easter. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the Trinity using the analogy of an apple to describe it. They talked about the skin of the apple being the Father; the flesh the Son and the core the Holy Spirit, but together they make one apple, God is three in one. The Trinity is further explored through the RE curriculum together with other worship themes, Christian concepts and values. There is a strong connection between the school and St Michael's Church. Pupils talked about the services they attend there. They particularly liked 'Messy Harvest' and 'Messy Easter' services when they could explore the Christian faith creatively, invite their parents and engage with the parishioners of St Michael's. Worship is monitored by the headteacher and governor linked to worship. Evaluations are written by the pupils and an action plan is formulated by the leadership team to address any issues. The current evaluation of worship needs to be adjusted so that pupils are able to comment on how they think the

worship theme could be applied to their own life both inside and outside of school.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious Education is extremely well led by an enthusiastic and committed subject leader. Pupils make very good progress in RE particularly those pupils who have difficulty in other literacy based subjects. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their RE lessons and teachers and enjoy the variety of learning experiences, particularly the opportunity to discuss and express their opinions. The lessons observed during the inspection were outstanding. Pupils were fully engaged and clearly enjoyed their learning experience. There were a variety of activities which allowed pupils to engage with one another to discuss their thoughts and ideas. Many of the activities stretched and challenged pupils in their thinking and learning. There was an excellent atmosphere of cooperation between pupils. Some of the school's Christian values were linked to the theme of the lesson which deepened pupils' understanding of them. One lesson with Year 2 focussed on Jesus in the wilderness. Pupils were encouraged to empathise with Jesus in the wilderness and think about the importance of faith. Pupils could clearly do this and some went on to apply faith to situations that they might find challenging. Another lesson with Year 4 focussed on the parable of the workers in the vineyard. This was used to explore the nature of God. From the parable pupils understood that God treats everyone the same, with one pupil profoundly saying, 'God made everyone different but He still loves us and treats us the same.' Pupils understanding of the Bible and the life and teachings of Jesus are excellent. Pupils talked about the importance of Jesus as the Son of God and that he died for people's sins and then resurrected. They talked about his miracles and parables, one pupil making the connection between the parable of the mustard seed and the growth of the Kingdom of God through Christians spreading the news of Jesus. Pupils also have a good understanding of Islam and Judaism. They talked clearly about the Five Pillars of Islam and the Passover and the Exodus story in Judaism. The subject is very well monitored by the subject leader. Colleagues speak very highly of the subject leader and the support and advice they receive. The subject leader is currently working on embedding 'Understanding Christianity' within the RE curriculum. This will enhance and deepen further pupils understanding of core Christian concepts such as the incarnation and other theological concepts. The subject forms a core subject in the school curriculum, is very well resourced and valued by all who deliver it.

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

The headteacher is inspirational in her leadership and management of the school as a church school. She leads by example. She has the respect of her staff, governors, parents and pupils. She values her hard working staff and regards them as part of a team. The headteacher is supported by a very strong and committed governing body. Together they ensure that the Christian distinctiveness of the school is maintained and enhanced. All work in collaboration with each other, support one another and truly model the school's motto, "Together we learn! Together we achieve! Together we believe!" to pupils, parents and carers. In a recent survey parents were overwhelmingly positive about the school and the way it is managed. They talked about how welcoming the school is, how well their pupils are cared for and the positive Christian atmosphere and setting of the school. Some parents specifically chose the school because it is a church school, believing this gives children confidence in their own Christian faith and journey. Parents interviewed during the inspection spoke highly of the headteacher, talking about her open-door policy and that nothing was too much trouble. They valued the hard work of the teaching staff. They also valued the opportunities that the school and St Michael's Church provides through 'Messy Harvest' and 'Messy Easter'. They particularly liked celebration worship on Fridays and any opportunity the school provides when they can celebrate the achievements of their children. The relationship between the school and St Michael's church is very strong. The Rector, lay reader and curate are regular visitors in school and help in the planning and leading of whole school worship. There is a very good relationship between the school and the diocese with regular contact with the diocesan Christian distinctiveness advisor. Now that the school has become part of the Trinity Federation there will be opportunities to share good practice and to seek creative ways in which the Christian distinctiveness of the entire federation can be enhanced and strengthened.

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