

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Holy Trinity Church of England Primary Academy	
Havelock Road, Birchfield, Birmingham B20 3LP	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Birmingham
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	December 2013
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	N/A
Date of inspection	23 November 2016
Date of last inspection	4 November 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy 140463
Headteacher	Paula Burns
Inspector's name and number	Marianne Phillips 586

School context

Holy Trinity CE Primary Academy became a converter academy in 2013. Since then, however, it has been on a difficult journey. There have been significant staff changes with 80% leaving, including the retirement of the long-serving headteacher. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2015. Since her appointment she has worked diligently to re-build her staff, forging a strong partnership with the deputy headteacher, who was already in post. The school serves an area of high deprivation. There are 230 pupils on roll; 99% of them are from ethnic minority backgrounds and 37 languages are spoken.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Holy Trinity as a Church of England school are good

- The distinctive Christian character of the school, which unites all faiths into a spiritual community, that is “accepting and respecting” of the rich cultural mix represented by the members of the “school family”.
- The links between the church, school and community which are strong and supportive, underpinned by clear Christian values.
- The strong partnership between the headteacher and deputy headteacher, that builds on embedded strengths, driven by a shared passion to improve and proclaim the school’s Christian distinctiveness.
- The commitment of leading governors to the school, in its drive to improve, which supports school leaders, staff, pupils and their families through a sense of shared purpose and loving care.

Areas to improve

- Establish a ‘spiritual committee’ of pupils, that would represent the faith groups of the school and which would support its members in developing their roles as leaders in worship.
- Continue to support the new religious education (RE) leader, to build on: the existing strengths in practice; the ways of assessing and monitoring the achievement and progress of its pupils and quality of teaching.
- Review procedures to formalise the regular visits and monitoring, effectively undertaken by link RE and worship governors, to establish a strong evidence base that reflects their commitment to school improvement and the contribution they make to the drive to raise standards.

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

This is a school with children at its heart and its heart in the community it serves. The caring commitment of its leaders, governors and the vicar of Holy Trinity church unites this richly diverse school. There is a sense of family and belonging that is appreciated by all. As it's 'strap line' motto records, "We work, we play, we care, we pray" together. This, and its shared vision, successfully celebrates each individual's commitment, "as a child of God and a member of the school team". The new headteacher, is making a difference, working effectively in partnership with the established deputy headteacher. After a time of instability, she is working hard to build and develop new members of staff into a school team that supports and drives its distinctiveness. All pupils questioned are sure that, "as members of a church school we are taught to accept and respect each other". They confirm they feel safe, enjoy learning, particularly in RE and are developing an understanding of other religions and faiths. Attendance is good and is an indicator that the large majority of pupils want to come to school. Behaviour is also good because, the consistency of agreed school rules and positive encouragement, through shared Christian values, guides their daily choices. Relationships are strong and pupils share, they enjoy learning and going to church and try to treat others the way they want to be treated. Children enter the nursery with skills below national expectation. Over three quarters of the current class are from homes where English is an additional language. Many display literacy and numeracy skills below expected levels. However, by the time they leave the school, the majority of pupils are confident, articulate and grateful for the way the school has prepared them for their future lives. Phonics is taught well. Standards in achievement are broadly in line with schools nationally and above similar schools in the local authority. Pupil premium funding (PPF) is used effectively in key stages 1 and 2 to support individuals and groups of vulnerable pupils. It enriches their learning experiences, through subsidised visits and support from skilled adults, deployed to target academic, social and emotional needs. One very effective example of this is illustrated through the recent appointment of the 'Pastoral Manager'. This post has been filled by the previous 'Family Support Worker', who works alongside the 'Inclusion Manager' to support pupils and their families. Case studies show how her deep knowledge of the families and established links with outside agencies, is keeping pupils safe and is helping to meet their extensive range of needs. This is one of many strategies the new headteacher is implementing, to enable pupils with additional needs to experience success, in line with their peers, confirmed by a recent Ofsted inspection. It also reflects how the Christian vision and heritage of the school is embedded in everything the school is trying to do. Standards are endorsed through moderation practices with other schools and through support from the local authority. Unfortunately, there has been insufficient time for the current leaders to evidence the impact of the work they have started, on standards overall. Strong links exist between worship, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) and RE. The 'British Values Day' is an example where visitors from a range of faiths explored SMSC issues reflected from their personal beliefs and experiences. Prayer is encouraged as part of the focus on the spiritual growth of pupils and staff. It opens school council and staff meetings and is a support for all, particularly staff, in times of need. Parents are very positive about the relationship between the church and school leaders. They praise the work that is being done to welcome them and create a sense of family, underpinned by Christian care and a shared respect of faith.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Daily worship is central to school life and is effective in encouraging a sense of community and shared values. No-one withdraws from worship, which is distinctly Christian, and all come together, regardless of cultural background, faith or belief, to worship God. Pupils questioned all spoke enthusiastically about worship and the experiences it brings. Staff participate fully in all aspects of worship and through their enthusiasm provide good role models for their pupils. 'Songs of Praise', is a weekly act of worship that is a favourite with all. It positively exemplifies how pupils and staff, through worship, respond to the guidance, "to follow Jesus", through the respectful responses and behaviour displayed. "They explore Advent through song, whilst waiting for Christmas to come". Jesus is introduced as, "the awaited King" and the smiles and participation from all reflect their enjoyment. Singing is beautiful and as the descant in the round, "Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God", raises in volume, it creates a harmony in spirit and sense of God that is almost tangible. Worship consistently offers times of prayer and silence, balanced with sensitive teaching from the Bible, to encourage all to be thankful to God, regardless of individual circumstances. Pupils use Anglican responses enthusiastically – for example, "God is Good – All the Time – God is Good". Strong links with the church and contribution by the vicar in church and in school worship, "helps everyone understand more about each other and other religions". Also, in the words of another child, "it helps me decide whether I want to accept a faith". All like singing and say it makes them feel closer to God. Daily acts of worship, led by leaders, staff and the vicar contribute well to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of all pupils. Worship, in these ways, provides experiences which help them explore the Anglican year, its celebrations and other faith traditions. It supports prayer and personal reflection and successfully encourages pupils to participate and take a lead. School leaders are exploring ways in which the spiritual development of pupils, as worship leaders, can be supported. Plans are in place to develop a 'spiritual committee' made up from pupils of all faiths chosen for their prayerfulness and

the ways they positively represent their faith in school. Pupils and parents are often asked to share their views on worship in church and school. These responses reflect the positive impact worship is having on them. Link-governors regularly participate in worship and gather these views. They informally feedback their findings and have a clear understanding of the impact of worship on these groups. The school is exploring ways of formalising these visits to ensure the quality of the experiences offered.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

Pupils enjoy RE and contribute well to the discussions in lessons, drawing on their own spiritual and faith experiences, from home as well as school. The RE leader is an experienced member of staff, but has only taken on this role this term. He is enthusiastic about his new responsibilities and is creating a file of key information relating to the subject. He attended training, offered by the diocese, on 'Understanding Christianity' and has been piloting the approaches, from the course, in his Year 5 class. The headteacher is supporting him in his role, by providing non-contact time to discuss priorities for the coming year, to ensure support is maintained. The vicar and link-governor for RE also meet regularly with him, to observe his teaching and monitor the views of pupils, to the subject. Planning is in place, which follows the Agreed Syllabus and this is being audited to consider ways 'Understanding Christianity' guidance can be married with existing approaches. The achievement of pupils in the subject is tracked by teacher assessments, using diocesan guidance and moderation, to confirm standards. These are in line with other core subjects and national expectations. Teaching in the subject ranges from satisfactory to good. The challenge and support provided through differentiated tasks is inconsistent. This is an area which is less effective in ensuring all groups progress appropriately. In the best lessons, targeted questioning, 'talk partners' and creative teaching styles enable pupils of different faiths to share their perspective and progress their thinking, for example pupils exploring, in groups, why people go on pilgrimage. The skilled teaching facilitates their discussion, reflection, sharing and "bouncing on their ideas". Year 2 Muslim children share openly their experiences of 'the Five Pillars of Islam' and what it meant to them. Responses from the pupils, in these settings, illustrate the strong, vibrant, thought provoking range of experiences over time. Links with Kenya are also supporting the pupils' understanding of faiths and religion from a global perspective. The work in pupils' books evidences teachers' positive marking and the way this is supporting learning. RE has a high status in the school. Leaders are working diligently to target areas of weakness to ensure it is effective in shaping the pupils' understanding and driving the school's distinctiveness.

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

The headteacher is a strong leader, who is patiently, yet purposefully, building a school team, underpinned by Christian care and a shared vision, "to educate and enable every member of the school community to feel valued and able to positively contribute as a member of a team and as a child of God". Her partnership with the deputy and close relationships with the vicar, governors and key staff, provide a support network that is mutually beneficial. The focus upon love, trust, perseverance and hope are some of the key values that underpin daily life and generate a joyfulness and positivity of attitude in all. Governors work with the headteacher and regularly visit the school to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Their findings are shared, but the school is considering ways of formalising their visits to ensure the focus is clear and more rigorous, to further drive standards. There is a growing sense of 'team' which is encouraged by the headteacher's spiritual leadership and careful consideration of the needs of the school. This creates an "unspoken clarity of faith". Parents appreciate the ways they are welcomed. They enjoy 'Coffee Friday', workshops the other support meetings which build a sense of community and family. The school responds to individual need, and the success of their targeted intervention, which enables their children to progress and grow in confidence, is evident. Parents speak very highly of Reverend Eve and the way she encourages them, regardless of their faith, to attend worship in church. They are responding positively and numbers attending worship with their children are growing. They enjoy these experiences and feel that, "the school supports their faith by respecting and listening". One grandmother had prepared a written record of her thoughts, which described the school as, "a spiritual focus that blends all faiths, with the church at its centre and a minister who lives out biblical values and guidance". The new RE leader is committed to improving the outcomes for pupils. Plans are in place for leaders to support him in his role to ensure his priorities for the subject are appropriate and effective. Pupils, through the subject, are learning about Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and other global religions. The different faith groups come together in this school because, "God is important to them all". The school is facilitating their understanding of religious beliefs through respecting, accepting and celebrating difference. There are close links with the diocese, providing an effective avenue of support. Governors and staff attend training offered, which guides school improvement and clarifies the importance of being part of a church school. The developmental points from the previous inspection have been addressed, but some work is on-going.