

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St. Andrew's Church of England Primary School

Matilda Street, Islington NI 0LB	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	London
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Islington
Date of inspection	2 February 2018
Date of last inspection	27 February 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 100448
Headteacher	Felicity Djerehe
Inspector's name and number	Jan Matthews 855

School context

This one form entry, voluntary aided Church of England primary school, based within the Kings Cross regeneration area, educates 200 children from Reception to Year Six. The percentage for whom the school receives extra funding due to social disadvantage is high. Almost half of the children speak English as an additional language and levels of unemployment and mobility are high. Since the last SIAMS inspection, almost all staff have changed. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2013. Most staff have joined the school within the last three years. Ofsted judged the school as requiring improvement in July 2013. Numerous monitoring visits were made until the school was classed as 'Good' in 2016.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. Andrew's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Inspirational leadership means that the school does not stand still but is constantly evaluating and improving further.
- Excellent and compassionate relationships between and among adults and pupils lead to a harmonious learning environment in which pupils can thrive, learn and know that they are valued.
- The missional nature of collective worship means that the lessons learned in worship times are lived out through the school day.
- The spiritual development of children and adults is enhanced by regular periods of reflection and the innovative use of 'big questions'.
- Strong leadership and an investment in staff training has led to huge improvements in teaching and learning in religious education (RE).

Areas to improve

- Develop staff as future leaders of church schools by strategically expanding the programme of staff development.
- Increase opportunities for children to choose their own creative ways of recording their impressive RE learning.

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

Explicitly Christian values are central to the life of the school and drive its every action. Each child, regardless of ability or background, is considered to be a unique and special child of God, made in His image and therefore worthy of the highest levels of care, concern, guidance and education. Through teaching, reflection and celebration, the school values are deeply embedded and well understood by the children, staff and parents. Pupils readily draw upon the biblical connections and relate the school values to the Christian stories behind them, for example, the current value is 'endurance' which pupils readily relate to the stories of various people who persisted in asking Jesus to heal them. Parents and children give examples of how lessons from collective worship have been remembered and applied to everyday life. For example, after falling out with his friend, one boy made time to sit quietly and think what Jesus would have done. He spoke sincerely about feeling like a '... whole, new person ...happier and lighter' when he forgave his friend the next day.

Parents of all faiths and none speak enthusiastically of their confidence in the school's leaders and about how their Christian and moral values shape the extremely positive relationships throughout the whole community. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils are explicitly taught to be kind and considerate to the adults who help them and to each other. Because of this, children feel secure, loved and confident and they want to come to school each day. Both attendance and punctuality are very good and there are comprehensive strategies in place to improve it further.

The school's leaders are fiercely ambitious for the children in their care and work strategically to provide, not only, a high standard of education but also a wide range of enrichment opportunities. Cultural trips and visits as well as opportunities to be involved in leadership, community and social justice strengthen children's social, moral and cultural development. Additional funding is used very wisely to counter the effects of social and economic disadvantage. Gaps are closing and progress across the school is good. The way 'big questions' are used is a clever and innovative way of encouraging children to take time out of the day to reflect on spiritual things and formulate their own ideas. RE makes a huge contribution to the Christian character of the school. Units of work are linked with the values and this helps to enhance the spiritual development of pupils.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

A calm and reflective attitude of worship is infused throughout every aspect of daily life and learning at St. Andrew's. Children understand that worship can take many forms and explain that it can be a time of formal assembling together; it can be stopping to reflect; it can be singing together, praying, working hard or serving each other. School leaders plan carefully to achieve their aims of providing '*an opportunity for a time of quiet reflection in a busy, noisy and often frightening world*'. As such, collective worship time is jealously guarded and protected. In order that children see worship as a safe and comfortable place, worship is always at the same time of day, follows a similar pattern and appropriate attitudes to worship are modelled by all staff and the older children. During worship times and throughout the school day, children and adults have the opportunity to pray for themselves and each other. One child commented 'I love collective worship because we are all together. But, sometimes I feel really sorry for the office staff because they can't come!'

Whilst always Bible based and fully reflecting the nature of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the content of worship is well planned to be relevant to St. Andrew's children and to the school's values. Children's speak of deeper meanings and difficult concepts with a remarkable degree of understanding. Whilst trying to explain the concept of the trinity, a small group of children used an impressive array metaphor and analogies. Children also use the content of collective worship to feed into their consideration of the 'big questions' posed in each class. When necessary, school leaders do not shy away from tackling difficult current issues. Parents particularly praised the sensitive way in which staff dealt with recent terror attacks in London.

Children experience a good variety of styles of worship as assemblies are led by a range of workers from the Barnsbury group of churches and other visitors. They show great interest in the fact that that Christianity is a world-wide and multi-cultural faith and talk enthusiastically about their particular areas of geographical interest. They enjoy and learn from collective worship and explain many ways in which it contributes to their own and others' behaviour and relationships. Parents report that children often want to discuss the things that they have learned once they get home. Several parents talked about how their own children had 'taught us a thing or two'.

A particularly effective and impactful aspect of collective worship is that it is always missional. At the end, children are exhorted to remember what they have learned and to go out from collective worship and put something into place that day.

Despite considerable staff and leadership changes since the last SIAMS inspection, previous good practice has been improved upon and developed even further. The highly effective worship leader has a strong sense of direction and improvement is driven by a robust programme of evaluation involving a variety of interested parties. Considerable investment of time and resources are given to training staff in both theology and how to teach religious literacy.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Strong leadership and a clear vision have led to solid improvements in the standards of both teaching and learning in religious education (RE). Children are inspired by their lessons and speak enthusiastically about: having time to think deeply, being respected for their own opinions and about how RE helps them to understand each other and the world around them. Creative teaching methods enable children to develop an excellent understanding of Christianity and other faiths. In a particularly strong, multi-sensory lesson about Jesus healing the blind man, Reception children remembered the story through acting; they 'felt' the story through being blindfolded; they analysed ideas around being rescued and being a rescuer and they applied their learning to the current school value of endurance. By the time children reach Year Six they are knowledgeable about all the major world religions and they display an impressive range of high level thinking skills. In one excellent lesson, children acted as researchers and producers for an interview on 'Radio World Faith'. With a striking degree of courtesy, knowledge and respect they worked in small groups to discuss the content of each religious leader's answers to questions about how different faiths respond to death. This sharing and careful consideration of ideas and opinions makes an outstanding contribution to children's spiritual and moral development. Moments for reflection are incorporated into lessons. This, and the ongoing focus on 'big questions' further enhances children's spiritual awareness. There is an excellent balance between learning about religion and learning from religion.

RE has a very high profile at St. Andrew's. A detailed action plan is incorporated into the school improvement plan and school leaders invest heavily in induction and training to ensure that teaching and learning are of the highest quality. The best lessons allow children to record their knowledge and understanding in a range of creative ways. Where teaching is not yet outstanding, the subject leader has a clear programme of training and support in place. A sound programme of assessment activities and effective recording of attainment ensure that the school maintains high standards in the subject.

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

School leaders at St Andrew's are intensely protective of, and ambitious for, the children in their care. All are welcome and provided for regardless of ability, background, race or faith. Leaders believe that, in order to be able to learn, children must feel emotionally secure and physically safe and so actively promote a culture of care and valuing each other. Pastoral care for both children and for their families is outstanding. As a result, children enjoy their learning in all areas and engage exceptionally well. Academic standards are good and continually improving. However, it is in the area of spiritual development, resilience and understanding of self and others where the school truly excels.

The spiritual leadership of the headteacher is outstanding and she is very well supported in this by the deputy and the Barnsbury Parish Team. Because of her clear and unerring direction over a number of years, all stakeholders have become united in their support for the school's Christian values and appreciative of their impact on pupils' personal development and aspirations. Parents are left in no doubt as to the Christian nature of the school and some are now choosing the school for this reason. Parents of all faiths and none, associate the strong moral guidance and the secure, inclusive atmosphere to the school's core Christian values. For example, a Muslim parent spoke appreciatively of the sensitive way in which her child was supported and encouraged during Ramadan.

Regular monitoring, involving staff, parents and pupils, has led to an excellent understanding of the impact of various initiatives throughout the school. This, in turn, informs the robust school improvement plan and leads to a highly effective cycle of development. The focus for development from the last inspection has been thoroughly addressed and the standards in RE are now outstanding.

Teachers speak highly of the excellent induction procedures which have enabled them to commit to the success of the school ethos and ensure strong academic performance. Staff at all levels feel that they are challenged and supported in equal measure. They are held to account for standards and safeguarding issues in a way that upholds the essential value of each child as a unique and special child of God. Over the last few years, staff development has, quite rightly, been focused on the development of a strong and committed staff team. The headteacher has been personally involved in local authority and diocesan initiatives to promote church schools. Now, the school is in a position to develop its own staff as future leaders of church schools by strategically expanding the programme of staff development. School leaders have cultivated a variety of strong, mutually beneficial partnerships with local churches, the diocese and within the local community.

Both RE and collective worship are led by members of the senior leadership team, thus ensuring that both have a high profile throughout the school. Arrangements for collective worship meet statutory requirements and the religious education offered meets the National Society Statement of Entitlement for Religious Education.