

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

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

Wellclose Square, Whitechapel E1 8HY	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>London</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Date of inspection	14 June 2018
Date of last inspection	26 March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 100959
Executive Headteacher	Terry Bennett
Inspector's name and number	Gladys Vendy NS 299

#### School context

St Paul's CE School is in a formal federation with St John's CE School, Bethnal Green. The school is a one-form entry primary school with a nursery unit. It is situated in the parish of St George-in-the-East. Very high proportions of pupils are eligible for extra funding due to social disadvantage and are entitled to free school meals. Those who speak English as an additional language or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is significantly higher than the national average. 95% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, the largest being of Bengali heritage.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Paul's as a Church of England school is outstanding

- The close partnership between the two federated schools, sensitively guided by the executive headteacher, promotes a strong Christian ethos which impacts effectively upon the unity of the whole community.
- Strong relationships are shaped by the Christian character of the school and model the Christian ethos so that personal development and wellbeing flourish and academic achievement is high.
- Religious education (RE) plays a significant part in developing an understanding of and respect for all faith communities which excites, inspires and encourages pupils to make good progress and achieve high standards.
- Pupils and adults of different faiths enjoy coming together for collective worship which is inclusive and inspiring so that their spiritual growth is nurtured through a wide range of experiences.

#### Areas to improve

- Feed assessments into a whole school tracking system so that pupils' progress can be more easily monitored.

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

The school's Christian character is shaped through the outworking of its Christian values which are at the heart of the school. These deeply embedded values, such as service, koinonia, love and peace are articulated and practised in every aspect of school life. The school continues the vision of its founder to serve the local multi-cultural, multi-faith community. It shares this effectively with the parish church. Performance data shows that the fierce ambition of the school for pupils to succeed academically is met and academic achievement is high. Pupils make very good progress from well below age related expectations and exceed national averages at the end of Key Stage 2. This is because careful attention is paid to the developmental needs of each individual as a valued member of the school by using a

variety of support strategies. For example, a Place2be and a Place2talk, for counselling, is an integral part of the school which makes a significant impact by diminishing emotional barriers to learning. It is valued alike by pupils, parents and staff. As one parent said 'to seek help is normalised'.

Relationships between all groups are strong and model the Christian ethos so that personal development and wellbeing flourish. As a result standards of behaviour are high because everyone is polite and shows respect. The attendance of most pupils is very good because they feel safe and valued and are excited by the many learning opportunities. Pupils talk confidently about the high quality displays which reflect the school's Christian tradition. These support their understanding of the links between the Christian values and biblical teaching. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is underpinned by the school's Christian ethos. This is woven into the very fabric of school life through a rich and engaging curriculum, a sustainable learning environment and a wide range of visits. RE makes a strong contribution to the Christian character of the school by developing pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith as well as teaching respect towards all faith communities through its enquiry based approach.

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

Collective worship is a central part of the character of the school and fosters a sense of family and unity between people of all faiths. Sensitive planning by the executive headteacher ensures that it has clear biblical links, relates to the liturgical year and is distinctively Christian. As a result pupils understand how the school's Christian values spring from the way Jesus lived and influence how we live. This is most evident in the way pupils and parents of all faiths engage with the church and two local mosques about issues of social justice, such as helping the homeless and campaigning for affordable housing.

The clear framework for worship, knowledge of liturgical responses and visits to the parish church for major festivals, contribute to pupils' enjoyment of worship and understanding of Anglicanism. Through the visual use of symbols and imagery, as well as teaching in RE and worship, pupils have an age appropriate understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The outstanding act of worship observed during the inspection captured the excitement of the apostle Paul's ministry and skilfully explored the Christian values of service, endurance and friendship. One child said on leaving the hall 'I can't wait to hear what happens next'. Because of the willingness to acknowledge and talk about their different faiths, pupils and adults enjoy coming together for collective worship which is inclusive and inspiring. Their spiritual growth is developed through a range of worship experiences and worship leaders, including those from the parish church. For example, the school hosts a weekly choir club led by church staff and clergy with a monthly celebration of the Eucharist which welcomes members of the church, staff, pupils and parents of all faiths. This reflects the Sunday Eucharist and 'it gives us a chance to think more about religion' said one parent who claimed not to have a faith, before adding 'we are pleased to be there'.

Prayer and reflection is integrated into the routine of school life. The prayers on the leaves displayed in the reception area are an indication of the depth of pupils' understanding of the nature and purpose of prayer. Reflection areas in all classrooms also have a strong impact upon pupils' spiritual development.

As a result of pupils' evaluation of worship it is now more interactive and pupils enjoy taking part by writing prayers, reading, acting and singing. Governors give written feedback following visits and also report to the full governing body. As a result of good communication the quality of worship has improved.

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

The high profile of RE is reflected in the time allocated to it and the regularity and quality of work in pupils' RE books. The well-embedded enquiry based 'Discovery' scheme of work has been amended to include additional units about Christianity which gives it a distinctive Christian focus. This contributes strongly both to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to the Christian character of the school. Pupils are secure in their knowledge of Christianity. They have a well-developed inquisitiveness about all faiths. For example, an infant class who watched two Muslim parents carrying out the ritual of Wudu made impressive comparisons with the importance of water in Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism. Older pupils engaging in a new unit of work about covenants used sophisticated religious vocabulary and the higher level skills of interpretation, analysis and evaluation. They effectively related the importance of making an agreement to keeping promises in their own lives. The quality of teaching and learning in RE is often outstanding and never less than good. Pupils confidently consider big questions such as 'How does the Holy Spirit help Christians?' or 'is anything ever eternal'? Questions are also used to challenge and inspire the more able pupils in lessons. The creative approach to RE, which encourages pupils of lesser ability to achieve well through a variety of activities, means that the needs of all pupils are fully met. Pupils say that RE is exciting and inspirational. RE has a strong impact upon other areas of the curriculum and examples of extended writing in RE are used in the moderation of national assessments. RE work is effectively marked by

teachers and peers and often requires a response from pupils. Pupils make accurate self-evaluations against success criteria. It is clear that pupils make good progress and that standards in RE are in line with or better than those in other subjects. Monitoring systems are rigorous and assessment is thorough. However these assessments are not yet fed into a whole school tracking system which would make it easier to monitor pupils' progress. The RE subject leader is enthusiastic, knowledgeable and supportive. As a Muslim she has a strong desire to be seen as a good role model for the subject and this ambition is supported by a clear action plan. She works closely and effectively with her colleague in the federated school to improve standards in RE. The governors fully monitor, evaluate and report on RE and this has a positive impact upon the quality of teaching enabling high standards to be reached.

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

The close partnership between the two federated schools, sensitively guided by the executive headteacher, promotes a strong Christian ethos which impacts effectively upon the unity of the whole community. The school leaders demonstrably share the vision to serve the wider community, which is rooted in the Christian values of service and koinonia. For example, school and church together are actively engaged in the local affordable housing campaign which has raised the school's profile in the community. Careful thought is given to being a Church of England school with a sizeable Muslim community so that people of all faiths feel comfortable and confident in articulating the vision. One parent said 'we look more at our similarities than our differences'. For example, the school has engaged with the 'tackling Islamophobia' project to challenge stereotypical thinking. As a result, wellbeing and personal development is strong. The clergy from both parishes are a visible presence and speak of the open generosity of a community of different faiths. Governors' evaluation of the school as a Christian school is accurate because they are well-informed through school visits, meetings with subject leaders and parents. Strategies for improvement are effectively implemented. In addressing the focus for development from the previous inspection the school has strengthened its Christian distinctiveness as a church school in a multi-faith community in a variety of ways. For example, through the introduction of the school choir monthly Eucharist service which is well-attended by the Christian and Muslim community. The highly effective leadership of worship and RE ensures that the school meets statutory requirements and also strengthens pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Members of staff work across both schools which provides mutually beneficial opportunities for professional development as leaders in church schools. Staff retention is high. Relations between staff are very good and as one adult said 'we are here to help and learn from each other'. Parents feel the way the school listens to them is 'extraordinary' so that the school is a 'linchpin for the community's voice'. Pupils are inordinately proud of their school and speak consistently about how the mantra of the school is to 'do your best and encourage others'. Strong partnerships with the diocese and beyond the school build an understanding of local and global communities. St Paul's School fully deserves its reputation of an outstanding effective and distinctive church school.

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