

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

<b>St Swithun's Church of England (VC) Primary School</b>	
Grundy Crescent, Kennington, Oxfordshire, OX1 5PS	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Oxford</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Date/s of inspection	15 November 2016
Date of last inspection	13 December 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	123177
Headteacher	Helen Atkinson
Inspector's name and number	Sandra Symms 805

### School context

St Swithun's C of E Primary School is a larger than average primary school with 379 pupils on role. The two key stages and foundation stage are housed in separate buildings divided by the school field. There has been a significant programme of building work over the last four years to accommodate the school's move from one point five to two form entry. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is slightly below the national average. The proportion of pupils in receipt of additional funding and those with special educational needs or disabilities is below average. The headteacher has been in post for four years.

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

- The vision and drive of the headteacher, supported by staff and governors promotes an inclusive Christian ethos that leads to good achievements and a supportive, nurturing school environment.
- Supportive and caring relationships between all members of the school community, based on Christian values such as love and respect are a strength of the school and lead to high standards of behaviour for all pupils.
- Religious education is given a high priority and makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the Christian character of the school.
- Strong community and church links put the school at the heart of the village community leading to benefits for all pupils.

### Areas to improve

- Ensure that Christian values are explicit so that all members of the school community can consistently talk about the impact that they have on the daily lives and achievements of the pupils.
- Develop a clear definition of spirituality and identify experiences in the curriculum for pupils to explore spirituality so that pupils are confident to express their thought and views in considerable depth.
- Create reflective spaces in the school grounds to deepen pupils' spirituality and to provide opportunities for worship in an outside setting.
- Develop provision for learning about the Trinity so that pupils can talk about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit with an age and faith appropriate understanding.

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

St Swithun's Primary School is a welcoming, nurturing school at the heart of the village community. Leaders promote a vision based on values for life such as perseverance, peace, respect and forgiveness. Values are given a Christian context through links with the Bible and collective worship. Displays and class worship corners enhance the Christian ethos. A display of clay pots challenges pupils to think about how God wants to shape their lives to hold his love. Love is said to be the foundation of and fundamental to all of the school's values and this results in all pupils feeling valued and having a sense of well-being. Pupils respect one another's strengths and persevere in their learning, knowing that they need to 'keep up not catch up'. They feel safe to take risks in their learning resulting in good achievement across the school. The Christian values now need to be made more explicit in policies, on the website and in newsletters so that all members of the school community can articulate the impact that they have on the pupils' achievements. The supportive ethos of the school ensures that any attendance issues are dealt with in a sensitive, compassionate manner. The result of this is good attendance where pupils are keen to attend school, confident that they will be cared for and their needs met. Pupils and staff live out the golden rule which is to act with courtesy, consideration and respect at all times. Parents say that the Christian ethos gives a moral compass resulting in pupils supporting and encouraging one another and appreciating each other's strengths. One boy said that in this large school 'we can't all be friends but we are all friendly towards one another'. Anti-bullying ambassadors support staff to ensure that pupils are kind and caring so that all pupils feel safe. As a result bullying is rare, behaviour is of the highest standard and relationships are strong and supportive. Religious education is given a high priority. Visits to places of worship such as the local cathedral, synagogue and mosque result in a good understanding of differences in the church and other faith communities and contribute to the cultural development of pupils. Pupils see the importance of learning about and from other world faiths such as Islam and Hinduism. Pupils from a different faith background were excited to teach about their food and clothing and appreciated having their own prayer stations in the school. One boy said 'you get to know about the different ways that people believe' and pupils recognise that this leads to tolerance and respect for diversity. As a result RE makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the Christian character of the school. Experiences such as singing, having moments for quiet reflection and pausing to appreciate the world and nature when visiting the local woods or taking part in residential visits enable pupils to explore spirituality. However leaders need to ensure that the school has a clear definition of spirituality so that pupils can develop their ability to express their spiritual thoughts and views with more confidence and depth.

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

Collective worship plays an important part in the life of the school. One staff member talked about worship being 'reinvigorating'. Another reflected in a questionnaire that 'through worship the school promotes a sound moral code that adults follow with integrity'. Pupils value the time to reflect and to have some peace and quiet in a busy school day. Parents talk about how worship helps their children to be caring and to ask questions such as 'When is God's birthday?' As a result members of the school community value worship and see that it plays an important part in the life of the school. As a result of the vibrant and informative hall display showing the liturgical colours, pupils have a good understanding of Christian festivals and church seasons. Worship includes some aspects of Anglican practice such as joyful singing, prayers, a cross and the lighting of three candles to represent the Trinity. Older pupils can talk about this representing the three parts of God. The school now needs to develop and deepen all pupils' understanding of the Trinity so that they can talk about this with understanding in an age and faith appropriate way. Worship is led and planned by a range of leaders including staff, clergy and the Open the Book team so that the worship experience is varied. The school now needs to extend the range of settings for worship to include the school grounds so that pupils are offered a rich experience of worship. Planning and themes show that worship often includes Bible stories with links to the values such as peace and patience. Pupils make links with the story of The Good Samaritan saying that they keep the peace in their school by showing tolerance and respect. They look out for and help one another in the playground. Younger pupils make links with the story of Noah's Ark by learning to persevere and be patient. Bible stories support pupils' understanding of Jesus. They talk about Jesus being the son of God who forgives people's sins. They add that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead and they enjoy learning about Jesus through the festivals of Christmas and Easter. Year 6 pupils are proud to be part of the Worship Team. They plan and lead worship with growing confidence such as preparing the Remembrance Day service to include poems, prayers and a time for reflective silence. Pupils enjoy writing and contributing prayers in worship saying that prayer is a time to talk to God, to say sorry and thank you. They recognise that prayers can be said at any time and help you to get closer to God. As a result pupils show that they understand the purpose of prayer. Some pupils pray at home for their families, before food and bed. Parents appreciate the inclusive ethos of the school as pupils from different faith backgrounds are invited to 'make the prayer your own' both in school and class worship. Monitoring by leaders and foundation governors has led to worship areas in all classrooms, improved church links and the involvement of the Open the Book team. As a result pupils are more involved in worship and

are keen to participate with the acting and reading prayers. Staff say that this has 'revitalised worship in an interactive way.'

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

The drive and enthusiasm of the headteacher, supported by staff and governors ensures that the school's vision to provide 'an environment based on Christian values' is promoted throughout the school through classroom displays, artefacts and daily practices such as saying grace before lunch. Leaders show awareness of the impact of the values on pupils when they talk about pupils having a sense of self-worth, and the excellent behaviour and relationships throughout the school. However all leaders need to be able to consistently and clearly describe the impact that the values have on the whole life of the school and in particular on the pupils' achievements. Governors have developed strategies for monitoring and evaluating the school's Christian character and collective worship so that development points from the previous inspection have been met. Self-evaluation shows a sound understanding of the school's performance and is reflected in the school improvement plan. There is a strong focus on raising standards for all such as improving standards in maths across the school and improving outcomes for vulnerable pupils. Leaders are ambitious for the school and talk about each child being made in the image of God and worth spending time on. Learning is the key focus but only part of the story. Leaders want a rich experience for all pupils and strive to provide a curriculum that 'lights a spark for each child' through RE, worship, sport, art, theatre trips and cultural visits. As a result the curriculum contributes well to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in an engaging, inclusive way. The RE leader is well supported to carry out her role effectively. A key focus on working towards the RE Quality Mark has led to raised standards in teaching and learning with RE being well led and enjoying a high profile in the school. The headteacher, in her role as collective worship leader is also well supported to bring about further improvements such as the development of pupils as worship leaders after attendance at a training workshop. The school makes good use of training opportunities. Training is cascaded down to staff so that they are well informed and can support leaders to keep the school moving forward. Parents feel valued and welcome and they appreciate the sense of community and belonging that the school imparts. They contribute to the life of the school such as helping in classrooms and the library, making Christmas post boxes and costumes, attending school assemblies and church services, raising funds and sharing their skills with pupils. They enjoy attending school assemblies and church services and being a part of the school family. As a result there is a sense of trust and community with everyone looking out for and supporting the pupils and their school. The school enjoys close links with the local church. Pupils visit the church for special services and experiences and the church also supports the pupils' learning in RE such as learning about church buildings or baptism. These close links lead to a growing understanding of the place of the church in the local community. The links with the diocese support leaders pastorally and enable the school to share its good practice with another school. Shared experiences with the wider community such as the village fete, visiting the local care home and taking harvest gifts to a local homeless charity contribute to the pupils' understanding of local and national communities. In addition pupils learn about the lives of pupils in Africa through the school's involvement with the local Kennington Overseas Aid. Consequently their understanding of global communities is enhanced.