

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

The King's Church of England (VA) School

First Avenue, Kidsgrove, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST7 1DP

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Lichfield
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Not previously inspected
Local authority	Staffordshire
Dates of inspection	14 -15 February 2018
Date of last inspection	Not previously inspected
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 141700
Headteacher	Emily Verow
Inspector's name and number	Revd Huw Bishop 344

Context

The King's School is a smaller than average voluntary aided (VA) secondary school in Kidsgrove, a small town in Staffordshire. It opened in 2015, replacing a predecessor community school. The school has become very popular, with numbers on roll increasing. A new build was completed in 2016. Most pupils come from a White British background, with a small number from minority ethnic groups. Pupils supported through additional government funding are above the national average, as are those with special educational needs and/or disability. After its first Ofsted inspection in November 2017 the school was judged to be good.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of The King's School as a Church of England school are good

- This Church school has quickly become a beacon of hope and aspiration in the local community. Because of very effective leadership by senior staff and governors, pupils enjoy their learning in a stimulating environment that is clearly underpinned by Christian values.
- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher, which is recognised by pupils and parents as offering a clear direction to drive forward the school's distinctive journey of Christian learning and faith in a highly principled and effective way.
- Pupils who are motivated and have excellent attitudes to learning. Behaviour and relationships are outstanding because pupils appreciate every opportunity they are given to learn and grow by belonging to this church school family.
- The partnership with the parish of St Thomas's Church that has helped to establish a secure spiritual foundation from which to build its distinctive Anglican identity.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that the leadership and structure of collective worship reflects and celebrates the broad nature of Anglican practice and includes opportunities for leadership of school worship from other Christian churches and appropriate faith groups in the local area.
- Deepen learning in religious education (RE) with a specific focus on key Christian concepts, festivals, Anglican tradition and practice, so that pupils understand their importance in the school's Christian character.

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

The King's School is a growing faith community where Christian values are openly expressed and interpreted within a diverse school context. Six core Christian values – thankfulness, trust, justice, grace, aspiration and celebration – were chosen by the students, staff, parents and governors and are embedded in all aspects of school life. This makes a positive impact on pupils through increasingly effective teaching in RE, engaging collective worship and pupils' pastoral care and guidance. Together, these have made a good impact on the school's distinctive Christian character in a relatively short period of time. Pupils who were present in the predecessor school summed up their perceptions by commenting that the headteacher's Christian leadership has 'massively changed the school in a big way; teaching is improved, and the school is better because Christian values help us to look after each other'. The school's vision is firmly rooted in biblical teaching and core Christian values, promoted through the six core values above. These are linked carefully to quotations from the Bible which are displayed clearly and effectively around the building as constant reminders of distinctiveness. Pupils have a developing degree of spiritual awareness which they attribute to the school's Christian character. Pupils say that they experience a very strong sense of respect, trust and feeling safe in their school. Pupils are well supported in school and the quality of relationships between pupils and staff is very strong. Parents, too, were clear in their support saying that the guidance and support their children receive was personalised and exemplary. Parents described the school now as a 'platform of aspiration within the community', with the needs of all pupil groups being met effectively. As a result, pupils' outcomes are good and improving, particularly at Key Stage 3. Pupils behave well and appreciate that the school deals quickly and efficiently with any behaviour issues that arise. Pupils know that they have a voice that will be heard and that their views are respected by school leaders. Peer mentoring, pre-apprenticeship opportunities and volunteering are just a small sample of chances that pupils are given to offer service in God's name. Pupils' efforts are acknowledged and celebrated and so their attendance at school is also good. Pupils now see their school as an exciting place to learn and grow and their attitudes to learning are exemplary because they enjoy and appreciate all the learning experiences they are given. The school serves a community which does not readily identify itself with any religion. However, the partnership with pupils' homes and families is improving in this area although leaders know that there is still more work to do to share a vision based on Christian values. Pupils enjoy a range of extra-curricular opportunities in music, drama, sport and community work that provides opportunity and access for every pupil beyond the school day. Pupils develop excellent social and moral values through this extensive range of extra-curricular activities and their responsibilities as citizens are also promoted through active involvement in the local community. There are many opportunities for Christian action and raising much needed funds for various organisations such as Comic Relief and donations to the local foodbank as well as volunteering to help with parish lunches for the vulnerable. Christian symbols are prominent in public areas and classrooms and a reflection room is used by staff and pupils. The new school environment has been designed to emphasise and enrich academic and spiritual development and does so very effectively. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including the promotion of British values forms an integral part of the curriculum, but it is also an extension of community values too. Pupils are taught about tolerance of others' beliefs although the local community is not culturally diverse; the school teaches exactly what it describes through its evaluation statements about mutual respect and understanding 'because God's love is without limits and without condition'. Leaders use this important concept to support the teaching about challenging stereotypes and the quest for equality through its effective personal development programme.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The importance given to worship is demonstrated through the commitment of senior leaders and the vicar at St Thomas's church. Despite most pupils coming from non-worshiping families, pupils gather respectfully and engage in collective worship with reverence and dignity. Worship draws links between the school's Christian values, the Bible and events in the modern world, nurturing students' beliefs so that they have a sound awareness of and a caring attitude towards others. The attention to detail in terms of planning and resourcing in worship reflects the same attention as that given to learning. Worship is also evaluated carefully. Pupils agree that worship is integral in their experience of life in the school and they feel affirmed by this. Pupils are very positive about prayer and reflection. Worship themes are balanced, appropriate and are based on Christian values as well as some important occasions in the Christian calendar. Also, pupils reflect with maturity and sensitively on social, community and global issues. In collective worship, pupils are invited to think about their own and others' beliefs, their relationship with God and the implications of their faith for their daily lives. Worship themes are then developed further through chapter groups when pupils are encouraged to take a more active role in discussions, exploring and discussing God's 'word' through the shared Bible passages. The Lord's Prayer and the Chapter prayer (written by the pupils themselves in each chapter group) are frequently used and made visible in all classrooms. Pupils talk openly about their faith and recognise that the school's Church of England status has become 'very important' to them. However, this understanding is insufficiently broad at present and so limits the way the school can help pupils to nurture their own personal spirituality. Whilst some opportunities for spiritual reflection are offered during acts of collective worship,

these could be developed so that pupils' spiritual development is enriched further. A reflection room provides a quiet space for individual or small group worship where students can engage in prayer, meditation, reflection and contemplation as well as leaving messages in times of personal or special need. There is a weekly Bible-focused group, led by the parish vicar and curate; this session is attended by a core group of students from both faith and non-faith families. Pupils are, however, less secure in their understanding of key theological concepts such as The Holy Trinity, including the seasons and festivals of the church's year, liturgical colours and their significance. Adults in school respond well to collective worship and particularly in the leadership of chapter worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The Religious Education department is an example of effective practice and enjoys a high profile within the school. There is now a lead teacher of RE who works alongside the Head of English faculty to coordinate and manage the RE provision. Most students are entered for a public examination at the end of Key stage 4 and outcomes are moving closer to the national average. The three-year trend in GCSE outcomes shows that results in RE and most subjects across the school are improving. The department has effective leadership, with a dynamic and qualified specialist employing a wide variety of creative and interactive approaches and cross-curricular learning skills. She is assisted by non-specialists who are well supported, trained and effective in the delivery of creative lessons. The RE curriculum is well-planned and leads into the school's assessment framework, thus giving the subject parity of status with other core subjects. RE is forward looking, with pupils encouraged towards ownership of their learning, not just for examination success, but also for developing their confidence and helping them to reflect on their attitudes and behaviours. They also consider relevant social and moral issues and can make some connection between the subject, collective worship and the school's distinctive Christian character. The 'Understanding Christianity' resource has been implemented at Key Stage 3 following training by the diocese. At Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress because of good teaching. Leaders need to ensure however, that pupils understand clearly the relevance and importance of key Christian theological concepts and their specific link to the school's distinctive Christian character and Church of England context. Although numbers are few, post 16 students have not yet opted to choose RE at A Level. However, they do study RE once a week and aspects of RE also feature heavily in all pupils' personal, social and health education programme of study. Statutory and GCSE RE lessons are carefully evaluated by a senior leader to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning in RE, including the outcomes enjoyed by pupils, are at least good. This evaluation is particularly rigorous and effective in driving improvements forward, but it is too early to be able to assess its full impact.

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

The school's distinctive Christian values and vision are explicitly communicated to the visitor at every opportunity. The school environment positively reflects that of a Church of England school; visually, the corridors are decorated with biblical references, imagery and students' work. School documentation proclaims a vision for a distinctive Christian learning community in the town which supports local needs in partnership with the parish church. The school's vision of challenging every individual to make the most of their God given talents and aspire to great things is brought together very convincingly by the headteacher and staff through rooting the vision in distinctive Christian values. These values underpin policy and practice in all key school areas and have contributed to a dynamic model of rigour and enthusiasm which is evaluated carefully at every level. This drive to establish the school's Christian distinctiveness is also shared sensitively in partnership with the local community. Strong links with the diocese have supported the school through its transition and growth and this has helped to move the school forward quickly. Leaders have invested in staff training for the whole school, planned in conjunction with the diocesan team. Staff development is ongoing, and the leadership team ensures that training is tailored to all staff needs so that they feel safe and confident to deliver the vision as a church school. Leadership is a shared task and staff speak highly of how valued they feel, both professionally and personally. Similarly, pupils appreciate every opportunity given to them to grow in confidence. The headteacher has a thorough understanding of the school's performance and the place it holds within the local community. This was the clear view of very supportive parents when they were describing how the school prepares their children for adult life. There is considerable investment in working with parents to emphasise that this school is at the heart of its community and that it models aspiration and hope for all its pupils as a Church of England school. The King's School is an inclusive Church of England school where the Christian ethos spreads into the community through a strong, sensitive and thoughtful sense of mission which is well-integrated and supported fully by St Thomas's parish. School leaders' processes for evaluating Christian distinctiveness are exemplary. Governors are strong, resilient and well led, encouraging future church school leadership potential from within staff. Leaders' comment that 'what God is doing in our school at the moment is just the beginning' is true.