

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Katharine's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School	Rolls Drive, Southbourne, Bournemouth BH6 4NA
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Winchester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Good
Local authority	Bournemouth
Date of inspection	22 September 2016
Date of last inspection	16 November 2011
School's unique reference number	113841
Headteacher	Nicola St John
Inspector's name and number	Andrew Rickett 201

School context

St Katharine's is larger than the average size primary school with 436 children on roll. Children come from a range of socio economic backgrounds. The majority of children come from a white British heritage. The number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average as is the number entitled to receive the pupil premium. Attendance is above the national average.

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

- Bible stories provide the inspiration for children and adults to retell their own stories which significantly contribute toward the growth of a personal spirituality.
- Inspirational acts of worship allow children time to reflect on questions of meaning and purpose that help them make the right moral choices.
- Religious education makes an excellent contribution to the promotion of the Christian ethos by encouraging children to explore their personal responses to faith and belief.
- Transformational leadership places people at the heart of the school's mission and underpins its success in bringing about improvement as a Church of England school.

Areas to improve

- Create innovative ways to capture the children's high quality responses to challenging questions so that the school is better able to demonstrate the development of the children's growing spiritual awareness.
- Ensure that the existing depth of questioning and challenge in the teaching and learning in religious education (RE) is of a consistently high quality throughout the school.
- In the light of recent national developments in assessment, ensure that assessment of attainment and progress in RE is accurate and consistent across the school through regular moderation of the children's work.

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

The Christian character is outstanding because of the significant impact that explicit Christian values make upon the children's growing perception of themselves and the extent that they care for others within and beyond the school community. Three values were chosen in 2011 and have become firmly embedded as the root of the school's distinctively Christian ethos. Grace, integrity and aspiration are challenging values and yet children of all ages clearly articulate how they make a difference to their lives through the relationships they have with others and to help in their academic learning. Furthermore, children eloquently use the language of other values, such as honesty and trust to enhance their understanding of the core values. For example, when referring to integrity, children speak of love and respect for others and God. They have a deep appreciation of the moral context of integrity and 'doing the right thing'. Children relish the opportunities to talk about these values and respond with insightful comments that are listened to with respect by others. These values contribute to the excellent quality of relationships throughout the school and the success in learning, with standards at least in line with national expectations. Links between these values and a set of 'powerful learning attributes', such as resilience and decision making, ensure that values are integral to the classroom environment. The school has improved its understanding of spirituality since the previous inspection. Adults and children are using a shared understanding to a greater extent to help reflect at a deeper level. These times to reflect are integral to collective worship and religious education although the children's comments are not always captured so that there is a way to follow the growth of their spiritual awareness as they move through the school. Children listen to a wide range of Bible stories from which they learn the lessons that Jesus taught us. A particular strength of the school is the extent to which children are given opportunities to tell their own stories to each other, from which they also learn. These occasions can be moving as children describe what is special to them and the reasons why. Children are developing their appreciation that Christianity is a world faith and that there are other faiths in modern Britain. The school ensures that children have opportunities to visit the local synagogue and learn about other cultures and religions.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is inspirational because children have time to reflect on the meaning of Bible stories and what they learn from them personally. There are strong connections between the messages that children hear during acts of worship and their social and moral development. Children have a clear grasp of making good choices and 'doing the right thing'. They explain with determination that behaving in the right way brings its own reward and that, for Christians, 'God knows that they have acted in the right way'. They say that 'God loves us more each day, even we have been naughty'. Through these times for reflection, acts of worship provide opportunities for children and adults to explore how faith and belief make a difference to their own lives and the lives of others. They are joyful times when children have the freedom to express themselves. For example, younger children were free to move to music at the beginning of worship and did so without embarrassment. Children have a very clear understanding of the meaning and purpose of prayer. Younger children speak with confidence how 'God wants us to say sorry' if we have upset someone, 'because that upsets God as well'. They openly discuss their relationship with God and explain how prayer can help them to be calm when they get angry. Older children are developing an appreciation of the nature of the Trinity. One child spoke of the Holy Spirit 'knocking on your door. You only have to open your heart to let Him in'. Children have very positive attitudes towards acts of worship and regard them as an essential part of being a church school. Systems to gather the children's views about worship are of high quality and are used to inform improvements. Planning of worship responds to the needs of the children and is delivered by a wide range of staff and the children themselves. Children regard the celebration of major Christian festivals at the local church as part of the life of the school. This helps them to have a better understanding of Anglican tradition and the Christian faith.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious education is outstanding because the subject makes an excellent contribution to the school's Christian ethos and has a significant impact on the children's spiritual development. Standards of attainment are high and children make good progress to achieve outcomes that are at least in line with national expectations and often higher for a considerable number of children. Teaching is confident and challenges children to think at a deep level. Children respond very well in lessons to these challenges and are engaged and enthusiastic. They listen carefully to each other and show respect for their views while having the confidence to disagree and share carefully explained justifications for this. At their best, these opportunities to explore religious concepts at a personal level produce some highly insightful comments from children, showing a mature degree of reflection. For example, in an RE lesson looking at Hinduism, older children shared their thoughts on places that were special to them to find peace and calm. They did so in considerable depth. A further strength of teaching and learning in RE is the way that children are given opportunities to experience a wide range of world religions in an experiential way. Teachers, for example, prepare classrooms so that children experience the sights, sounds, smells and feel of different faiths. Lessons are very well planned and are delivered at a good pace that allows children time to ask questions and explore them. Teachers ensure that children across classes in each year group receive the same entitlement to lesson content and quality of delivery. The introduction of new units to supplement the scheme of work, supporting the teaching of Christianity, is an excellent example of the way that teachers reflect on their teaching. The school is currently developing assessment of RE so that it is in line with other core subjects following the abolition of national curriculum levels. The new assessment system was introduced in January 2016 and is still at a relatively early stage in its implementation. A new system to record and track children's attainment and progress is an improvement. Some moderation of work, assessed against the new criteria, has taken place. The RE leader is outstanding. She ensures that the subject is continually developing in the light of latest developments both nationally and locally. She has an excellent grasp of what needs to be done to continue to make RE an inspirational part of the school curriculum.

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

The headteacher, fully supported by other senior leaders in the school, has ensured that the Christian ethos has improved since the previous inspection. She has worked with adults and children to address the raised expectations of the current inspection criteria, with particular regard to developing children's spirituality. The choice of three challenging core values is a reflection of the leadership's desire to seek the very best for the whole school community. Governors share the commitment of the leadership to finding ways to create a Christian vision that is as relevant to the lives of children as possible. The leadership and management are outstanding because they have been successful in achieving this vision. They have a clear grasp of the school's strengths and areas to develop as a church school through thorough self-evaluation and set challenging targets for continual improvement. The school has very close links with the parish church and other local churches. They benefit from the contribution of clergy who support the school through their place on the governing body and leading acts of worship. The vicar is relatively new and is keen to see these links develop further still. Children say that the church is part of the life of the school and enjoy celebrating festivals such as Easter, Christmas and an annual Eucharist at the church. Parents say that the school has currently struck the right balance between promoting a distinctive ethos based on explicit Christian values and being inclusive to all. They say that their children are encouraged to be open-minded about matters of faith and belief and have opportunities to explore their views knowing that they are their own choice. The school has addressed the areas for development from the previous report. It meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.