

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Northern Saints Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School	
Rotherham Road, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear. SR5 5QL	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese District	Durham
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Local authority	Sunderland
Date of inspection	27 September 2017
Date of last inspection	15 June 2015
Type of school and unique reference number	139425
Headteacher	Steven Williamson
Inspector's name and number	Alan Baker 903

School context

Northern Saints Primary is a larger than average, voluntary aided primary school in the north of Sunderland. It opened in 2013 as an amalgamation of an existing church school and the local community school and expanded to three-form entry in 2016. The pupils are mainly White British with English as their primary language. Levels of social deprivation are higher than the national average. The school also has higher than average numbers of pupils with special educational needs and those who are in receipt of pupil premium funding. A small speech and language unit forms part of the school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Northern Saints Primary as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Provision is outstanding because the wellbeing of each individual as known and loved by God is of upmost importance to the school.
- The school community describes the impact explicit Christian values have on their actions and aspirations.
- Pupils participate with enthusiasm in worship that regularly uses biblical references and the life of Jesus to allow them to reflect upon their everyday actions.
- Pupils play a full and effective role in reviewing, planning and delivering distinctively Christian worship.
- Achievement in religious education (RE) is outstanding and pupils show great enjoyment for the subject.
- RE planning, analysis and staff development is given great importance, resulting in a subject that is valued by the school community.
- Leaders ensure the academic needs of all pupils are paramount, resulting in outstanding achievement.
- The Christian heritage of the school is a driving factor in the vision of leaders who clearly articulate and live out their Christian vision for this Church school.

Areas to improve

- Increase opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Extend study of a range of faiths so that pupils have a deeper knowledge of relevant beliefs.
- Create strategic plans that allow governors to gain more hands-on experience of the strengths and development areas of the school.

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

Staff, pupils, parents and other community members talk with passion about the positive impact the Christian character of the school has on their lives. One parent of a child who recently joined the school told of a clear change in the behaviour of her daughter because of the Christian values which she now loves to talk about. New parents to the school feel welcome immediately. 'You can feel the love in this school' one parent noted. Christian values of faith, hope, love, courage, trust, forgiveness, peace, truth, compassion, respect, service, responsibility, kindness, honesty and integrity are communicated clearly and pupils are impressive in their ability to describe which values guide their actions and the choices they make. They successfully fulfil the school vision statement to create firm foundations in the lives of the pupils.

The behaviour and attitude to learning, of the vast majority of pupils, is superb. Relationships with families are strong and vulnerable pupils, particularly those with poor attendance, receive strong care, support and guidance from the highly respected family worker. The community is clear that the Christian guidance they receive is the driving force behind the care shown to each pupil as a child of God. One parent spoke with clarity about the impact Christian values and access to Christian support had on her personal life. The positive environment generated by this Church school community ensures that staff go above and beyond what is expected to meet the needs of all pupils.

An experience rich curriculum, where pupils learn in creative and practical ways, ensures that achievement is amongst the top 1% nationally and that all groups of pupils perform well above national expectations. Equally high achievement in RE plays an important part in ensuring that pupils have imaginative experiences that enrich their spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) understanding. They talk with enthusiasm about the opportunities and projects they undertake due to the school's insistence that their pupils personally experience the things they are learning. They feel a great sense of ownership due in no small part to the opportunities for pupil voice. A group of pupils came to the clear consensus that 'our opinion matters – we're all equal'. Pupils enjoy opportunities to develop their personal spirituality using prayer spaces, reflective areas and a wide variety of enrichment activities. Those in need of emotional support benefit from continued development of these opportunities. Many regular and fruitful links with charities and organisations are well-established. Strong relationships with the National Glass Centre, The Outward Bound Trust and Seven Stories: The National Centre for Children's Books inspire pupils and raise their aspirations. Parents warmly express their appreciation of the academic and pastoral support which the school offers to their children.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is central to the life of the school. All pupils and staff fully engage in daily worship, which is lively and thought provoking. The large school population prevents the whole school gathering but the school draws positives from this, by tailoring worship styles to suit the age of each school phase. Pupils noted how their understanding of worship grew as they moved through the school.

The work of the pupil church school council has had a profound effect on worship. Distinctively Anglican traditions have been reviewed and specifically selected resulting in pupils who feel great ownership of worship. Design of a functioning worship table, choice of Anglican greetings and songs which are selected to match themes, are participated in with vigour. Their work in monitoring and evaluating worship, alongside staff, is impressive and leads to determined actions. Careful planning uses pertinently selected Bible stories and the teachings of Jesus to exemplify Christian values. The pupils are able to understand and articulate the impact worship has on their personal life. They share personal prayer confidently in worship and describe the value of prayer at different times of the day. Many gain comfort, reflection and motivation from the time they spend worshipping in school. Parents see the difference this makes to their children, particularly during times of adversity.

The involvement of a range of local clergy has added an extra dimension to worship in school and the community speak about the positive impact of this. Parents enthuse about the clergy who are regularly present in school and at the many services and visits which pupils make to Church. In turn, the example given by clergy allows staff to learn and develop. New staff grow quickly in confidence to deliver worship due to regular and effective training opportunities. Pupils show an awareness of the Trinity but more work to allow them to articulate their understanding would benefit the whole community. Links are strong with the local church and diocese. The ability of worship to raise the aspirations of pupils and develop their resilience and spirituality is understood by all leaders and staff of the school. Worship, therefore, has a dramatic impact.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE teaching is given high importance by senior leaders, who manage and evaluate the subject effectively. Teachers speak with confidence about a subject which underpins many aspects of the school. High levels of achievement are obvious, from pupils who see the subject as important and enjoyable. Many lessons involve a range of creative activities and thorough monitoring shows teaching to be at least good and often outstanding. Large, class record books offer many examples of how drama, role-play, visits and visitors add interest and impact to teaching. New teachers receive support through training and mentoring.

The subject leader has detailed knowledge of the strengths of the staff and works to bring all teachers to this standard. She uses monitoring and pupil voice effectively to impact on the subject, for example organising a diversity week in school and making close links with a local Sikh family. The impact of this allows pupils to show particularly strong understanding of diversity within their own school community and they link this clearly to messages from RE. Pupils enthuse about the subject. Use of the adopted Durham diocesan curriculum ensures a strong pupil knowledge of Christianity. The values of the school are present in the planning and delivery of lessons, enabling pupils to comment on the impact RE has on their understanding of communities at home and abroad. They speak with great understanding about Christianity and the other cultures and religions they study. Visits and visitors are used effectively to stimulate learners although more opportunities to meet people of differing faiths would help to strengthen pupils' specific subject knowledge

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

All leaders speak convincingly about the importance of the Church ethos of the school and the way it has supported them and continues to give direction. As a recently opened Church school, leaders work hard to ensure that their clear Christian vision to offer a spiritual dimension to the lives of young people is actively carried out. Chosen Christian values are made clear to the school community. Leaders are particularly strong in the way they model and live out the values which are now central to the life of the school. Decisions, which have the importance of each individual pupil as a child of God at their core, create a supportive and thriving environment. The positive impact this has on children is clear to all members of the community. This child centred approach creates outstanding academic achievement, as well as strong SMSC development.

Involving all members in the monitoring and review of all areas of the school gives leaders a thorough understanding of performance, which leads to well-planned next steps. The school is continually moving forward. Staff are fully involved and understand the importance of the Christian heritage of the school. They feel supported and challenged to improve, with several explaining how leaders have encouraged them to develop in their career. Staff openly discuss their appreciation of the 'compassion and love' they are shown when times are hard. Leaders challenge failure but assist staff, implementing clear support models with care and dignity. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school with great clarity. They support and challenge the head teacher, who guides this Church school to create 'firm foundations' for pupils with unfaltering passion. Their involvement in the life of the school is effective and they can further strengthen this by developing formal systems to enable governors to personally monitor RE and worship.

The school has strong links with the local parish and diocese and it thrives on the opportunities, support and development impetus they gain from these relationships. Central to pupil development is worship and RE which is given the highest priority and meets statutory requirements. Links with the local church are strong. In turn, the church community enjoy the participation of pupils in services throughout the Christian calendar. These partnerships, along with many local, national and international ventures are key to the success of the school. A curriculum designed to give pupils important life experiences allows them to develop God given talents with enjoyment and confidence. The development of each child is of ultimate importance.

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