

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report (SIAS)

St Nicholas' Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

St Faith's Road, Alcester, B49 6AG

Diocese: Coventry

Local authority: Warwickshire

Date of inspection: 23rd April 2012

Date of last inspection: 10th December 2008

School's unique reference number: 134611

Headteacher: Mrs S Staley

Inspector's name and number: Mrs A E Wellings 707

School context

St Nicholas' Church of England Primary School is situated in the small historic town of Alcester, with 326 pupils on roll, all living within the local area. The majority are from families of a White British heritage, of whom most are Christian with a minority having strong church connections. St Nicholas Church, although not adjacent to the school, is within walking distance.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Nicholas' Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are good

The school is very effective as a Church of England school. Its clear Christian ethos is very well supported and enhanced by the use made of the creative environment both inside and outside. The building of good relationships in a climate of high expectation and a strong culture of care, support and nurture enables all members of the school community to thrive and achieve well.

Established strengths

The care, nurture and support the school gives to all members of the school community.

The strong and committed leadership, especially that of the headteacher and religious education (RE) manager.

The school environment both inside and outside which supports the spiritual welfare of pupils.

Focus for development.

Establish a clear process for the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship.

Celebrate the vital role its distinctive Christian character plays in the school's success.
Embed the system of recording the evaluation of church school distinctiveness

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

St Nicholas' School meets the needs of its learners very well; having a strong and mainly overt Christian character. There is a clear Christian ethos which guides the development of the school and the lives of all stakeholders. Although strong this ethos is not always clearly articulated by pupils and parents. Behaviour is very good and pupils are confident about their school and proud of their place within it. Learners flourish in a climate of high expectation in which the achievements of all are valued and celebrated. Good relationships based on

Christian principles are clearly evident across the school, all knowing whom they should approach should problems or concerns arise, confident that these will be addressed appropriately and well. A very strong system for care and support exists within the school, which is welcomed by all members of the school and used effectively especially during times of difficulty. A Samaritans listening group working with some pupils is a clear example of this work. The school's curriculum carefully weaves opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and religious awareness across different curriculum areas and experiences, making them relevant and accessible. This is demonstrated in the effective, well-resourced and practical approach taken in the delivery of RE, making pupils own faith and that of others come alive. Parents are strong supporters of this, one commenting that 'the school can make faith relevant to life and give scope for practical spirituality'.

The school is well placed at the centre of the local community and is an active partner in many events, particularly the town celebration for St Nicholas Eve when a pupil as a Boy Bishop leads the procession through the streets alongside the rector.

The school undertakes work to support carefully chosen charities based in the local, national and international arena. Much attention has been given to developing an effective and stimulating environment.

Outside many areas have been created to develop and enhance pupils' spirituality. These areas are well used by pupils but their value and significance is not always clearly recognised or articulated by parents. Display within school is very good, often cleverly challenging pupils with open questions, and giving many opportunities to develop and broaden their knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith. This is clearly demonstrated in the inspiring areas created in each classroom, used for class worship and private reflection.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is good, holding an important place within the life of the school, making a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual development. Great care has been taken in the planning of the programme of worship themes weaving in social and emotional aspects, Christian beliefs and festivals and also those of other faiths. Pupils commented on this remarking 'it is good to know what other people do and we can learn from each other'. Pupils enjoy and are engaged in worship, they indicate that they enjoy writing and reading prayers at worship on Fridays and for use in the classroom reflection areas. Pupils clearly look forward to worship and value it saying, 'the music relaxes you for a good day and you work well if you are having a good day'

The atmosphere created in the hall for worship is enhanced by the stimulating and informative displays. Pupils do undertake the preparation of the hall for worship; however their participation in the planning and leading of worship is limited. Although pupils answer questions and readily offer ideas within worship they are not always able to relate these experiences to their everyday lives. A notable exception to this however, is the warmth of the pupils' appreciation of the special worship led by the rector after bereavement when 'we all remembered nice things and took a candle to the classroom to remind us'. Pupils also benefit from the rector's weekly contribution to school worship. The preparation and planning for worship is thorough. However no formal monitoring and evaluation is presently in place. Worship takes place in St Nicholas Church usually for the end of term or major festivals such as the school carol service, at which parents are made welcome. The school lead one of the Sunday family services in church each year, with pupils taking a very active role, planning the liturgy, reading and leading the congregation in prayer.

A foundation governor and members of local churches lead the Doughnut group, a thriving Sunday club for children of the area, held in the school. The club uses prayer, song and craft activities to teach its members about the Christian faith. Prayer plays an important role in the life of the school. Pupils know the school prayer and those used at other times during the day; and they are also familiar with The Lord's Prayer and have a good understanding of it, with one pupil explaining, 'it helps us with how to live our lives'.

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

The headteacher, governors and RE manager have a strong and clear vision for the school which is clearly rooted in Christian values. They work hard to ensure this is in place, understood and supported by everyone, addressing areas from the previous inspection.

Parents and pupils support this vision but are not always able to link it to the daily life and success of the school. Governors are very dedicated, effective and knowledgeable, steering

the school skilfully through the transition to an academy. This process has further deepened the already strong links with the diocese. The evaluation of the school as a church school is clearly evident, showing how the school has progressed since the last inspection, however the system for recording this needs to be refined and embedded. The findings of this evaluation are clearly used to inform areas for future development. The school has a clear understanding of its professional development needs and has given regard to succession planning. Foundation governors are actively involved in staff appointments. The school council is very effective undertaking its work with enthusiasm; the chairman of governors attends the meetings along with the headteacher. The Friends of St Nicholas group work with governors and staff to add a further dimension to the work of the school and local community.

Very good links are in place with the church community and a notice board in school ensures all are up to date with parish news. The rector undertakes a pastoral role rather than that of a governor; he does this with care, dedication and skill.

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