

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

<b>St Nicholas's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School</b>	
St Faith's Road, Alcester, Warwickshire B49 6AG	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Coventry</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Warwickshire
Date of inspection	3 April 2017
Date of last inspection	April 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary School Primary 139518
Executive Headteacher / Head of School	Adam Walsh / Karen O'Shea
Inspector's name and number	Reverend Alison M. Morris 759

### School context

St. Nicholas Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is a larger than average primary school. There are 407 pupils on roll aged from 4-11 years. It serves a small but growing town of Alcester. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The number of pupils who receive SEND is currently below the national average. The school has a strong reputation in the local community and has close links with the incumbent and St. Nicholas Church. In September 2015 an executive headteacher was appointed following a restructure of two church primary schools.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Nicholas as a Church of England school are outstanding

- A Christian leadership and vision which is confidently lived out and promoted by all leaders is instrumental in the creation of a distinctively Christian school that is inclusive, welcoming and harmonious.
- Exemplary pastoral care, the nurture group and effective intervention strategies based on Christian values enable pupils to blossom and flourish with a safe and nurturing Christian community.
- Christian values, such as forgiveness and compassion are embedded in the excellent spiritual, moral, social and personal development of pupils.

### Areas to improve

- Through the development of the 'worship warriors', engage pupils in the process of planning, leading, and monitoring and evaluation of worship throughout the school.
- Implement the new religious education (RE) scheme of work alongside the 'Understanding Christianity' resource to make RE more accessible to all pupils and to enhance their spiritual development.
- Foster more partnerships and strategies which will allow pupils to encounter different faith and cultures to deepen pupils understanding of a multi-faith and multi-cultural world.

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

St. Nicholas is an explicitly Christian school which is outstanding in the work it does. The school has developed an excellent Christian character and positive ethos. This is immediately apparent and permeates all aspects of the school's life, from documentation and displays through to classroom practice. It has resulted in a strong shared vision which is articulated by all in the community. Explicit core Christian values, which are rooted in biblical teaching, are being successfully embedded and internalised through the imaginative interweaving of the moral code, values boards and newsletters. As a result, the values shape and support the holistic approach to meet the needs of each child. Effective use of Growth Mindset and nurture rooms, such as The Beach Hut, run by staff and social agencies support pupils to overcome challenges. Highly effective intervention programmes and excellent SEND (special educational needs and/or disability) provision has a direct life-changing impact on all pupils and particularly those with deep seated needs. This is a strength of the school. The introduction of the Forest School has impacted upon the emotional needs of specific pupils to optimise their learning potential. High expectations and aspirations have a significant impact upon pupils' lives because they positively influence pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships. For example, the introduction of 'Achievement for All' across the school and 'proud cloud' in reception class has successfully promoted achievement. Pupils are treated with dignity and valued as unique individuals to be fully nurtured in this caring Christian environment. Excellent pupil progress is made and pupils achieve well, most reaching standards of attainment above national average in academic work. Exemplary pupils' social, moral and spiritual and cultural development (SMSC) is also nurtured and challenged by core Christian values, such as forgiveness and compassion. It is well promoted through religious education as well as in high quality spiritual experiences within worship and the classroom. A well-structured RE scheme fosters deep respect for Christian values and beliefs, as belief matters in this school. Pupil knowledge of the 'Christian story' is excellent as well as awareness and understanding of other faiths and cultures. RE makes a significant contribution to pupils' development. It also enhances the Christian character, distinctiveness and SMSC development. Pupils enjoy RE and are challenged by creative learning activities. However, the school has identified the need to integrate the Understanding Christianity resource, so that RE is more accessible for all pupils. Pupils understand what it means to be a pupil at a church school and make the link to Christian teaching in the bible. One pupil said, 'We are a Church of England school which worships and respects God.' An effective school council allows the pupil voice to contribute to decision making. Pupils are given leadership responsibilities through positions such as Peer Mediation. They also participate in the mission of the wider community through fundraising as seen through 'Operation Christmas Child' and the charity appeals which support the Myton Hospice. Harmonious staff relationships are a strength of the school and provide excellent Christian role models. Standards of behaviour are exemplary due to a well disciplined school embedded with Christian values. For example, 'The Golden Ticket' scheme promotes a clear understanding of right and wrong. Excellent attitudes to learning by pupils are promoted within a happy and inclusive Christian environment. They are well motivated to attend because of engaging curriculum activities and rich learning experiences, such as the Shakespeare Week or the project on Polar regions. Pupils are polite and respectful. They feel safe and valued in the knowledge that diversity is embraced as pupils from all cultures feel welcomed and their beliefs are respected. All safeguarding arrangements are in place and are effective. Exemplary 3D interactive RE displays, prayer tables and artefacts throughout the school clearly expresses the school's Christian distinctiveness and encourage spiritual development. This successful school is an excellent environment, in which all pupils mature and thrive academically and socially in a distinctive Christian community.

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

Worship is distinctively Christian and evokes a sense of belonging and gathering in God's presence. It is seen as important in the formation of Christian character and forms the main element of the school Christian's distinctiveness. It is also engaging and inspirational which makes an outstanding contribution to the daily experience of all pupils and staff. With a strong focus on the role model of Jesus Christ and the Trinity, both Christian values, such as forgiveness and compassion, and beliefs are reinforced and embedded into the vision of this Anglican foundation. Great care is taken to ensure a variety of approaches to worship includes key elements which are an integral part of Anglican traditions and practices. Additional activities, such as 'Open the Book' and specific days such as 'Trinity Day' broaden pupils' worship experiences. Worship aims to meet the needs of all pupils through meaningful experiences which are appropriate and significant to pupil's lives. Clever use of inclusive language allows all pupils to listen, reflect and respond appropriately so that they are spiritually nourished. For example, very good use of role play in the worship observed energised pupils' attention throughout the theme of 'Getting on, Falling Out.' Through the moral message pupils are encouraged to relate their learning to their own behaviour and life, fostering responsibility and respect. Pupils participate in high profile evaluation of their own behaviour and attitudes through discussion during curriculum activities and 'family time.' During worship a range of experiences are used such as prayer, silence and music, all of which attempt to stimulate pupils' attention and atmosphere. Visual images, symbols and lighted candles are used to encourage awe and wonder, and to encourage spirituality. Pupils' attitudes to worship are very good and can be seen in their good use of responsive prayers. They

enjoy and sing enthusiastically in their response to worship; as one pupil said, 'I like singing because it has a meaning about our values.' They speak positively about worship and its impact upon their lives. Pupils have excellent knowledge and understanding of Christian symbols. One pupil explained the Trinity as 'one whole religion in three parts'. Worship is planned using Christian values throughout the year over a two year cycle. Through a range of resources including 'Values for Life' and 'Roots & Fruits' the themes are supplemented with Biblical material and follow the Christian festivals. Spirituality mapping across the curriculum introduces engaging activities which are built into the curriculum in addition to acts of worship to deepen pupils understanding of their faith. As a result, pupils' spiritual development is exemplary. Prayer is integral to daily life with prayers during the day. Pupils understand their purpose and the impact that prayers have in their lives. Response to prayer is enthusiastic with pupils speaking well of how they feel personally when engaging in prayer. One pupil said, 'Prayer is calming'. Spiritual development and reflection are fostered through 'stillness' to deepen the relationship with God. The use of prayer corners enhances pupils' opportunity to be still and reflect beyond collective worship. They also eagerly use reflections books to record their feelings and opinions about worship. Substantial links with the vicar, diocese and foundation governors ensure Christian distinctiveness has a high profile which reinforce Christian values and a wide range of Anglican traditions and practise. Key Christian festivals such as Easter, Harvest and Christmas are always celebrated in St. Nicholas's Church which reinforces the church and school link. Parents also respond positively to invitations to attend special services and to share in worship. Pupils do lead some worship. However, the school has identified the on-going development of 'worship warriors' for further pupil involvement in planning, leading and evaluation. Since the last inspection formal evaluation and monitoring of the impact of worship upon pupils by governors has been effectively introduced. Effective use of questionnaires, pupil voice and reflection books are also an integral part of an evaluation schedule so that the high quality of worship offered is relevant to the pupils' lives.

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

The inspirational executive headteacher has worked with energy and commitment to develop an uncompromising and distinctive Christian vision which is lived out in every detail of this school's life. His experienced leadership which is rooted in his personal faith, strongly supported by a dedicated and engaging head of school has contributed significantly to the success of the partnership between the two schools. St. Nicholas has a strong identity as a church school because Christ's teaching is at the heart of everything. Governors and school leaders have worked hard to ensure and develop a clear and consistent, shared Christian vision based on explicit distinctive Christian values which pervades the school. Both chair and foundation governors act as critical friends who are particularly supportive of the leadership team and the strategic drive to sustain the distinctive Christian ethos. Clearly governance makes a distinctive Christian difference to this school. As a result improvement plans now fully reflect at every level, monitoring and evaluating the school's progress in both policy and practise as a church school, taking account of the school's Anglican foundation. Accurate self-evaluation and reflection by skilled governors and staff impacts well and effectively upon the school's strategic direction on academic achievement. All staff and governors have a very honest and challenging view of any future developmental needs of this church school. Identified strategic professional development and insightful succession planning across the partnership has contributed significantly to the success of this school. Both governors and staff have training opportunities for leadership roles which has impacted positively upon staff and school development. An enthusiastic incumbent nurtures the close links between the school and church. For example, the annual Festival of St. Nicholas is exemplary practise of how the school, church and community work together. Statutory requirements for both RE and collective worship are met. Both areas are enthusiastically led which radiates through to the staff and pupils. RE also has a high priority and is strategically planned within the School Improvement Plan. Strong partnerships exist between the school and the diocese, multi-agencies and with members of the local community. Pupils' learning is enhanced through opportunities for families to be involved in the school. An example of this is seen in the extensive work of 'The Friends of St. Nicholas.' All parents recognise the 'welcoming Christian faith' that underpins the school. They also appreciate the distinctive Christian values and ethos which pervades an atmosphere where their children feel safe and secure. One parent said, 'Our children are loved and cared for'. Parents say that issues are dealt with quickly and efficiently. They also speak of the professional way in which staff work which enables their children to flourish spiritually, socially and academically. Parents believe pupils' academic and personal needs are being met and that the pupils' personal development is enhanced through extra-curricular activities such as cooking. Pupils also have a deepening sense of Christian identity and are provided with activities and reflection opportunities to celebrate diversity within society. The school recognises the need, however, to enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding of other world religions to prepare them for life in a multi-faith society. Wider community links are strong. For example, current effective strategies include interschool links and Farming Overseas Action Group, which are examples of strong effective practice and development in school.