

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Oswald's Church of England Aided Primary and Nursery School

Church St Durham DH1 3DQ	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Durham
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Durham County Council
Date of inspection	8 March 2018
Date of last inspection	12 March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary School 114228
Acting Head Teacher	Donna Wilson-Smith
Inspector's name and number	Valerie Hall 859

School context

St Oswald's Church of England Aided Nursery and Primary School is smaller than average and oversubscribed. There are 117 pupils on roll with lower than average numbers of pupils eligible for pupil premium. There have been a number of changes since the last inspection. There has been a change of headteacher and there is currently an acting headteacher who receives leadership support from a colleague in another local school. In 2014 the school has become an all through primary. The school was judged to be good at its last OFSTED inspection in 2017.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Oswald's Aided Church of England Nursery and Primary school as a Church of England school are good

- This is a happy and successful school, valued by its wider community.
- The acting headteacher is ensuring high standards are maintained and improved. She is supported by capable and caring staff who base their work in love and compassion.
- Adults are involved in leading communion preparation, supporting creative work and ensuring children understand both Christian traditions and the multi-cultural world in which they live.
- Parents have an obvious pride in this school and feel the whole child is valued.
- Pupils state that teachers have ambition for them and make learning fun.
- Imaginative display and worship areas lead learners to reflect on faith and to pose big questions.
- Governors have ensured consistency of leadership and this has led to stability and coherence for staff, pupils and families at a time of substantial change.
- Religious education (RE) is very well organised by the experienced leader and staff value her support.

Areas to improve

- Develop and embed the proposed renewed set of values so that they drive the work of the school as a church school and influence its standards
- Offer opportunities for staff and families to engage in personal prayer and worship in a planned way to further enhance the Christian character of the school
- Ensure that Governors receive succinct, formal and regular reports on RE and worship from the headteacher, vicar and RE lead so that they can hold leaders to account and support improvements in both areas.

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

The acting headteacher has secured the confidence of staff, parents and governors. She is leading the school convincingly in its first year as an all through primary school. Decisions at all levels are underpinned by a clear set of Christian values, including trust, hope, compassion, forgiveness and thankfulness, that are being embedded and evaluated by experienced and long serving governors. They are able to offer newer leaders the benefit of their deep wisdom and insight, which is underpinned by deeply Christian values and support. The acting head and other leaders, supported by the headteacher of another local school, have ensured stability and maintained standards during the absence of the current substantive headteacher. Standards have remained strong and governors have successfully supported the school through conversion to a primary school and extensive building work. Outcomes in early years have been above national whilst standards at the end of key stage one in 2017 were in line with national. In 2018, the school has become an all through primary school and will have its first set of key stage two results. Numbers of pupils eligible for pupil premium grant are lower than national figures and in some instances they perform better than those who are not eligible, which is as a result of the Christian care and support families receive. Behaviour is good and pupils feel free to express well thought-out opinions and ideas about worship and RE. Pupils appreciate that teachers do all they can to promote interesting learning. They enjoy being able to express opinions about faith matters and the Christian ethos. They demonstrate examples of deep thinking which may be rare in primary aged pupils. Work in books and in abundant displays show a strong emphasis on personal, social and cultural education. The recent opportunity the local church afforded, to take part in the Lumiere exhibition on Big Bang Theory was an example of teacher willingness to exploit every experience. The installation led to intelligent and well developed discussion which encouraged pupils to explore many 'Big Questions' related to both RE and worship. Pupil voice is strong and their views are regularly sought. Pupils appreciated the chance to talk about the new behaviour system which is based on forgiveness, one of the current Christian values. They enjoy the fact that they can have the chance to put things right and start again, which the school encourages as a better basis with which to teach children about conduct issues in a Christian framework. Pupils are encouraged to have a voice on all issues. This is evident in work in RE books. Pupils discuss faith issues freely and celebrate the many faiths represented within the school community. Parents enjoy the fact that the school readily reflects a multi-cultural society and feel it eliminates prejudiced behaviour as pupils readily celebrate different cultures and beliefs. Other types of bullying are extremely rare and immediately dealt with in this school. Leaders promote a love of Jesus which is echoed in pupil attitudes to one another, demonstrated by their obvious support for one another.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Good quality worship is both invitational and inclusive. It is central to the life of this school, giving adults and pupils a chance to engage with important issues in a reflective way. There are several creative prayer areas around school, allowing adults and pupils the opportunity to pray and reflect with peace and in tranquillity. Whole school worship is based on the church calendar. Pupils confidently read Bible stories and prayers, some traditional and some written by themselves. Collective worship is planned by the vicar and the headteacher, who also evaluate worship. They feed back to governors but there is no regular reporting of findings yet. Parent and pupil views are sought and often acted upon. This was demonstrated when families valued the new behaviour system being trialled, and their views gathered, before being made final. Class worship has been included since September and is now a strength of the school. Children contribute well to this by influencing planning and by taking on roles of increasing responsibility such as organising music and preparing the classroom. Worship encourages pupils to take action in their community. They have been involved in collecting for Durham foodbank and contribute regularly to charitable action in the local church. The children use their garden produce and bake items to give to the church community, which supports charitable work. This helps to root children within their community and to understand that charitable action has a purpose. The school feels this is particularly important for those pupils who arrive from other countries and is effective in helping them develop a sense of Christian community. Links between worship, ethos and personal, social and moral education are continually being developed as the new behaviour and rewards system becomes embedded. The new Shining Light and Shining Bright award, presented in worship, allows adults in school to praise pupils for showing good citizenship as well as behaviour reflecting the stated morals and values of the school. The new system has had a very positive effect on pupils' self-awareness and ability to regulate their own behaviour. This encourages the whole community to see Christian forgiveness as the basis for behaviour management. Resilience and self-reliance are encouraged which is well demonstrated among the vast majority of pupils. Staff take every opportunity to help pupils take part in spontaneous exploration of worship spaces. On a recent visit to the church for a Spring walk, pupils from the early years were invited into the church where they looked around and were allowed to explore the church and its artefacts. Such experiences are valued by adults and pupils as they promote a sense of belonging between church and school. The church family takes pride in the children and feels a responsibility for their spiritual welfare. Displays around the school demonstrate how pupils understand the concept of the Holy Trinity and staff and pupils are able to describe it a number of creative ways. One imaginative display

likened the Trinity to an apple but went a step further and gave pupils the chance to ask questions stimulated by the imagery. Collective worship and religious education encourages pupils to question and to be proud of their beliefs. It is evident that all pupils' beliefs are valued and celebrated in this highly affirming environment.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The leader of religious education is an experienced and confident co-ordinator. She is well supported by the acting headteacher and by governors, who ensure she has time and resources to lead her subject well. An observed lesson on Buddhism was very well resourced and the children worked with enthusiasm. Well organised data shows that standards are high and in line with other core subjects, and pupils make good or very good progress over time. Work in books is thoroughly marked, following the introduction of a whole school marking policy which encourages pupils to improve their work within a lesson. The school is working hard to improve presentation in line with school policy and this is showing good results. Teaching and learning is good with evidence of some outstanding work in books and floor books. In one lesson, the teacher encouraged searching questions about baptism and then used skype to find answers in real time. This innovative approach ensures that children are enthusiastic about this teaching and it places RE in a real life context. Children enjoy RE lessons and like learning about other faiths. They enjoy the opportunity to talk to other children about their beliefs and celebrate differences. In some instances, personal, social and health education is linked to religious education to the benefit of pupils understanding RE in real life situations. Theology and philosophy are linked in these lessons in a mature and challenging manner. Pupils have considered such questions as 'Why do we exist' and 'How was the universe made'. Parents speak convincingly of the impact of RE on their children's lives. Staff and pupils were invited to a family event marked in church which was a remarkable example of RE and worship links. Children have a deep and mature understanding of theological issues and what they mean. One child described herself as a 'deeply religious non-believer' and was able to explain in detail why, demonstrating that children are confident and articulate in matters of faith and religion.

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

Ambitious leaders at all levels articulate a Christian vision that is leading to sustained and consistent improvement during a period of substantial change. Aspirations for all are high and although standards at key stage one in 2017 were in line with national levels, there is a sustained drive for improvement this year. Leaders are well aware of their strengths and areas for development. Evaluation by the acting headteacher is informing the work of the school very well. Staff demonstrate a robust attitude to change and thus it has not affected overall standards. Pupil behaviour is very good and incidents of bullying are effectively dealt with. Detailed logs of incidents are kept allowing staff to respond quickly. Christian values underpin the school's approach to attainment and achievement of all pupils and every person in school is regarded as a unique child of God. As a result, each pupil is encouraged to reach their full potential. Staff demonstrate great support for one another and governors recognise this as a strength of the school. Christian fellowship has been vital in times of change. Governors' evaluation is frequently informal and supportive which is greatly appreciated by staff. They value that governors are critical friends. The acting headteacher conducts searching and frequent evaluations of all aspects of school's performance. She feeds back to governors and the school's strategic development is based on these findings. Worship and Christian ethos are also evaluated by the vicar and headteacher, who give feedback informally to governors. They have, however, secured the ethos of the school by supporting the acting headteacher in the appointment of a headteacher from another highly effective church school. This has led to strong practice and invaluable relationships between the two schools as many exchanges of practice have taken place, with sustained impact. The capacity for strong leadership in the future is evident. The school works well with the diocese, acting on advice and guidance. Relationships with the local church are valued. The vicar is of particular spiritual support during this time of change and offers deeply meaningful prayer and guidance. Parents value strong and sustained leadership as well as innovation offered by newer leaders. A number of parents said they appreciated the school's response to the whole child over pursuit of singular academic excellence. The holistic education offered through a rich, varied and often innovative curriculum was prized. Parents also valued teachers' knowledge of all children and how they created a spiritually safe environment. This was especially noted for those families who are working in England, away from family. The Christian ethos that underpinned this reflects a Christ-like welcome to all. A parent summed this up when she likened leaving her child at this deeply Christian school as 'Going from a family to a family'.

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