



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Paul's Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School

New Street, Gloucester
GL1 5BD

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Gloucester

Local authority: Gloucestershire

Date of inspection: 23 June 2015

Date of last inspection: 14 June 2010

School's unique reference number: 115605

Headteacher: Stephanie Matthews

Inspector's name and number: Margaret James 698

School context

St Paul's VC Primary School is a one form entry school currently with 190 pupils on roll. It is situated in the centre of the city of Gloucester and serves the local community, reflecting its rich cultural and religious diversity. The proportion of children identified as having special educational needs is significantly above the national average as are the numbers eligible to receive free school meals and pupil premium funding. With 22 different home languages spoken by children at the school, the numbers identified as having English as their second language are also higher than those expected nationally.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Paul's VC Primary as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The headteacher's Christian vision for the school as a distinctive, effective, inclusive and transformational community ensures that the needs of each person, viewed as a unique individual made in the image of God, are met.
- Every member of the highly committed team of staff and governors know their school very well and use this knowledge to improve the life chances of all children and their families.
- Thoughtful and reflective children, from a wide range of religious backgrounds, live out Christian values for the well-being of others.

Areas to improve

- Formalise the outcomes of governors' monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the school's distinctive Christian character so that gaps in effectiveness can be identified and strengths built upon and celebrated.
- Take the next steps in enabling children to become leaders of whole school acts of worship so that they can grow in confidence and develop their personal spirituality.

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

St Paul's is a school community which lives out the fundamental mission of the Church of England in education and whose work is driven exclusively and passionately by a set of distinctive Christian values. These values characterise both the work and attitudes of all adults working in the school and as a result, children not only know the values but understand their significance to daily life and learning. Children talk freely of ways in which their school values are rooted in Bible stories and even the youngest children recount these stories and explain their meaning. They are also, however, very articulate in describing how these values are common to many faiths other than Christianity and how the values are therefore relevant to everyone in their school, regardless of whether they are Christian, Muslim, of another faith or of no religious background at all. Children explain how much their teachers care for them and 'know whether we are alright just by looking at us'. They describe their school as being a place of safety and protection as well as being fun, challenging and compassionate. The overriding description of St Paul's by all is that it is a 'family' in which every person is thoroughly known and genuinely cared for. Well embedded systems, such as the pupil progress meetings held jointly between class teachers and the Reducing Barriers to Learning team four times every school year, ensure that the academic, personal, social and spiritual needs of each child are known and planned for. The unrelenting determination to bring positive transformation to all children and their families is thereby brought to fruition and the recent and sustained improvement in children's academic progress is directly linked by staff and governors to the sharp focus on the school's mission as a church school in which faith is at the forefront. All adults in the school share a good understanding of spirituality; they use this knowledge to routinely plan for children's spiritual development across the taught curriculum and include a wide range of 'wow' moments to enable children to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. Curriculum planning ensures that children engage in experiences they might otherwise miss, such as visiting the beach, studying works of art and spending time at Gloucester Cathedral. Learning in religious education (RE) lessons also enhances this aspect of children's development and draws upon the rich religious and cultural diversity of the school. Children have very good knowledge and understanding of beliefs and practices in Christianity, Judaism and Islam and apply this to their own daily experience of diversity. As explained by a Year Six child, 'if everyone went to a school like St Paul's, the world would be a much more peaceful place'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

It is in collective worship that St Paul's Christian values are mainly set out, explained and explored by the whole school. Children participate enthusiastically in acts of worship led by all of their teachers as well as by the vicar, Open the Book team and members and leaders of local church communities. Children regularly lead many aspects of worship in class, within whole school worship and in the parish church, but have not taken full responsibility for leading worship independently. They have many ideas for how they could do this, however, and explain how it would help them to develop their confidence and become leaders in their own right. Worship at St Paul's is primarily regarded as a spiritual experience which brings the school family together, embracing their differences and celebrating what they have in common. All children give feedback on what they learn through acts of worship and know that their voices are heard. At the weekly celebration assembly, children eagerly await to hear who has been nominated to be part of the CREW (Collective worship and RE), based on how they have demonstrated the school's Christian values. This is a highly sought after accolade and children of all ages are proud of being selected. Collective worship is firmly rooted in the teachings of the Bible and the traditions and practices of the Anglican church. Children have an impressive appreciation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and talk at length about Christian festivals and times in the church year, such as Lent. They appreciate the Christian foundation of worship at the school and readily make connections between this and the beliefs of other faiths within the school community. All children have a good understanding of the meaning of

prayer which is an integral aspect of the daily life of the school. They speak with confidence of their own views of prayer. Some describe their own prayer life in which they thank God and ask for 'sensible things like courage and forgiveness'; others speak articulately of how they do not believe in prayer but join in at school because they 'respect that it is important to others'.

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

The headteacher's Christian vision for the school as a distinctive and effective church school is summed up in the slogan 'MADE' which stands for 'Make A Difference to Everyone'. This vision is implemented in a context of Christian love which has at its heart the belief that everyone is valuable and equal in the eyes of God. This vision is known, understood, embraced and implemented by everyone involved in working at the school. Consequently, the focus is consistently upon transforming life chances for all members of the community. The head, staff and governors consciously go 'the extra mile' at every opportunity, driven by their belief that everyone within their school community deserves the best. The head's passionate belief that all parents and staff work together, doing the best that they can for the children in their care, has resulted in high levels of trust between adults in the school community. The main beneficiaries of this philosophy are the children; however, parents eloquently describe how they, too, benefit from the mission of the school as do members of staff and governors. This unity of purpose is one of the most striking features of this outstanding church school family. Governors know their school extremely well and share the head's pride and passion. They demonstrate their vision for the school in many ways, one of which is their financial management and the decision they make to fund initiatives such as the highly valued Family Support Worker and the Nurture Groups. They have well established systems for monitoring and evaluating the performance of the school and are able to describe many outcomes of the school's distinctive Christian character. All governors take on the responsibility to monitor this and their work is overseen by the Ethos Group which consists of governors, staff and community members. These outcomes are not formally recorded at present and, as a result, gaps in the effectiveness of the school as a church school are not identified as clearly as they might be. The development of all members of staff as leaders is a priority for governors and all teachers report to them on aspects of the work of the school for which they take the lead. In this way, individual staff members know that their work is valuable as part of the work of the school as a whole and their understanding of the school's mission is reinforced. The leadership of RE is regarded as an important role within the school. The subject leader is given time to monitor standards of both teaching and learning and discussions about the purpose and direction of the subject are held at a senior level and involves governors. The partnership with the parish church is an integral aspect of the life of the school and the vicar is viewed as an intrinsic member of the school team. Her work is valued by staff, children and parents alike and her commitment to the school and her level of expertise makes a difference to what can be achieved. Parents, also, are very important members of the school community. They both benefit from the work of the school team and contribute to it through their understanding of what the school stands for and what it is working to achieve for their children. The main feature which binds together the leaders of this highly effective and inclusive church school community is their vision of themselves as servant leaders, living out the love of Christ for the benefit of those whom they serve.

SIAMS report June 2015 St Paul's VC Primary, New Street, Gloucester, GL1 5BD