



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Park Street Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School and Nursery	Branch Road Park Street St Albans AL2 2LX
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese/Methodist District	St Albans
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Good
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Name of multi-academy trust/federation	N/A
Date of inspection	29 September 2016
Date of last inspection	12 September 2011
School's unique reference number	117452
Headteacher	Tina Facer
Inspector's name and number	Lilian Weatherley 42

School context

Park Street Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School and Nursery is a popular, oversubscribed, one-form entry school situated to the south west of St Albans. Although the school is in the Parish of Holy Trinity, pupils are also drawn from London Colney and Brickett Wood. Most pupils attend the school's nursery and move into the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). There are 214 pupils on role including 31 with special educational needs. The number of disadvantaged pupils is small. The senior leadership team comprises the headteacher, who took up post in 2012, two assistant heads, the head of special needs and the EYFS Leader.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Park Street as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The school has a distinctively Christian family atmosphere where pupils all feel valued. This has a significant impact on pupils' achievement and progress, which is in the top 1% in Hertfordshire.
- The school's gospel values have a significant impact on the pupils' enjoyment of school, their behaviour and attendance.
- The headteacher, staff, governors and parents all work together to achieve the Christian vision for the school and ensure this is underpinned by a clear set of gospel values.
- All stakeholders have an accurate picture of the school's distinctive Christian character, its vision, aims and gospel values.
- The high profile given to religious education (RE), prayer and worship is having a clear impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding of the school's distinctive character.

Areas to improve

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning in RE to be consistently outstanding throughout the school.
- Ensure pupils have a greater role in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of collective worship so that they gain greater insight into the distinctive Christian nature of the school as a church school.
- Embed the units of work on 'Understanding Christianity' into a new scheme of work to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of key Christian concepts.

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

Pupil attainment and progress are high and underpinned by the school's vision and Christian values. All pupils know and articulate these values, explaining how important they are in their daily lives. The 'learning without limits' programme, for example, underpinned by the Christian value of 'trust', has had a significant impact on pupils' independence and progress, and makes learning exciting for them.

All relationships follow gospel values and both pupils and parents regard the school as an extension of their family life. Attendance has improved and parents speak highly of the ways in which the school's Christian values impact on their children and their behaviour both in school and at home. The school's current Christian value of 'sharing' is exemplified by the initiative of pupils serving each other at lunch time.

Pupils also demonstrate the school's Christian values in the way they behave to others. They are polite, friendly, well mannered and articulate. Pupils from other cultures and faiths, although small in number, feel welcome and say how their individual traditions are celebrated.

Pupils' personal development and wellbeing are strengths of the school and behaviour is exemplary. Due to the very strong support and high profile given to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) and the school's Christian values, pupils set high standards for themselves. Learners have regular opportunities to engage in high quality experiences that develop their personal spirituality. Worship, prayer and reflection are regarded by the pupils as an important part of school and home life.

Pupil voice is strong and every pupil is able to share their work, experiences, thoughts and ideas through monthly meetings of the 'School Forum Group'. Pupils are eager to share ideas about their recently created peace garden in the shape of a cross and their ideas for expanding it. Studying the creation story they realise how the garden could be linked to the wildlife garden. 'The wildlife area has become noisy and the creatures have disappeared. It is important to have quiet time and space for them to return.'

The school offers a wide range of after-school clubs, including the popular 'Hot Shots' run by the incumbent. This Christian-based club is popular and has a significant impact on pupils' understanding of Christian belief and practice. RE has a high profile in the school and makes a significant contribution to the school's distinctive Christian character by developing the pupils' understanding of those with other faiths and beliefs. Pupils have a wide perspective of diverse communities and this has resulted in the school achieving the 'International Schools Award'. Charitable giving is high and the pupils all fully understand, through their Christian values, the need to support those less fortunate.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Prayer and worship are central to the school day. The pupils have positive attitudes and all enjoy worship. They value the many opportunities for prayer that the school offers. 'It brings everyone together and makes us a school.' There are prayer spaces in each classroom and the new peace garden is well used. Pupils say how they appreciate opportunities to sit, reflect and pray.

All worship is linked to the school's termly Christian values and pupils have a clear understanding of the theological aspects of worship. Through the regular use of Biblical texts their understanding of these values is reinforced. The worship observed was based on the Christian value of 'sharing' and linked to the Bible story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath. Pupils enjoyed this and discussions showed a real understanding of the Bible story. The use of candles, Anglican prayers and responses ensure that pupils are able to make links with the local church of Holy Trinity and St Albans Abbey. Individual class candles used in whole school worship have the effect of bringing the school together and are often used in lessons.

Following the last SIAMS inspection a regular programme of planning and monitoring is in place. A scrutiny of the monitoring and evaluations showed consistently good practice with much outstanding. Pupils' questionnaires also revealed the significant impact that worship has on their daily lives. Governors and staff regularly monitor worship but pupil planning and monitoring of their worship is less evident.

The school has a detailed collective worship policy but the distinction between the worship offered by the school and assembly is not always made clear. Pupils enjoy leading worship and prayer. They know the Lord's Prayer and many Anglican responses. Their understanding of the Trinity is less secure. The instruction 'hands together, eyes closed' is inappropriate, given the presence of pupils from other faiths, cultures and Christian denominations.

The new incumbent and members of other denominations are regular visitors to the school and lead worship.

Pupils say how much they enjoy these times and how much they learn about the different Christian traditions.

Pupils benefit from regular visits to the parish church and St Albans Abbey. For example, pupils all recognise the significance of the Christian celebration of harvest Festival and are able to articulate its importance. Parents say how important these events are for bringing the whole community together and supporting its Christian vision.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Attainment and progress in RE are good. Pupils have a good level of knowledge and understanding. They speak with confidence about aspects of Christianity and the other faiths studied. One pupil suggested that RE time should be longer. The recent introduction of the 'Understanding Christianity' materials is already having a significant impact on the quality of teaching and learning about Christian beliefs and concepts, but it is not yet fully embedded into a scheme of work. Pupils are enjoying the challenges and are eager to show and explain their work. Some of the work on the creation and its link to Psalm 8 is exceptional.

The overall quality of teaching is good or better. All planning is detailed and although current planning is based on 'Understanding Christianity', teachers are able to add their own creative approaches and ideas. Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not always move around sufficiently to ensure that all pupils are on task or keeping up with the challenging pace of the lesson. Books are well marked but some contain out-dated and less challenging worksheets. Pupils are all given a Bible and pupils in Key Stage 2 show clearly how they are all able to find the relevant chapters and verses required for their lessons.

Regular monitoring and assessment take place but this is being reviewed alongside the current scheme of work to meet the requirements of 'Understanding Christianity'. Standards are currently in line with those of other subjects but with the demise of levels this needs to be consolidated to take account of a new scheme of work. The RE subject leader is an RE specialist and provides strong support for her colleagues. The chair of governors is the designated lead for RE together with the new incumbent. Both have a keen interest in RE and monitor progress in this area. They ensure that pupils develop an understanding of, and empathy for, the range of cultures and religions in both British and global society.

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

'Together we learn, together with God' is the school's vision agreed by the whole community and consistently lived out in daily practice. Clear expectations are set and all members of the school community can articulate the way in which the school's Christian values shape the day-to-day actions.

Parents and governors speak highly of the school and the ways in which the headteacher has developed this vision, its distinctive Christian character and Christian values. All stakeholders fully articulate this vision of working together as a Christian community. 'Though we are many we are one body.' This underpins the work of the school and is modelled and promoted by all. Monthly prayer meetings take place for parents. New members of the school staff and community are inducted effectively.

Following the school's SIAMS health check in March, staff, governors and parents have worked together to ensure that any outstanding areas identified from the previous SIAMS report have been addressed in full.

Governors play a key role in bringing the school to account, with pupil outcomes and the school's distinctive Christian character paramount. The strategic development of the school's Christian character is clearly outlined in the whole school development plan.

Self-evaluation involves all stakeholders and the SIAMS self evaluation form is robust, leading to effective strategies for improvement. The school's ability to raise achievement has been considerably strengthened by the rigorous monitoring procedures. All pupils are supported in the best ways possible and any additional funding is used to promote improvement and narrow the gaps for disadvantaged pupils. The result is that all pupils enjoy school, are excited by learning and achieve well.

Through the strong leadership of the headteacher, RE and collective worship have a high profile in the school and statutory requirements are met. The recent decision for all staff and the incumbent to attend diocesan training on 'Understanding Christianity' is an example of the strategic direction to improve standards in RE.

There are strong links with Holy Trinity parish church, the local Baptist church and the Diocese of St Albans.

Members of the school regularly benefit from attending diocesan training on those areas related to school's distinctive Christian character and future leadership of a church school. The school has strong and effective links with all its stakeholders, including the pre-school groups and other schools as part of the Wroxham Alliance.

Daily contact between parents and teachers is encouraged. The comment slips attached to regular newsletters and questionnaires reflect that parents feel able to communicate fully and are very happy with the school. The school's new website demonstrates that Park Street is a rich, vibrant and exciting church school underpinned by its distinctive Christian character.

SIAMS report 29 September 2016, Park Street Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School and Nursery, Branch Road, Park Street, St Albans AL2 2LX