

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

## St Paul's Church of England Combined School

Stratford Drive, Wooburn Green, High Wycombe. HP10 0QH	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Oxford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Date of inspection	22 November 2017
Date of last inspection	15 November 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 110469
Headteacher	Joanne Butler
Inspector's name and number	The Revd Dr Jason Phillips 598

### School context

St Paul's is a smaller than average, semi-rural school of 217 pupils and with a governor managed nursery of 39 pupils. All deprivation indicators are well below the national average. Most pupils are White British although about 10% of the pupils have one parent who is not British by origin. The proportion of pupils with a special educational need is slightly lower than the national average. The headteacher and deputy headteacher were new in roll in 2017 and the chair of governors has been in position for two academic years.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Paul's as a Church of England school are good

- St Paul's has a deep Christian heritage that positively shapes the school community and which the very committed governors and staff are beginning to make more explicit, extending its impact further.
- Despite areas of outstanding practice, the school is good overall because the effectiveness and impact of collective worship and religious education (RE) are good and because the rapidly improving impact of governance is not yet embedded sufficiently to drive forward improvements as a church school rigorously.
- Relationships and pupil behaviour are strong due to the development of high pupil self-esteem and the impact of the school's Christian vision on the all-round development of the pupil's as children of God.
- The Christian care for all members of this inclusive school community results in a strong sense of wellbeing.
- The Christian leadership of the headteacher is building upon past strengths of this church school and is enabling the school community to shape a vision for a contemporary church school in a diverse world.

### Areas to improve

- Significantly increase pupils' biblical knowledge in RE and collective worship through a wide variety of creative experiences making clear their application to pupils' lives and our multicultural world.
- Ensure provision-maps show how Christian spirituality and Christian based personal, social, health education (PSHE) along with RE and collective worship themes are developed across all of school life.
- Continue to work with the diocese in developing a theologically based understanding of the school's emerging vision as a contemporary church school in a multicultural and diverse world. This should be explained through policy and provision-mapping documents for a range of stakeholders.
- Work with the diocese to train all governors and staff in using the SIAMS framework to drive school improvement and ensure strategic decisions are considered at each full governors' meetings.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding at meeting the needs of all learners. St Paul's has an outstanding Christian and inclusive family ethos. It is a school with a long Christian heritage where many aspects are presently being revitalized. One member of the school community said, 'the school is in the process of polishing its treasures.' All stakeholders were instrumental in drawing out the school's core values of courage, respect, hope, enjoyment and community which has meant they are heightened in the consciousness of all. Now they are more explicit, these values are clearly strengthening the school's Christian nature. One child explained that, 'the values are what we are.' This is clearly true of all members of the school community who not only articulate these shared values with increasing readiness, but consistently live them out. However, because pupils' biblical knowledge is relatively weak, pupils are not yet making connections between biblical precedent and their behaviour choices. The distinctive Christian character of the school shines through the positive relationships between all members of the school community which are consequently very strong. These quality relationships are a key factor in the successful induction of new staff and children. As a result, pupils feel safe and supported and consequently flourish in a school they love. Anti-bullying and safeguarding procedures mirror the Church of England's revised statement of best practice, 'Valuing All God's Children.' Most children feel that when issues occur these are sorted out effectively. Attendance is slightly above the national average and exclusions are very rare. The school has a relentless focus on developing each pupil's potential as a child of God. Regardless of an individual's background or belief, every pupil is valued to the full and most are attaining well. However, attainment in writing and mathematics are a relative weakness compared to reading. The school's work on growth mind-set is an effective part of this concern for the all-round development of the pupils. PSHE also makes a positive impact because it is fundamental to the school's way of working. However, the school's present work and its new emerging scheme for PSHE are insufficiently underpinned by the school's Christian values and a theological approach. This limits its capacity to shape pupils in accordance with the school's stated Christian aims. However, through a wide range of positive experiences pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) progresses well resulting in confident, articulate, caring pupils that are respectful of others and their diverse backgrounds. An example of this is the study of Bulgarian Martenitsa symbols of love. Pupils' respect is developed further through extending empathy for others shown, for example, in supporting well considered charitable endeavours such as the Kenyan Walk Centre and Diabetes UK. RE makes an effective contribution to pupils' SMSC and respect of others. This is because the subject inspires

pupils in a positive engagement with similarity and difference. Pupils' have many opportunities across their time at St Paul's to develop in accordance with the school's mission; that is 'to grow in strength, wisdom and faith,' if they so choose.

#### The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is valued by adults and children alike as a precious opportunity to come together in the presence of God as the family of the school. It contributes well to pupils' spiritual growth through reflection and an opportunity to be community. Pupils are mostly positive about the worship experience valuing opportunities for prayer, story and iSingPOP Christian singing, the latter really igniting an enthusiasm and engagement. Prayer is well considered and a variety of opportunities to engage in different ways highlights its importance, for example, the recent prayer tent for European Prayer Day. The school's Christian values are well developed in collective worship, for example, respect, courage and hope in the recent presentation of the secular book 'The Red Crayon'. However, the application of themes to biblical accounts is not strong enough, primarily because biblical stories are insufficiently used. Further, opportunities to explore the Trinity and Holy Spirit are insufficiently explored and Anglican forms and words rarely used. This means that pupils' knowledge of Anglican traditions and practices is not well developed. These are key reasons why collective worship is not yet outstanding. Never-the-less pupils gain an appropriate awareness of the actions of Christ that informs their sense of service to others. Collective worship overall is appropriately planned and involve a range of people such as the local Youth for Christ team and the parish priest. Children also have periodic chances to plan and lead act of worship, engaging them further. St Paul's Church is utilised for key festivals enabling pupils to gain a sense of the cycle of festivals in the Christian year. The coordinator leads well and enables evaluations from children, parents and governors. However, evaluations are insufficiently considered against the SIAMS framework to ensure improvements are effected with sufficient pace and rigour.

#### The effectiveness of the religious education is good

RE develops in pupils a hunger for finding out about others as well as exploring big questions and a personal spirituality. Pupils achieve well in RE and enjoy the subject, particularly where it is linked to other areas like art, creative writing and drama, for example, in building a sukkah in studies of Judaism. Pupils make good progress in RE and standards of attainment are at least in line with national expectations and other core subjects. Attainment is measured and tracked using Incerts tracking. The RE subject leader uses this assessment information effectively to ensure that standards in RE are in line with other core subjects. Through considering big questions of faith and life, pupils develop a wide range of enquiry and discussion skills that are also applied effectively across the curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to ask searching questions and relate themes studied to their own experience. Children have a sound knowledge of multicultural Christianity and other faiths such as Islam and Hinduism, but sometimes depth is lacking. Although there are examples of pupils using the Bible, for example, in comparing gospel accounts of the nativity of Christ, pupils' biblical knowledge is under-developed. This is because Bible stories have been insufficiently explored. In response and to deepen learning, the school has recently started to follow the Oxford Diocese RE scheme of work. This demonstrates the school's responsiveness to evaluation and high aspirations for its pupils. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. RE is appropriately led by the headteacher giving the subject high

profile. Governors monitor and evaluate RE bringing about some improvements. However, their limited use of the SIAMS framework results in evaluations and improvements that are not always rigorous enough.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding. Resulting from the open and enabling Christian leadership of the new headteacher, the long-held commitment to the implicit Christian values and ethos of this church school are now articulated more explicitly. St Paul's is clearly growing in strength, wisdom and faith as its mission summary states. The headteacher's open leadership style results in a capacity to draw in the views of all stakeholders and to make effective changes. An example of this is the community wide consultation on Christian values that now shape the language of the school's ethos. Particularly impressive is the degree to which the views of pupils are both considered and acted upon. This makes them feel they have a valued role in shaping their school. The headteacher is proactive in developing positive links with the parents, the local church and the wider community. A most fruitful relationship is between the school and diocesan link advisor who offers robust support, helping to drive up school standards still further. As a result of the headteacher's enabling approach, governors have sought to strengthen their own leadership capacity, for example, in undertaking the excellence in governance course. This has helped them greatly in extending greater challenge to the school. However, governors' understanding of the SIAMS framework as central to driving up standards in a church school is more limited. Consequently, the pace and rigour of development of the church school dimension have not been as robust as they should be until recently. Never-the-less, governors and staff are very clear about their commitment to the school as a place of Christian nurture that promotes the all-round development of each pupil as a child of God. Additionally, inspiring the school community is the headteacher's developing vision. This vision is to build upon past strengths as well as enabling transformation to ensure this school is contemporary in its approach as a church school operating in a diverse world. Leaders express with passion how the newly identified Christian values shape them both collectively and as individuals. Leaders ensure that through the curriculum the children are well prepared to operate in a diverse world with Christian principles to guide them. Academically, attainment is just above the national average, with reading well above. Progress for most pupils is above the national average but in comparison to similar school's progress in mathematics and writing is not as high as it could be. Leaders correctly analyse school data and have effective plans in place to improve this still further. The school develops its staff extremely well, particularly in leadership skills. This extends their capacity to bring about positive outcomes for pupils and to prosper the Christian heritage of the school. The headteacher is the lead for RE and collective worship and ensures they meet statutory requirements and make a positive contribution to the life of this church school. Arising from the headteacher's example and clear Christian leadership is the inclusion and wellbeing of all as part of the Christian family/ community of the school. This arises from the mutual care and support given to adults and children alike. Each is honoured as made in the image and likeness of God. The school's highly inclusive nature greatly values the differing nationalities of some parents and also the multi-cultural context of modern life. This helps everyone appreciate the positive qualities of diverse communities worldwide.

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