



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St George's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Beaufort Road, Birmingham, B16 8HY

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Birmingham

Local authority: Birmingham

Date of inspection: 20 May 2016

Date of last inspection: April 2011

School's unique reference number: 139267

Headteacher: Shirley Atkar

Vicar: Revd Julian Francis

Inspector's name and number: Lizzie McWhirter 244

School context

St George's Primary School serves the parish of Edgbaston and the wider community of Ladywood. It is part of the DBET Trust. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average in this richly diverse school. The number of pupils for whom English is not their first language is increasing. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average. There have been significant changes in staffing and senior leadership.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St George's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The level of pastoral care in this welcoming, nurturing and inclusive Christian family community enables children to grow in confidence and achieve well. This is seen in pupils' leadership of collective worship and their excellent level of religious literacy.
- Strong leadership and good governance result from the mutual and substantial partnership between church and school. This ensures a high level of parental engagement as well as the Christian character of the school permeating all school life.
- St George's pupils love learning and strive for excellence in all areas of school life. This is very evident in vibrant art work, musical and sporting activities as well as academic subjects.
- The school's vision and mission is lived out and is explicit in the physical and spiritual school environment where Christian values are embedded and contribute significantly to St George's Christian distinctiveness.

Areas to improve

- Enrich and extend pupils' understanding of Christianity as a worldwide faith and enable them to meet people of other faiths more frequently to enrich their learning and support their spirituality.
- Enable pupils to deepen their knowledge of key Christian concepts, with the support of adults.
- Extend the monitoring of RE to include pupil self-assessment, so its profile as an important aspect of Christian distinctiveness is raised and is on a par with other core subjects.

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

St George's strong distinctive Christian character stands proudly at the heart of all school life. Consequently, St George's is a welcoming, inclusive and nurturing family in this church school where the wellbeing of the whole community is of utmost importance. Children, staff and families of all faiths and none are warmly accepted. Any exclusions are met with compassion. This is because the school's core High 5 Christian values of forgiveness, empathy, honesty justice and kindness, all leading to respect, drive positive progress. In addition, such values permeate all school life, making an excellent contribution to the Christian character of the school and to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural [SMSC] development. As a result, relationships between all members of the school community are very good. This school has a very clear policy for behaviour and discipline, which stems from the Christian value of forgiveness. Consequently, pupils are given positions of responsibility in school, such as the school photographer, and children of all abilities are praised for their individual achievements. There is not just a focus on academic achievement, but the whole child is valued. Music and sport are both strengths of this school. Moreover, the school's motto is 'Our love of learning leads to excellence'. This applies to all aspects of school life. Dedicated staff have very high aspirations for the pupils. As a result, standards have risen, with pupils significantly exceeding above the national average in many year groups in the core subjects. More importantly, children have a very strong sense of self-worth. Parents highly praise the richness of this diverse community where pupils 'learn to explain other faiths whilst remaining distinctively Christian'. However, pupils say they would like to visit more places of worship and meet visitors from different faiths in order to deepen their learning and enrich their understanding of diverse communities and cultures. Pupils go on to say they would like to know more about Christianity as a worldwide faith.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Engaging and inspiring collective worship at St George's is integral to daily life, making a very good contribution to the spiritual development of the gathered community. This is because acts of worship involve and engage everyone and are linked to Bible stories and the school's Christian values. A hallmark of worship at this school is the involvement of the worship council who take a lead in improving collective worship. Year 6 pupils lead family time worship each Friday. Such times of worship focus on key biblical themes and stories, such as The Promised Land, David and Goliath, and the story of Ruth are displayed on hall banners which the pupils have made. All pupils, staff and governors are involved in regular and robust evaluation of worship, which informs future planning. Pupils have a good understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They say, 'The Holy Trinity is important to me because we are all equal'. Pupils speak of 'collectively talking to God' in prayer, whilst the school is affirming of individual faith and belief. Pupils also say they pray at home before they go to sleep. They value the peace garden and the woodland walk for times of reflection as well as the well-used interactive reflection areas around school. Another strength of worship at St George's is the involvement of the parish church, namely through the incumbent who leads worship regularly in school. Key festivals are marked in St George's Church with pupils and adults, including parents, celebrating the different seasons of the church year including St George's Day. Pupils say they like it when their vicar leads worship and 'the church is amazing'.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

St George's pupils can relate the Christian narrative exceptionally well, explaining key events in their own words. This is especially true of the Christmas and Easter story. One Key Stage 1 pupil could explain the Christian theory of atonement and ransom in his own words. He spoke of Jesus' sacrifice as seen as an allegory through the character of Aslan in the Narnia Chronicles. Significantly, the proportion of Muslim pupils in this church school is high. Pupils support this by saying, 'If you believe in one faith, you can learn about another and it's a further step in your learning'. They would welcome key adults in this school community helping them explore more deeply key concepts and beliefs to enrich and extend their very good religious literacy. They know how to improve in their work in RE, saying, 'we take pride in our work' and say they 'learn more as we are stretched with the choice to work in the mega-stretch zone as opposed to the comfort or stretch zone'. Teaching and learning in RE is consistently good, often exceeding other core subjects, contributing significantly to pupils' SMSC development. Year 6 pupils reflect deeply on Pentecost and the difficulties of discipleship. Vulnerable children show courage in developing their learning. One pupil went on to say, 'I'm a Christian and I've got the Holy Spirit with me'. RE is well led and managed by the RE subject leader. However, the school recognises the need to embed the monitoring of RE in order to inform progress and consequently raise standards. This includes pupils' own assessment of their subject knowledge and understanding. Currently, this is in its early stages. RE is on a par with other core subjects and is an important contributor to the school's distinctive Christian character. Pupils say they enjoy asking important questions. They speak of the value of

meeting people of faith, saying 'we ask how does Christianity spread to the whole world?' They also would value visiting places of worship other than their own faith and say they have learned more about the Sikh faith from their headteacher.

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

Leadership at St George's is very strong with shared collaborative and yet clearly defined roles and responsibilities. This is because the Christian vision of the school's leaders drives the school development and its Christian values. Such virtues are at the root of all decision making at St George's, where a strong sense of family is fostered that is felt by most staff. One staff member explained, 'St George's are my family. If I am feeling down, they lift me up. We laugh, cry and celebrate together as a solid unit. I couldn't imagine my life without St George's. I always look forward to coming to work'. Pastoral care is a high priority, with foundation governors ensuring that the strategic response to the challenge of community life is met with Christian compassion. This is through the significant work of the pastoral committee which, together with the school improvement committee, feeds into the strategic work of the whole governing body. The school's vision is modelled and embraced by the whole staff. This makes clear to all the importance of the school's chosen Christian values. Excellent examples include all new members of staff who have inducted well into the distinctive Christian character of the school. Additionally, members of the school community explain such values in their own words as well as parents testifying of pupils modelling the school values at home. All governors are committed to ensuring that every person, whether adult or child, flourishes in this caring Christian environment. Consequently, children feel safe, grow in self-esteem and achieve well. They grow spiritually and socially as well as academically. All areas from the previous inspection have been addressed and there are clear priorities for future action and development. This includes supporting training needs for staff, who are growing in leadership skills at all levels of responsibility. St George's has benefitted greatly from diocesan support and training. Partnerships with the local community, including other schools, are strong and growing. Worship falls under the brief of the pastoral committee and RE under the school improvement committee. These two key areas of school life are closely monitored by governors and therefore more than meet statutory requirements. Children's work on display boards in church celebrates the importance of church/school links.

SIAMS report May 2016 St George's CE VA Primary Edgbaston, Birmingham B16 8HY