

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Saint Oswald's Church of England Primary Academy

Cross Lane, Great Horton, Bradford BD7 3JT

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Satisfactory

Diocese

Leeds

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Name of multi-academy trust

Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust

Date of academy conversion

November 2012

Date of inspection

6 February 2018

Date of last inspection

3 May 2013

Type of school and unique reference number

Aided 138916

Head of school

Gillian Wilson

Inspector's name and number

Malcolm Price 627

School context

St Oswald's Primary Academy is a larger than average sized school with 409 children currently on roll. It is part of the Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust. The substantial majority of children are from ethnic minority backgrounds or of Eastern European heritage. For many, English is not the home language and a significant proportion are new to English. The school is located in an area of significant socio-economic disadvantage and the proportion of pupils receiving SEN support is almost double the national average. Following an Ofsted inspection in July 2016, the school was placed in special measures. Since then, a new head of school has been appointed. The school benefits from a growing relationship with St John's Church.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Oswald's Primary Academy as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- The school has made significant recent progress in developing its distinctive Christian character, resulting in good attitudes and relationships.
- Changes in approach to collective worship and religious education (RE) support this distinctiveness and are beginning to offer greater opportunities for children to engage and grow spiritually.
- School leaders have a clear idea of priorities for St Oswald's continued improvement as a church school. They provide a nurturing environment with a growing focus on Christian values. As a result, children benefit from school life and, in most areas, are now making better progress and their attainment is more in line with expectations.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that the new distinctively Christian values become embedded by their promotion in collective worship and RE, and also through encouraging recognition of their relevance and impact in all aspects of school life.
- Increase children's confidence in planning, leading and participating in collective worship through the further development not only of the worship group but also through wider opportunities for all children.
- Through the development of teaching and learning in RE, extend children's confidence in their knowledge and understanding of the Bible, so that they can apply their learning to attitudes and behaviours and to the core school values.

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

After a period of challenge, this school is now making significant strides in its journey towards re-establishing its Christian character and its core values. School and church leaders have met with children to agree a set of distinctively Christian values. Children know that these are love, compassion, hope, humility, endurance, koinonia and service. These values have wisely been planned over a three-year cycle, with the core value of love being repeated each year. The school is using this distinctiveness as a driver for change and the rapid improvements in all areas are testament to the success of the strategy. All members of the school community, including parents, are aware of these values and fully support them. For example, parents refer with enthusiasm to the values tree in the entrance area. Children are beginning to make connections between these values and their own attitudes. They understand that koinonia means 'coming together as a community' and that service is about 'helping someone in need'. The impact of the Christian values is seen in the good standards of behaviour and children's commitment to change within their school. Children are also beginning to link their understanding of being members of a church school to their growing knowledge of Christianity. For instance, they know that the cross on their badge 'represents Jesus and shows that we are a church school' and they can explain that the parable of the Prodigal Son is about forgiveness and 'having another chance'. Despite these strides forwards, the establishment of the values programme and the Christian distinctiveness agenda are still in their early stages and members of the school community recognise that it will take time for the new approach to become embedded and for them to be able to judge the full impact on the school's character. For this reason the school does not yet meet expectations to be judged as good. However, it is already clear that these changes are resulting in a greater focus on spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and on more positive relationships at all levels. As an example, leaders from the local church are delighted that the partnership with the school has flourished in recent months. Children are proud to talk about the development of reflective areas in their classrooms which have come about as a direct result of an increased school focus on spirituality. These areas include Bibles, candles and prompts for private prayer. Each area also displays a reflection book which comprises children's thoughts and prayers, typically linked to the current Christian value. Opportunities for reflection are enhanced by prayer at key times, particularly before lunch and at the end of the day, to which children respond well. Through the newly developed Christian character, leaders are enabling children to make better progress academically, particularly in areas identified for development during the recent Ofsted inspection, with most children making better gains in their learning. This is being achieved through additional staffing, support from within the academy trust and a focus on quality first classroom teaching and learning. In addition, children who are new to English or have emotional challenges are well supported through the nurturing environment of the Eden room.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Recent changes to the structure and delivery of collective worship are resulting in children and other members of the school community having a greater appreciation of its value. The move to conducting worship at the start of each day has resulted in more opportunities for children to apply what they learn, particularly when the worship is based around a specific Christian value. There is clearly the beginning of a much stronger focus on spiritual aspects of worship, particularly within the context of Christian practice. For example, there are opportunities for prayer and reflection. Children say the Grace and are encouraged to use responses from Anglican forms of worship although they do not yet appear to have the confidence to say these responses with ease or understanding. Nevertheless, children speak positively about collective worship and say that 'it's inspiring and interesting' and 'we get to know more about Jesus and stories from the Bible'. They also volunteer willingly when offered a chance to participate. Children say that they would like opportunities for singing to be reintroduced and suggest that they could 'sing something that links to our values'. Worship is often connected to a Christian value and to biblical material - for example, children learnt about the Transfiguration when Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus. Through the recently formed worship group children have been encouraged to lead change. For instance, they have taken responsibility for leading worship based around tau crosses, which were then given to each class to be placed in reflection areas. With reference to candles, children can explain the significance to Christians of the Trinity. Worship is well supported by clergy and members from St John's Church, including through the Open the Book programme. Children visit the church for important festivals, for which they write prayers, do readings and act out short pieces of drama. School leaders are correct in their view that monitoring and evaluation of the impact of collective worship is an area for development. Some monitoring has been carried out by staff, governors and church leaders and this has included gathering children's comments especially through the vertical group sessions. There is scope to develop the range of those involved in evaluation and also to diversify the methods, especially in terms of how the views of children are gathered and acted upon.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

As in other areas, there have been significant changes in the delivery of the RE curriculum and the school has been well supported by the diocese, the academy trust and a local leader in education. The recent decision to ensure that all class teachers deliver RE has raised its profile at the same time as improving the skills and confidence of those teachers. In the better lessons, children are now benefitting from and enjoying regular activities of a good quality, which are improving their knowledge and understanding as well as presenting them with challenging material. For example, children were thoroughly engaged by a discussion about the resurrection of Jesus which was illustrated by a comparison with video extracts showing the death of Aslan in Narnia. Children were able to explain that 'resurrection means coming back from the dead'. In the same lesson, when considering the Ascension of Jesus, children were able to verbalise that 'the disciples felt that Jesus was around them and inside them'. In another lesson, children were considering the theme of peace and how it is traditionally shared amongst believers in both Christianity and Islam. These examples demonstrate that RE is becoming more effective in increasing children's knowledge base and in providing them with opportunities to reflect on important questions of faith. The range of learning presented in RE books has increased and children are more aware of biblical material, such as the story of Jonah. They are encouraged to think about questions such as 'what is important to Christians at Christmas?' and teachers are beginning to promote deeper thinking through reflective feedback. Children also learn about the beliefs and practices of a number of other faiths, sometimes drawing on examples from within the school's own community. The subject leader has received training in introducing the Understanding Christianity materials and all staff are involved in trialling a unit from this resource. Children also benefit from attending the Bible Times Exhibition at St John's Church. It is too early to fully assess the benefit of these initiatives to children's overall attainment in RE although it is certain that the change in approach has sparked their interest. RE is being regularly monitored in accordance with the school's action plan, for instance through book scrutiny, and this is indicating areas where development is still needed. The school has taken some steps towards establishing a programme for assessing learners' progress and attainment in RE, which in general is in line with other curriculum areas. Leaders are aware that assessment practice is inconsistent and remains an area for development. In this respect, there has not yet been sufficient progress towards meeting the focus area from the previous inspection to 'embed the system of assessment and tracking in RE'.

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

The success of recent initiatives results from good leadership at all levels. The head of school and leadership team are passionate about improving the school as a church school and have secured the support of all staff for a wide range of ventures. This has been achieved in part through coaching and modelling strategies, for instance by using a room as a training classroom with appropriate displays and an example of a reflective area. This approach suggests that, under its current leadership, the school has good capacity to improve. All leaders, including governors and representatives of the academy trust and the church, articulate the same vision for the school. Much of this vision is formed around the core Christian values which inform the school's approach to all aspects of improvement. Governors provide the leadership team with support and challenge and some of the additional funding provided by the trust has ensured support for school distinctiveness and quality assurance of learning. The partnership with St John's Church has grown, with school and church leaders now working together closely. For instance, church leaders have encouraged children to engage in supporting a food bank initiative and members of the church help weekly with an early intervention programme. School leaders are encouraging children to take on leadership roles and value their opinions. For example, the worship group has been given responsibility for planning and leading collective worship on a half termly basis. As a result they have successfully planned and delivered a recent worship activity about crosses, for which they wrote prayers and gathered resources. School leaders have acted on children's suggestions for raising funds for Children in Need and for a local hospital. Members of the school council are given responsibility for some decisions, such as the replacement of outdoor play equipment. Children in both these leadership teams are beginning to relate their role to the core values. For example, those on the school council are able to connect their support for those in need in the community to the value of service. Due to other priorities, leaders have not as yet fully developed children's wider perspective on the world nor made children more aware of Christianity as a global faith. Leaders are accurate in their self-evaluation and are well equipped with a range of strategies for further development of the school as a church school. They should be congratulated on their significant achievements in a relatively short time.