

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Cooper and Jordan Church of England Voluntary Aided Endowed Primary School

The Green, Aldridge, Walsall WS9 8NH

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Diocese / Methodist District [delete as appropriate]

Lichfield

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Local authority

Walsall

Date of inspection

23 November 2017

Date of last inspection

17 October 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Primary 132073

Headteacher

Keith Farquhar

Inspector's name and number

Rosemary Woodward 583

School context

Cooper and Jordan is an oversubscribed two form entry primary and nursery school with 485 pupils situated in a small town on the edge of Walsall borough. The majority of pupils are from a white British background, although a small number are from other ethnic groups. Deprivation indicators are low, but rising, with the number of pupils supported by additional funding known as Pupil Premium increasing over recent months. The headteacher has been in post for four years. The rector of the nearby parish church has recently moved on, but the area church team are actively involved in the school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Cooper and Jordan Church of England Voluntary Aided Endowed Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The inspirational leadership of the head teacher who works with a very committed team to realise their shared vision for a school where the light of Christ truly shines.
- A holistic approach that nurtures each individual in God's love, enabling every pupil to feel special, valued and so flourish to make significant progress in all areas of school life, including the academic.
- The pupils' secure understanding of the key concepts and beliefs that lie at the heart of the Christian faith, and are explicitly proclaimed throughout the life of the school.
- Christian values and relationships that are embedded and lived out in all areas of school life.
- Lively and relevant worship that inspires and is valued by the whole school community.
- Appropriate and varied opportunities for prayer and reflection that underpin school life.
- Extremely strong links with the local church that enrich the school's spiritual life.

Areas to improve

- Provide further opportunities to enrich religious education (RE) by ensuring that work challenges and enriches the religious understanding of all pupils.
- Offer pupils across the school an increasingly active role in planning and leading worship as part of their journey towards spiritual independence.

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

The school clearly declares that it is a place 'Where Light Shines', and explicitly annotated symbols of a lighthouse proclaim this throughout the building. The belief that Jesus, the Light of the World, is present enabling the school community to shine as lights in the world is celebrated throughout the life of the school. This vision is also clearly stated on the school's website and in documentation as the whole community work, worship and celebrate the Christian faith together. The vision of shining as lights is applied through explicit Christian values which are very well embedded in all areas of school life and underpin all that is done. These are clearly linked to Bible teaching and Jesus' teaching and are lived out and modelled by staff. As a result pupil behaviour is consistently excellent, and any conflict or bullying is dealt with in a proactive way. Extremely high attendance figures indicate that pupils want to come to school and are supported and happy while there. Every individual is valued at Cooper and Jordan, and there is a strong ethos of respect for every member of the community, regardless of any difference. Pupils have real pride in their school and speak with passion about how they enjoy being there, clearly linking its caring support to the school's Christian character. Forgiveness and an assurance of a fresh start are key to the strong relationships which ensure pupils see the school as a safe and secure place to be. Pupils are treated with love and trust and as a result care for each other and they do indeed shine as lights within the school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the pupils' journey are central to life in the school. Older children are offered many roles that support and enrich the lives of those who are younger or less confident. The curriculum is varied and rigorous yet pupils declare that learning is fun. Data shows that pupils are encouraged to work to achieve their full academic potential and there are many opportunities for them to develop skills in the arts and physical activities. Achievements are highly valued and parents are actively involved in their children's learning. Pupils are also taught to show compassion and generosity towards those less fortunate than themselves, with many opportunities for helping others, either by giving or through service such as singing to older folk. Pupils clearly link such opportunities to the school's values and the call to share God's love with others. Success is celebrated well, including recognition of those who live out the school's values. Pupils past and present take great pride in their school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Well planned and structured worship underpins school life and has a key role in developing and inspiring the pupils' personal spirituality. Whole school, key stage and class worship ensure that the content is relevant and age appropriate so that all children can participate fully. Reflection, praise, prayer and opportunities to engage with Bible teaching offer varied opportunities for pupils to participate and deepen their understanding. Children are confident in discussing the importance of worship and what it has taught them. The school's Christian values are constantly referred to within worship to reinforce their importance and root them in Biblical teaching. Pupils are very confident in talking about the meaning of the Christian faith and who Jesus is for Christians. They also have a very good understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity, explaining that God can be known as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three in one. Older pupils confidently explain that Jesus' death and resurrection offers forgiveness and hope. The joy of worship is also encouraged by the strong music traditions of the school, including the choir and instrumental groups. Pupils very much enjoy singing and clearly link the songs' words to the Christian message. The Lighthouse Song is a particular favourite that clearly proclaims the school's vision. Pupils have a good knowledge of a wide range of Bible stories, and value highly the individual Bibles given to them in Year 3 to use in their journey through the school and beyond.

The school strongly values the place of prayer and reflection. Prayer is not limited to formal worship times, but extends to classrooms and beyond. School life is underpinned by prayer, at church, in governor and staff meetings and with pupils. Opportunities for prayer are given throughout the school day and are highly valued by pupils who are very confident in sharing liturgical prayers and in contributing their own written and spontaneous prayer and praise. Pupils affirmed that 'we just know how to talk to God, any time, about anything'. The extremely popular interactive prayer room, often staffed by volunteers from the church, provides additional chances for pupils to reflect and explore different aspects of prayer. Pupils, prepared to queue for their opportunity to join in the prayer activities offered, are very confident in explaining how they can pray about anything, using praising, asking, thanking and saying sorry. They also give examples of how God answers and supports them through their daily lives, including at times of challenge, illness and bereavement. The very enthusiastic year 6 worship team take a role in planning and leading worship. They have begun to explore the opinions of pupils as to what next steps would enrich worship even further. Staff and governors also have some effective monitoring strategies, but the enthusiasm for worship found throughout the school suggests that offering increased opportunities for every pupil to be more actively involved in planning and leading at their own level would help them to move further in their journey towards spiritual independence.

The pupils' understanding of the Anglican tradition is good because of the strong partnership with the local church. They are confident in using and understanding the Lord's Prayer and have a good understanding of principle church festivals. Celebrations shared by church and school are very well attended by parents, who see church and school working together as one community, and talk of 'joined up care that goes above and beyond'. Several families have joined the church and come to faith as the result of school links. One much valued annual highlight is the leavers' service at which every pupil is invited to go forward for prayer, an example of the way in which the school values every one of God's children in its care.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious Education (RE) is well planned and taught across the school, and is an ongoing focus for development. The subject is led by a dedicated team who have taken steps to ensure they are trained in and aware of recent developments within RE. This approach means that the subject offers variety and challenge as it encourages pupils to develop their own skills of religious literacy. The spiritual and moral development of all pupils is enriched by teaching in the subject, meaning that pupils of all faiths or none are affirmed through work in RE. Pupils are very positive when discussing their learning in the subject and demonstrate a good knowledge of the Christian faith and some understanding of the other faiths that they have studied. They are encouraged to contribute and raise their own questions in an atmosphere of trust. RE lessons are used to enhance the distinctive Christian character of the school. The best teaching is characterised by an interactive approach where children are active learners and confident risk takers. Good planning ensures that there is adequate differentiation enabling all to participate at their own level. The new Understanding Christianity resource is already developing pupils' ability to debate the 'big questions' of life and this is already having a significant impact on their learning, as it increases opportunities to understand the concepts at the heart of Christianity, in particular the concept of the incarnation which is clearly linked to the Christmas story throughout the school. Pupils demonstrate a very good understanding of the Christian narrative and links between their RE themes and the 'Big RE Frieze', and their own personal Bibles. Monitoring and evaluation by the dedicated RE co-ordinator, in conjunction with link governors, ensures ongoing sustained improvement. Marking and assessment is being used to move pupils forward in achieving the learning objectives. The enhancing of long term plans and steps to ensure that all staff have a secure subject knowledge in order to teach the concepts at the heart of the faiths that are studied will further enrich teaching, as would the consistent use of owning language when discussing different faiths. At present pupils have only limited opportunities to engage directly with those of other beliefs and experiences living beyond their immediate community, such as those offered by visits to a variety of places of worship. Pupils have some understanding of Christianity as a worldwide faith, but the diversity of Christian worship could be further explored. Much progress has been made in learning in this subject in recent years, and the school is clearly committed to continuing the journey towards subject excellence.

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

The headteacher has a very clear vision, fully endorsed by the senior leaders, governing body and parents, for the school as a holistic church school which is a beacon of God's light within the local community. This vision is clearly proclaimed as the leadership team work together to strive for excellence within the school. There is no division between the school's distinctive Christian character and its drive for excellence in education. Governors are very active within the life of the school, and are involved in taking a role in strategic planning for its future. They monitor and evaluate the impact of the school's Christian effectiveness and development plans with confidence, providing challenge and rigour as they hold the school to account. They also take opportunities to explore the opinions of the pupils, using their findings to help move the school forward. Dedicated staff work hard to ensure that the school's vision becomes reality, and as a result the school has continued to move forward in all areas in recent years. The Christian foundations and values are clearly modelled and lived out by the whole team, led by those who confidently proclaim their own commitment to the Christian faith. The staff team are enabled to flourish and develop their role within this community where care and support are not limited to pupils. They are also given good opportunities to develop professionally. Parents, including those of other faith or none, recognise and celebrate the strong partnership between school and church. They speak extremely highly of the school's loving support for pupils and their families, which begins the moment their children enter the school. Partnerships beyond the local area, including links with other Walsall church schools and with the Diocese, help to enrich and develop this distinctive, caring and inclusive community. Cooper and Jordan is indeed a place that fulfils the Church of England's mission by demonstrating life that is deeply Christian, chosen by many Christian families who strive to obtain admission, but also serves the common good of all those within the local area who know that they and their children are valued, accepted, supported and loved.