

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Francis Church of England Primary School

Aiken Road,
Taw Hill,
Swindon,
SN25 1UH

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Bristol
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Swindon
Name of multi-academy trust	N/A
Date of inspection	29 March 2017
Date of last inspection	24 April 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 134151
Headteacher	Joy Farrell
Inspector's name and number	Daphne Spitzer No 37

School context

St Francis is a 2 form entry primary school with 417 children on roll and a 52 place nursery. It is situated on the northern edge of the large town of Swindon. The school has doubled in size since its foundation in 2004. The proportion of children with special education needs and /or physical disabilities (SEND) is below the national average as is the proportion eligible to receive the pupil premium grant. The majority of children are from White British heritage families with a growing minority who speak English as an additional language. The parish is currently awaiting the appointment of a new priest and is being served by two non-stipendiary clergy.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Francis VA as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The outstanding leadership of collective worship by children is integral to the life of the school and is highly effective in promoting spiritual development for the whole school community.
- The school's distinctive Christian values are having a significant impact on children's personal development and well-being.
- Strong partnerships between parents, the church and school communities are having a profound impact on raising the school's distinctive Christian character.

Areas to improve

- Update and refine assessment procedures in religious education (RE) so that they are in line with the new curriculum and current expectations.
- Involve parents in the church school self- evaluation process in order to value their contributions and further raise its impact.

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

St Francis Church of England Primary School is a warm, friendly and welcoming Christian community. The school promotes values, deeply rooted in Christian teaching, which are having a profound impact on children's academic achievement along with their personal and spiritual development. A secure and inclusive environment is created in which all children are cherished and grow in confidence and self-esteem from the knowledge that they are 'gifts from God, made with love in His image'. Relationships are outstanding at all levels and particularly between children because they are built on the Christian value of friendship. Spiritual development is outstanding. It is planned in the curriculum and focussed on asking the big questions in life as well as being linked to the church calendar such as Lent challenges. Bibles provided on an individual basis by the school, and taken home when children leave, are held in high regard. Children recognise that they symbolise the high value the school places on themselves as individuals in line with the school's vision. The school's Christian character contributes very effectively to children's developing spiritual life. This is reflected in the way children understand that each and everyone in the school community is represented in the large bowl of pebbles on the worship table. Children say that they feel a strong sense of belonging because 'we are all part of God's family'. This has a profound impact at a personal level for staff as well as children. This is partly due to the school's concern for others, such as the links with Uganda and sponsored education of two Philippine orphans. Their developing understanding is also as a result of the very effective way that spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is promoted. Children are developing a good understanding of Christianity as a global faith. Children demonstrate high levels of respect and acceptance of people of other faiths and a strong desire to treat all with equality.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is inspiring and transformational because of the exceptional way that distinctive Christian values and spirituality make a difference to the lives of the whole school community. This is due to the outstanding impact of spirituality which is reflected in times of prayer and the children's uplifting, heartfelt and reverent singing of hymns and songs. In turn, this creates a palpable sense of belonging to the St Francis church school community. Themes focus on the school's core values and are wholly engaging and interactive. All children participate well and lead worship regularly in a variety of ways, in classroom, house groups or whole school settings. Values are closely linked to the liturgical church year as seen by the current theme of repentance, forgiveness and Lent. The school's recent celebration of Ash Wednesday by the clergy and the school council has had a significant impact on children's spirituality. This is evident in the children's mature appreciation of the need to 'say sorry' and to forgive which promotes loving relationships throughout the school. It also promotes an excellent understanding of Anglican practice. Children are developing a good understanding of the centrality of the Trinity from their use of a variety of liturgies at the start of worship. Quotes from the Bible are used to good effect to promote spirituality as well as an understanding that it provides excellent guidance for life. Times of prayer are integral to the life of St Francis church school. Children make good use of classroom reflective areas, each customised to link with the class's focus on the school's values and prayer. In this way, a deep sense of personal spirituality is promoted reflected in the way children willingness to lead prayers spontaneously. The leadership of worship is exemplary. It has ensured that planning for worship is comprehensive, detailed and very supportive of all leaders. Children lead worship with ease demonstrating that they have ownership of this important aspect of the day, enhancing its status. Collective worship is monitored and evaluated rigorously and this is having a very positive impact on practice. For example, school leadership have recently decided to change the worship programme to provide longer time on each value in order to increase the children's depth of understanding of their Christian teaching.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards in RE for the majority of children are at least in line with national expectations and often higher. Teaching is at least good as verified by the subject leader's monitoring. Progress between key stages is also good. Teaching methods make good use of key questions and thinking skills. They are lively and interactive as noted in a lesson which made excellent use of role play enabling children to empathise with the feelings and views of Jesus's followers on the first Easter Sunday. In this way, children are learning to consider the views of others, to think beyond themselves. These valuable opportunities are contributing in a very effective way to promoting children's spiritual development. This is also seen in children's ability to generate questions and justify their opinions in a supportive setting. Children's understanding and knowledge of Christianity is good. The curriculum is engaging and interesting ensuring that children enjoy the subject and find it relevant to their needs. It is taught discretely, emphasising its importance as a core subject. Children demonstrate good levels of interest in other faiths. For instance, younger children learning about Islam audibly gasped with wonder at the beauty of the architecture of mosques. A recent visit to a local Sikh Gurdwara has enabled children to increase their understanding of the lives of people living in their community and beyond. Religious education is led very effectively. The subject leader has an excellent

overview of the subject and now leads a small team of staff who share good practice throughout the school. Monitoring and evaluating the subject is thorough, involving a number of strategies including lesson observations, book scrutiny and pupil conferencing. An experienced governor is linked to RE is supporting the school very effectively by offering her expertise. The RE subject leader, together with school leadership are taking a well-considered approach to the implementation of the new 'Understanding Christianity' resource. It is being implemented in a part of the school whilst new assessment procedures are being trialled. Further work has yet to be done to refine and improve new assessment procedures. The school is giving careful consideration to the adoption of the new resource 'Understanding Christianity'. Further work has yet to be done to improve and moderate assessment procedures in the light of current national changes to the school curriculum.

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

The school's distinctive Christian character is of the highest quality, is deeply embedded and has a significant impact on the whole school community. The school's strong Christian vision 'where God's gifts begin their journey to gain, attain and grow into lifelong learners' is the driving force at the heart of the school's success and ongoing improvement as a church school. It is also reflected in the very effective way issues for development from the last inspection have been addressed and the leadership's continuous drive to improve. Self-evaluation is led very effectively by the foundation governors and shared by the school leadership team and all governors ensuring that is central to their discussions. Foundation governors have enabled all governors to have an excellent understanding of the school's Christian values and these form the basis of all their interactions and decision-making. The staff team are strongly spiritual and supportive. They live out the school's Christian vision and their commitment is highly valued by parents and children. Parents are very supportive of the school and highly appreciate the school's inclusive nature, seen in the way it promotes other faiths and cultures. Parents feel very welcome and contribute very well to the school's life. However, they are not formally included in church school self-evaluation process because their views on this aspect of school life are not formally surveyed. Links with the diocese are good and members of staff regularly undertake training which benefits the school. The school's partnership with the church is deeply embedded and clergy from a number of other denominations regularly contribute to the worship programme. The school hall is used for monthly parish worship and the church weekly drop-in sessions welcomes all to the school community room. These are examples of the strong links between the church and school. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report, St Francis CEVA Primary School, Taw Hill, Swindon, SN25 1UH