

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

### St Oswald's Church of England Academy

<b>Address</b>	Silver Birch Grove, Finningley, Doncaster DN9 3EQ		
<b>Date of inspection</b>	14 March 2019	<b>Status of school</b>	Voluntary Aided Primary
<b>Diocese</b>	Sheffield	<b>URN</b>	138704

<b>Overall Judgement</b>	<b>How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Additional Judgements</b>	<b>The impact of collective worship</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
	<b>The effectiveness of religious education (RE)</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Good</b>

#### School context

St Oswald's Church of England Academy is an average size primary school with 231 pupils on roll, including those in nursery provision. The school has a low level of religious and cultural diversity with no pupils speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national averages. A period of turbulence followed the previous inspection, with significant changes in staffing. The school is now settled under the leadership of a new headteacher. It has recently joined the Diocese of Sheffield Academies Trust.

#### The school's Christian vision

Church – School – Community  
'Growing Our Values In Faith Together'

At St Oswald's we place the gospel values at the heart of our school: Love, Peace, Faithfulness, Joy, Goodness, Gentleness, Patience, Self-Control, Kindness. These values encompass our children's spiritual, moral, emotional, social, cultural, intellectual and physical needs. We aim to promote Christian values through the experiences we offer our children. These values help our children to serve our community and each other. We aim to preserve and develop our religious character in partnership with Holy Trinity and St Oswald's Church and the Diocese.

#### Key findings

- School leaders have established a Christian vision which is supported by all members of the school community and which impacts positively on relationships and attitudes at all levels.
- Children understand the relevance of the associated Christian values but the diverse range of values presented to them does not always enable them to articulate clearly how this impacts on them.
- Children and adults consider collective worship to be inclusive and inspiring. It strongly represents the family and community nature of the school. Children do not yet have a significant enough role in planning, leading and evaluating worship.
- RE has a high profile and is enjoyed by learners. It contributes positively to children's understanding of Christianity and other faiths, and is helping them to express and share their own thoughts and ideas.

## Areas for development

- Review the range of Christian values and themes associated with the school's vision to provide children with a clearer focus for articulating their spiritual understanding and development.
- Explore opportunities to develop and increase children's role in planning, leading and evaluating collective worship, so that they become leaders in promoting the school's Christian vision.

### **How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish? Inspection findings**

The success of St Oswald's Academy as a church school is based on the priority that school leaders, including governors, place on its Christian vision. Leaders speak with enthusiasm and understanding regarding the 'church, school, community' vision which aims to embed values centred on the fruits of the Spirit. Through the theological rationale, which includes relevant biblical references, and the faith development plan, school and church leaders demonstrate that they recognise a clear biblical underpinning for this vision. Children are familiar with the vision and understand that it has implications for their attitudes. They say that 'we think of our school as a family', that the fruits of the Spirit are 'the values of our school' and that 'our ultimate aim is to be like this'. The impact of the vision and values is seen in children's admirable behaviour and in excellent relationships shown by both children and adults. School leaders also promote a linked set of values, such as forgiveness and trust, which are woven thematically into collective worship and the wider curriculum. In some ways, children associate with these themes more readily than with the overarching vision and values, and to some extent this limits their ability to articulate clearly how the vision influences their daily lives. However, they understand that the themes are based on the Bible and relate to their behaviour. For instance, they express their understanding of forgiveness through insight into the story of Zacchaeus, stating that 'everyone had to forgive him but Jesus forgave him first'. They also explain how they resolve differences of opinion and agree that it is acceptable to hold different views.

The faith development plan is used as a working document for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school with regard to its vision. Governors are instrumental in driving this process in collaboration with the headteacher, and also report to the church council. A parent partnership committee has been involved in monitoring the plan to 'ensure it is a living and breathing' aspect of the school. The vicar also meets the pupil worship council and, as a result, children are enthused about making a difference to their school and community. School leaders and governors take their vision seriously in developing strong links with the local church. Church members support a range of activities including Open the Book. Children visit the church for major festivals, for learning and sometimes for Sunday all-age services. This illustrates how the faith development plan is bringing together the school, church and community.

Collective worship provides a focal point for the school community, including parents who comment positively about the weekly celebration of children's achievements. It is regularly led by the vicar. Children are enthusiastic in their participation, for instance in volunteering to act out the story of the prodigal son. They respond sensitively to times of prayer and reflection and enjoy songs that have a clear Christian message. The pupil worship council takes a lead in reading prayers that reflect the theme. Worship is inclusive and offers the opportunity for adults and children alike to be actively engaged. Prayer extends into the school day, for instance at the end of the day where children suggest topics that are on their mind. Children say that they make use of the quiet prayer spaces around the school. The worship council monitors the use of classroom reflection areas, reporting to the headteacher. They say that reflection areas are linked to the values and that they 'help us to pray'. They have some responsibility for planning and delivering worship, especially for services in the church relating to key festivals. Despite their mature attitudes, children are not typically given a more prominent role in planning and leading worship, nor are they offered opportunities to evaluate worship in ways that are meaningful to them. This restricts their ability to influence worship formats or to take a greater role in its delivery. Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship is largely informal through observation, conversations with children and gathering of parent comments. As yet there is limited formal evaluation that would indicate aspects to develop.

School leaders, including governors, monitor the academic progress and spiritual development of learners, including through lesson observation. Children on the whole make good progress in relation to age-related expectations, including those who are more vulnerable. Leaders provide additional support and resourcing where necessary, for

instance in some aspects of phonics and writing, and for particular cohorts where priorities have been identified. Measures put in place include additional staffing and investment in intervention programmes. As a result, children at risk of underachievement are making accelerated progress. Children show a willingness to debate moral and spiritual matters, for example when acting out scenarios in which people have difficult decisions to make. They are growing in their awareness of those who are different to themselves. For instance, they remember the visit of a Moslem parent to talk about her faith. They speak of their desire to help disadvantaged children and homeless people, and act on this through their practical support for charities such as NSPCC, their engagement with the Doncaster Foodbank and their participation in the Archbishop of York Youth Trust activities. They are proactive in supporting children in Sierra Leone and Ethiopia and are keen to show the letters that have been sent and received. These initiatives are widening children's perspectives and helping them to look beyond themselves and their immediate community.

The RE subject leader ensures that learning embodies the school's vision and has an impact on children. RE is taught by class teachers, which helps to embed the vision and values through the curriculum. The Understanding Christianity units have brought a structured approach to learning. For example, the unit on salvation has given children a thorough understanding of the events and significance of the Easter story. They can explain that 'Jesus died because he wanted us to be alive' and 'to take all our bad things away'. They engage in deeper issues such as how and why Jesus took the blame for others. Children have access to their own Bibles which helps them to engage with and interpret passages. Teachers ensure that children study faiths other than Christianity. The well-structured plan gives children insight into a range of beliefs, helping them to respect diversity. This has been enhanced by the introduction of the Discovery RE programme. The subject leader maintains a rigorous monitoring cycle, which includes lesson observations, work scrutiny and pupil interviews. Monitoring indicates that children particularly enjoy discussion and debate. The class RE books, which include records of children's comments during lessons, successfully capture this aspect of children's learning. In this regard, the area for development from the previous inspection has been addressed.



**The effectiveness of RE is good**

Standards of learning in RE are comparable to other core subjects. The progress of individual children is tracked effectively and regularly through a whole-school assessment programme based on 'I can' statements, which helps teachers to judge the impact of units of work. Evidence from these assessments suggests that most learners are making good progress against unit objectives. Children respond positively to RE lessons and demonstrate confidence in their subject knowledge and a willingness to engage with challenging issues. Through reports and impact statements from the subject leader, school leaders and governors are able to track progress towards objectives in the faith development plan. In particular, they have noted that children's regular engagement with scripture has significantly improved, with learning being more focused and reflective. The inspection findings support this view.

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