



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Paul's Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School

Byatts Grove,
Longton,
Stoke on Trent
ST3 2RH

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Lichfield

Local authority: Stoke-on-Trent

Dates of inspection: 24 September 2015

Date of last inspection: 28 September 2010

School's unique reference number: 124227

Headteacher: Sandra Hearson

Inspector's name and number: Rosemary Woodward 583

School context

St Paul's Primary School houses 298 statutory age and 40 nursery pupils in bright modern buildings set within a less advantaged area of Stoke-on-Trent. Its children come from a very diverse range of ethnic groups with significant numbers drawn from Eastern Europe and the Indian sub-continent. Deprivation levels and pupil premium are well above national average, as are the numbers for whom English is an additional language. Although pupil mobility is high the staff team are stable and the head has been in post for ten years. St Paul's parish church stands close to the school.

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

- Christian care and nurture that makes every child in the school feel special, valued and included, and extends to embrace their families.
- The strong and dedicated Christian leadership of the headteacher, supported by staff and governors, working together very effectively to realise their vision and embed Christian values and relationships in all areas of school life.
- The central and all-encompassing role given to prayer by the school community.
- Lively and relevant worship that inspires and is valued by all who share it.
- Very strong links with the local church that powerfully enrich the school's spiritual life, and extend to encompass and benefit the local community.

- Very strong and loving inclusion strategies that embrace those of other cultures and faiths.

Areas to improve

- Enrich the very good knowledge of Christian values and concepts by linking them more closely with the narrative and example of Jesus' life and teaching, and stories of people of faith.
- Generate opportunities across the curriculum to provide experiences and develop understanding of the diverse nature of the Christian faith.

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

St Paul's is an extremely happy and caring community in which pupils feel valued and secure and are empowered to succeed. The school's strap line of 'A welcoming Christian place of learning where everyone feels valued' is strongly underpinned by the Christian values of peace, faith, hope and love in all aspects of school life. Pupils talk confidently about the relevance of these values to their own lives and their relationships with others. The Christian values are modelled very well by staff who are passionate in their role of nurturing and serving their pupils, while offering a creative and challenging curriculum. This loving care, alongside very high expectations, enables pupils to flourish and strive to achieve their full academic potential, despite the fact that many enter the school at low starting points. The school is very effective at meeting the needs of all the pupils, ensuring that no matter what their background or ability they are encouraged to succeed within a safe and secure environment. Data confirms that pupils do indeed achieve consistently well. Pupils explain that *'Whoever you are, you are accepted here'*. This loving support ensures that behaviour of pupils is of the highest standard. The school has very effective strategies for personal, spiritual and emotional development, recognising and meeting specific needs, such as through the 'unique and valued club' that raises self-worth and self-belief. Pupils' opinions are sought and discussed before being acted upon positively by staff, enabling pupils to grow as independent spiritual beings. Children are taught to develop as responsible citizens, including taking opportunities for generosity and service. Children explain that *'we don't just think about ourselves here. We have a chance to give and share with others too'*. Parents value the links between school, church and the local community highly, and feel that they belong in a community which is a *'home from home'* for their children. They also describe the positive difference that the school's Christian character makes to their children, including those from other faith traditions, who also express gratitude to this special community. Well planned religious education (RE) lessons offer good opportunities for the deeper study of Christianity and an exploration of other faiths, including those represented within the school community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Well planned and relevant worship is central to school life at St Paul's and has a key role in developing the pupils' personal spirituality. Whole school and class worship ensure that the content is relevant and age appropriate so that children can participate fully. Many enjoy opportunities to plan and lead worship and prayer. Children are confident in discussing the importance of worship and discuss what it has taught them. The school's Christian values are constantly referred to within worship times, to reinforce their importance and root them within biblical teaching. However, children sometimes find it difficult to make direct links between the values and stories of Jesus' earthly life and teaching. Pupils have a good understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity, explaining that God can be known as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Older pupils confidently explain that Jesus' death and resurrection offers salvation and hope. All pupils very much enjoy singing and praise and clearly link the songs' content to the Christian message. This joy is encouraged by a singing club which welcomes all to join in further praise at lunchtime. The school strongly values the place of prayer and reflection. Prayer underpins the daily life of the school, with regular and much appreciated opportunities for prayer involving not only children, but also staff, governors and parents. Many celebrate stories of answered prayer.

Effective strategies evaluate the impact of worship in the school. Pupils' opinions are regularly sought by staff and governors and then acted upon. The pupils' understanding of the Anglican tradition is good because of the strong partnership with the local church. This is particularly evident through the shared Agape feasts which are highly valued by older pupils. Pupils speak with great understanding and respect of this opportunity to worship, as well as sharing the excitement of Messy church, Christian club and special celebrations. They have a very good understanding of the principle Christian festivals, and are confident in using the Lord's Prayer. The nature of the local community, however, means that, as yet, they have been offered few opportunities to explore the diversity of Christian worship in Great Britain and worldwide.

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

The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school as a community reaching out with Christ's love to all and this is fully endorsed by the whole staff team and governing body. Dedicated staff work hard to ensure that the vision becomes reality. The school's Christian values, strong church links and Christian foundations are clearly proclaimed. Staff are involved in leading worship and embedding the Christian values across the whole curriculum, with excellent guidance from the senior management team. Governors are very active within the life of the school, and are involved in the school's self-evaluation process and taking a role in strategic planning for its future. They also listen to the views of pupils, and so can discuss the impact of the school's Christian effectiveness with confidence. Staff are supported very effectively and given good opportunities to develop professionally. The church works extremely closely with the school. The vicar and many other church members actively participate in school life, and pastoral care for staff and families is given high priority. Pupils see the vicar as a trusted friend. Parents recognise the strong partnership between school, church and parents. They speak extremely highly of the care and support given by St Paul's school and church communities; not only to the pupils, but to the whole family. They affirm that every pupil is seen not just as a child but as a unique individual. Many parents attend and highly value school worship events, particularly the oversubscribed Messy Church sessions. Ties with the Diocese are good and staff and governors benefit from their training and resources.

SIAMS report September 2015 St Paul's CE Primary, Longton ST3 2RH