

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

### St Nicholas Church of England Academy

Chillington Drive, Belvide Gardens, Codsall, Wolverhampton WV8 1AN

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Lichfield</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	October 2016
Name of multi-academy trust	Codsall MAT
Date of inspection	27 March 2018
Date of last inspection	February 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy 142988
Headteacher	Jodie Parker
Inspector's name and number	Lizzie McWhirter 244

#### School context

Currently there are 355 pupils on roll from nursery to Year 4 who are mainly from a White British background. There are also 8 pupils who are Rising Threes in the Early Years Foundation Stage [EYFS]. The church is currently in an interregnum as the vicar and his wife, who was the RE subject leader, have relocated. This First School became an Academy in October 2016. The headteacher has been in post since April 2014.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Nicholas as a Church of England school are outstanding

- This is a welcoming Christian family community which serves its pupils and their families exceptionally well.
- Effective Christian leadership and dedication and commitment at all levels ensures the school's Christian vision and values permeate all school life and practice and underpin the strategic direction of this school as a church school.
- The strong partnership between St Nicholas Church and the school enables the worshipping life of this community to nurture spiritual and personal development.
- The excellent religious literacy of these young pupils makes a rich contribution to their own spiritual journeys.

#### Areas to improve

- Deepen pupil leadership roles in collective worship to enrich their spiritual and personal development.
- Enable the whole school community to enhance their experience of a shared understanding of spirituality to enrich their own spiritual journeys.
- Extend the monitoring of religious education [RE] by governors to support the RE subject leader in

her role and ensure that this key aspect of Christian distinctiveness is on a par with English and mathematics.

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

The exemplary Christian ethos makes a difference to every aspect of school life at St Nicholas. For example, the school's core Christian values of trust, care respect, thankfulness and challenge [perseverance] within a nurturing community enable a strong sense of belonging and family. Relationships are excellent, with pupils and staff showing great care and concern for one another. The behaviour policy is underpinned by the Christian values of forgiveness and reconciliation. Attendance is good and exclusions are rare. This contributes towards pupils making expected progress, with many pupils achieving excellent academic achievement in RE. In addition, pupils with special needs and/or disabilities in this dyslexia friendly school and those from minority ethnic backgrounds do well because this is an inclusive school. Much work has been achieved working on raising the aspirations of children and families, with all pupils, including those who may be classified as disadvantaged. Consequently, excellent partnerships exist between parents, pupils and school and children. Parents immensely value the work the school is doing in raising achievement for all. A good example is the use of many different approaches, such as 'writing warriors' as writing has been an area to develop. After school clubs, providing additional support, with a graduation upon completion, have all served to help targeted group of pupils who now successfully want to write and do so with greater skill. The school also attributes this success to the element of challenge they endorse so all groups of pupils across all groups can achieve well in their progress and attainment. For example, Year 2 pupils are well on track and showing good resilience to learning. All this takes place within the context of a school where Christian values, such as perseverance, are at the forefront of school life. Such values are also demonstrated at home, and are daily words for these young pupils, including the four and five year olds. Sport has a high profile at St Nicholas, with 'fitness frenzy' and other activities contributing to a real sense of team and the instilling of pride and belonging for pupils. Whilst children are members of the St Nicholas community, they take part in actively supporting schools in South Africa and The Gambia. An exemplary example is of two pupils who, with their parents, are 'real live missionaries'. This is because they have been privileged to visit a community in Gambia and see at first-hand what it is like to live and go to school in another continent. These young pupils have been able to share such experiences with their friends back at St Nicholas. In addition, there is an excellent relationship with the diocese. Consequently, the headteacher has been able to share in the diocesan links with Kenya by visiting with the diocesan RE adviser. Pupils are both excited and challenged by RE. Visits to other places of worship include a local gurdwara for Year 4 pupils] and a mandir for Year 3 pupils as well as numerous visits to their own St Nicholas Church. Whilst these take place as a regular part of the RE curriculum, pupils still say they would like more visitors to come into school to share their stories and beliefs with them. For such young pupils, their religious literacy and understanding is very good, making a rich contribution to their spiritual and personal development. For example, they can tell the Christian story of salvation in great detail, with reference to the Passover meal explaining in their own words that, 'Jesus took off his shoes and got a towel on and washed the disciples' feet'. They go on to talk about how, 'Jesus lay in the tomb on Holy Saturday and then some ladies came, an angel appeared and told them not to be worried'. One pupil said, 'I'm a Sikh and we learn about Jesus and the things he did'. For example, 'miracles, like healing people with leprosy'. These young pupils are very secure in their knowledge and understanding of key Christian beliefs, such as the colours of the church year. They also know the correct vocabulary, such as the 'triduum', given to the three days over Easter. However, they are less secure in their knowledge about festivals, such as Ascension-tide and Pentecost.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Collective worship is an important part of school life at St Nicholas, with pupils encouraged to have a living faith. This is because of the close partnership with St Nicholas Church. The pattern of worship also includes celebrating festivals through the church year, such as Harvest, Remembrance, Lent, Easter, Ascension-tide,

Pentecost and St Nicholas Day. Ash Wednesday and communion services in church are also part of the pattern of worship experienced by older pupils. These young pupils reflect and think quite deeply, writing their own prayers and using them in worship. They are familiar with the Bible and the teachings of Jesus, relating them to their own actions in terms of how they treat each other. The school prayer, based on 2 Peter 3 v 18 and The Lord's Prayer are used regularly in worship and known by all the children. They also know and use Anglican responses in worship. Work on 'I wonder' in lessons as well as the use of prayer stations in class and the outdoor peace garden 'in the shape of a cross' all help nurture pupils' own spiritual journeys. They also post prayers in boxes and use their reflection journals to talk about and record what they have learned. As a result, some pupils testify that, 'prayer helps in life'. Pupils and governors evaluate worship. For example, pupil evaluation last year showed some pupils did not like songs so much so now there are a variety of traditional and new songs. The raising achievement committee also evaluates worship and feedbacks to other governors. For example, adults were impressed at the depth of understanding by the pupils of The Last Supper. The school attributes this to 'Easter experience' held in St Nicholas Church. This was followed up in classrooms, such as Year 4's 'Lent line' and role play areas in the Early Years Foundation Stage for re-enacting the events of Holy Week, such as Palm Sunday and The Last Supper. For example, 'Jesus' was using the words of institution used at The Last Supper and encouraging 'his disciples' to 'all share one cup and pass it round'. Church members and governors also asked pupils how they thought Jesus felt on the cross after 'Experience Easter' as part of their evaluative role. Whilst areas for development include responding to pupil feedback on worship and developing their roles, pupils draw on real life experiences. It is however, mainly Year 4 pupils who completely plan and lead worship at times in the church year, such as Epiphany. Pupils say, 'everybody gets to lead and plan'. Pupils are growing in their knowledge and understanding of the Christian belief of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in an age appropriate way. Leaders continually refer to God as an omnipotent, all powerful father figure. Governors monitor pupils' understanding of The Trinity as part of their monitoring in RE, Pupils explain, 'the holy words go up on the screen' in worship. They go on to say, 'Trinity keeps going on and on and on. The Holy Spirit is still on the earth right now, with us from God when Jesus died. You can worship God everywhere.'

Pupils are inspired to action in the service of others through themes in worship. For example, they readily articulate values celebrated in worship, such as justice, as 'being fair'. They cite the story when, 'Jesus heals a blind man, we need to care about people'. They also 'raise money to give to other countries and people around world in different schools who do not have as much as we have'. They go on to say, 'We learn about global Christianity as Christians are not just in the UK, they're everywhere and God is all around'. Following worship in Holy Week which centred on trust and Jesus serving his disciples, pupils were encouraged to take 'a sheet with two pairs of feet and we are going to write how to serve somebody over the Easter holiday'. This is because they were inspired to act as a result of worship that day, when the headteacher knelt and washed a child's hands. Pupils and adults, including parents value worship. Some pupils say the most important part of worship is singing the hymns like 'We have a King' as it tells us Jesus is important and it leads us through the Easter story'.

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

Christian values underpin all school policy and practice, with wellbeing for all adults and pupils a priority for St Nicholas' leaders and governors. This means that staff at St Nicholas are fully supported by governors and professional development is a strength of the school. Links with the diocese are very supportive, with the school benefitting from diocesan training and support for leaders and for governance. Whilst links with other local church schools are positive, St Nicholas is the only church school within a mixed multi academy trust. The close partnership with St Nicholas Church and the local community are strong and mutually beneficial.

Areas for development have been addressed from the previous inspection, and self-evaluation is accurate. Managing links with the parish community during the interregnum is a key current priority. Pupils welcome being involved in the appointment of their new incumbent and relish writing questions to be considered. As one might expect in a church school, RE has a very high status. The resource, 'Understanding Christianity' has been used for a year and the impact of this training is already evident. For example, pupils

and adults are 'thinking about the big questions and digging a lot deeper'. RE and collective worship both enjoy a high profile at St Nicholas and both meet statutory requirements. Both have their own annual action plans which are integral to the annual Christian distinctiveness plan. There is the firm belief that these two key aspects of Christian distinctiveness help develop children as whole beings, not just in their academic development. This is because pupils are encouraged to believe in themselves. As a result, they flourish within the family environment. Parents confirm this as their children echo, 'I'm a human being'. One parent went on to say, their child was in a local supermarket and was 'practising my praying' and also saying grace at home. Families certainly value the 'spiritual curriculum' here. Parents also praise the 'brilliant headteacher who has made a big difference and understands in a supportive way'. Dedicated and hardworking staff affirm they enjoy belonging to this strong team within a caring Christian community. They are in no doubt that, 'the Christian values which run through the school have a positive impact on behaviour, values and the ethos of the school which makes St Nicholas a special place to be'.

SIAMS report March 2018 St Nicholas CE Academy, Codsall , Wolverhampton WV8 1AN