



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

Weavers Lane
Off Lichfield Road, Stone.
ST15 8QB

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Lichfield

Local authority: Staffordshire
Dates of inspection: 8 May 2015
Date of last inspection: 25 March 2010
School's unique reference number: 124275
Headteacher: Susan Campbell-Kelly
Inspector's name and number: Marianne Phillips 586

School context

This is a larger than average school set in the town of Stone within the parish of St. Michael's and St. Wulfad's. There are 350 pupils on roll. Although most pupils are from a White British background the school's inclusive practices ensure that all pupils and families feel special and part of the school family. There are strong links with the church and the Rector and the Foundation governors are regular visitors to school. The school is currently without a substantive head and is being led by the Deputy Head, in the role as Acting Head.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Michael's First School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The strong emphasis upon the teaching of key Christian values being 'lived out' in the daily lives of the members of the school.
- The Christian witness of the acting headteacher and other school leaders and staff that encourage pupils to grow in their Christian faith and belief that "through God they love, laugh and learn."
- The very strong links with the church and the relationships that exist that offer mutual support to the school and their families.
- The way the school proclaims its Christian status to the community at large through signage, symbols and the work it does within the community.

Areas to improve

- Create a 'Spiritual Council' to encourage pupils to lead in acts of worship and to support their spiritual development and the distinctiveness of this Church school.

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

This outstanding church school lives out the five key Christian values of 'Friendship, Koinonia, Thankfulness, Service and Forgiveness in every aspect of daily life and interaction. Their mission statement, 'Through God we love, laugh and learn' is displayed everywhere and is the benchmark to ensure all pupils are nurtured to succeed. As a result all the pupils, despite their

diverse needs, abilities and backgrounds flourish. As all children questioned agreed, "You are helped to learn and to understand about Jesus and to follow His path...we have fun, make friends and work hard... the teachers are kind and the school is special because we all believe in God." The emphasis upon Christian teaching through the values and the effective teaching of Religious Education (RE) has great impact upon pupils' attitudes to each other and their learning. As one early years child explained, "if my brother upsets me I think of how Jesus forgives us and I say that's alright I forgive you and then he says sorry to me." This focus upon Jesus as a role model is guiding the pupils daily and as a result the behaviour is excellent in classrooms and around school. The Governors and parents acknowledge how the school's Christian teaching is helping pupils' to develop academically and socially as citizens of the future. Pupils are encouraged to be reflective and prayerful in so many ways; for example, through worship, the Forest Schools club, the Adventurers club and pupils' individual responses displayed on their classroom reflection areas. In addition, through RE lessons and challenges set and the creative links teachers develop in planning their themes that call for individual reflective response pupils are growing spiritually as well as academically. This is strongly illustrated by the 'damp' group of Forest School pupils and their teachers observed during the inspection, sitting in a circle praying spontaneously, thanking God for the rain and their school. Pupils enjoy their school and feel safe and protected. As one pupil shared, "I live many miles away from school but the journey is worth it because this school is special." This view is shared by many parents, who choose the school for its links with the church and its Christian teaching. The School Council is one example of many where pupils are encouraged to be pro-active and responsible. They feel their role is very important because of, "the individual contribution we make and the way we work as a team for the school." They know the views of the pupils of the school and are tasked with gathering their views about worship, fundraising, health and safety and behaviour and feel that makes a difference. The vast majority of pupils join the school with attainment largely in line with age related expectations. The school's tracking data and monitoring ensures that pupils needing support are targeted effectively. As a result, all make at least good progress. Mathematics and writing have been two areas the school has focused upon since their last Ofsted inspection and the work done is having a positive impact upon the achievement of pupils in these subjects, helping to accelerate their rate of progress. Attainment of pupils at the end of Year 2 is in line with or exceeds national averages. Pupils in Year 4 are on track to achieve expected or better than expected outcomes by the time they leave the school. The school achieved the Silver standard for RE and is in receipt of other National Awards, acknowledging their success in supporting pupils to achieve. There are many vibrant displays, both inside and outside the school building, such as the Garden of Gethsemane, the prayer flags, the large face of Jesus created from the individual photographs of the pupils of the school, crosses and reflection areas that evidence the Christian foundation. The fund raising, links with Kenya and the work of the choir within the community celebrate the school's Christian outreach. In all these ways the school is committed daily to making a difference in the lives of the pupils and their families through its Christian teaching and guidance.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The outstanding act of worship observed provided many 'wow' moments to experience. The pupils collectively welcomed the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as the headteacher lit the candles representing the Trinity. The beautiful singing and signing, in which all pupils participated, was very spiritual and created an atmosphere that was special, encouraging individual response. The teacher signing I:I with a child with special needs the school song and the Lord's Prayer was one evocative response. Discussions with pupils and parents and documented evidence confirm that worship is central to the life of the school and through it pupils are being offered a wealth of opportunities to grow spiritually daily and to learn about Anglican traditions. The bible focus of 'Jesus healing the group of lepers' was ably acted out by pupils from the school as the story was told. All pupils were keen to share and contribute and clearly understood and applied the story's message of the need to be 'thankful.' The confidence and ability of the pupils

and leader generated a sense of fun and purpose that was enjoyed by all and behaviour was excellent throughout. During daily worship pupils and staff are encouraged to reflect and pray and learn about the Christian values underpinning the school. Worship, through the inclusive practices embedded, provides opportunity to nurture faith and belief in all pupils. Governors informally monitor the quality of worship regularly and plans are in place to further extend the formal monitoring they undertake. The quiet times of reflection were used effectively to give time for individual response to the experiences offered. Pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 also have weekly opportunities to walk to St Michael's and St Wulfad's church to participate in the Holy Communion Service. The pupils really enjoy this and explain how they are welcomed by the congregation and blessed through the service. The links with Pereston Ack Primary School in Kenya, the global focus through RE themes, 'Messy Church' and 'Open Door' are a few examples of the enrichment opportunities that the school is providing, in its efforts to expand the multi-cultural knowledge and spiritual understanding of its pupils. The RE co-ordinator is passionate about providing opportunities to further support the spiritual growth of the pupils and the development of a 'Spiritual Committee' is another way they are considering to further this work. As part of their extensive charity fund raising the school plans to raise money to buy up to 5 cows to support the work of Christian Aid week in Africa. Parents enjoy attending church services and worship in school. When they do attend their evaluations of the worship are collected and acted upon for future services. These examples confirm how tirelessly the school is successfully promoting the spiritual development of the children.

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

The school has experienced a difficult time of change in leadership over the past eighteen months. Currently the deputy headteacher has taken the mantle of acting headteacher and has worked closely with the governors, staff and parents to sustain the Christian distinctiveness of the school and the high standards to which it aspires. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed for September 2015 and plans are in place to ensure the transition is smooth and successful. The acting headteacher is an outstanding Christian leader who is held in high esteem by parents and the community, who feel she has been committed to support them and to drive the Christian vision of the school, whilst in the role. She has also maintained the focus upon achieving high standards through the support and nurture of the pupils of all abilities and backgrounds and their families. Christian values are lived out daily and Jesus is the role model for all. Systems are in place to monitor outcomes and target intervention to ensure needs of pupils are addressed. The school is described as a welcoming place by stakeholders, who are sure their views are respected and acted upon. The acting headteacher promotes an 'open-door' approach which encourages parents to come in and share any concerns they may have. The inclusive practices celebrate the uniqueness of each member of the school family and strong relationships underpin and create a harmonious ethos where everyone gets on well together. The mission statement, rich curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities offered ensures that pupils 'through God love, laugh and learn'. All pupils questioned want to come to school and feel it is, "action packed with experiences to help us learn." As a result attendance is good and leaders use pupil premium funding effectively to support need. The school has strong links with the Diocese and governors have had the opportunity to train and network. The RE co-ordinator has led training for staff on a regular basis. The links between the church and school have remained strong and in the absence of a substantive headteacher the distinctiveness of this church school has been sustained through the commitment of all members of the school family.

SIAMS report May 2015 St Michael's VC First School, Stone ST15 8QB

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