

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Stamford St Gilbert's Church of England Primary School

Foundry Road
Stamford
Lincs
PE9 2PP

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Lincoln
Date of academy conversion	1 January 2013
Date of inspection	27 January 2017
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 139178
Headteacher	Frances Dicker
Inspector's name and number	Yvonne Shaw 245

School context

Stamford St Gilbert's Church of England Primary School has become a standalone Academy since the previous inspection. It is larger than average-sized primary school with 308 children on roll. The proportion of children eligible for pupil premium funding, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average. Similarly the proportion from ethnic minority backgrounds and those for whom English is an additional language is also below average. The proportion who join or leave the school throughout Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is low. A new headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Stamford St Gilbert's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Deeply embedded Christian values, which reflect Christ's command that we love one another, permeate the life of the school. They provide a key focus within collective worship, enabling children to reflect on their growing relationship with God.
- Inspired by the role model of the headteacher, leaders ensure that the school's mission statement to 'inspire a love of learning' empowers, sustains and nourishes the school community on a daily basis.
- Understanding and mutual respect lead to excellent relationships between the school, its parents and the wider community.
- Great value is placed on collective worship which takes place at the start of each day thus 'placing God directly in our lives'.
- Well planned religious education (RE), is taught in a way which inspires children to consider deeper meaning to their questions of meaning and purpose, and makes a significant impact on the school's Christian character.

Areas to improve

- Develop increased depth and rigour to the evaluation of the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a Church of England school by establishing more formal systems for all leaders, particularly governors and children, to monitor and evaluate the Christian character, RE and collective worship so that evaluation better informs future improvement planning.

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

Stamford St Gilbert's core Christian values of trust, friendship, forgiveness, compassion, service and thankfulness are deeply embedded and have a profound impact on the daily life of the school. Staff, governors, parents and children talk very enthusiastically about them. Furthermore, children not only speak about the values openly but explain how they impact on their personal lives and faith journeys saying 'we have a connection with God'. They freely link the values to the teachings of Jesus Christ, to stories they hear within collective worship and other aspects of the curriculum. Members of staff model these values and there is a strong sense that the school is a family. Children are affirmed in the belief that they are 'children of God'. Consequently, children believe in themselves and respect each other. The school's mission statement 'To inspire a love of learning' is visible throughout the school in various high quality displays, immersing children in the wonder of God. This sets an outstanding context within which children can develop a relationship with God and contributes fully to their strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The school's Christian values are further reflected in exemplary behaviour shown by children throughout the day. This applies to all groups of children. They are kind to each other, thoughtful and respectful and consequently there have been no exclusions in the past three years. There is an extremely positive climate for learning in classrooms. Children know and expect that they will learn together and support each other in their learning. The leadership team are determinedly building on this success and there are well-planned initiatives in place to further enhance learning. There is a strong relationship with the local parish church and in other parishes close to the school.

Families hold St Gilbert's in high regard because of its Christian foundation. Several stated that this is the main reason they chose this school for their child. They recognise that the bedrock of core Christian values has a significant impact on the achievements, behaviour and attitudes of their children. Furthermore, they feel that their children are 'taught in a respectful way and feel safe to make mistakes' as a consequence of staff living the school's values. Children enjoy coming to school and attendance is good. Over time, children achieve well from their varying starting points. The overwhelming majority of children make good progress and attain standards at least in line with, and often above, national expectations in statutory assessments. Standards are improving and this was confirmed by the recent Ofsted report in July 2016.

The school enables children to develop a strong sense of justice through their understanding of links between Christian and British values. They support many charities and easily connect this to the teachings of Jesus to show service, kindness and care to others. They say that 'in this school we are all kind and loving', that 'saying sorry and forgiving' is the way to resolve conflicts knowing that this is what Jesus taught. Again, this has a significant impact on children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children are confident that bullying, including of a racist or homophobic nature is extremely rare. School records confirm this.

Well planned and systematically taught RE has a very significant impact on all aspects of children's development, particularly their spiritual understanding and respect for others, including those of different views. Children clearly enjoy RE and this is reflected in the quality of their learning which is in line with core subjects. They are excited when learning about different faiths with visits to a range of places of worship. They are deepening their understanding that Christianity is a faith that is practised across different cultures. RE lessons are lively and challenging and children achieve the same high standards as those in other subjects. Children are stretched through challenging questions such as 'what is unconditional love?' and 'what would Jesus do?' which enable them to develop deeper thinking skills.

With highly effective leadership support, staff have a very clear understanding of spirituality. They ensure that children access a wide and varied curriculum enabling all to experience creative opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding of the world. For example, in Foundation Stage, the outdoor area has been set up to reflect the current RE teaching of Creation and Noah's Ark. Deeply enriching opportunities such as these are also seen across year groups and children's progression in spiritual development can clearly be seen. By the end of their primary school life they tackle 'big questions' such as 'do we have to forgive?', 'must you be sorry to be forgiven by others?' with confidence and competence.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is central to the life of St Gilbert's and is held at the start of each day. This, children say, is 'placing God directly in our lives' illustrating the significant impact collective worship has on their spiritual development. They value and feel inspired by worship, talking enthusiastically about the way in which it influences the attitudes, relationships and character of the school. Children of all ages enjoy the range of worship leaders in a variety of settings. Children enjoy worshipping in church because 'there I have a connection with God.' They participate very

willingly through music, song and prayer.

Prayer is a very normal part of everyday experience in school. Children understand that prayer provides opportunities for them to talk to God. Children have an age appropriate understanding of The Trinity because this has been taught and is embedded through formal prayer such as the benediction. The many areas for reflection developed in recent times have enabled children to develop more fully their spiritual relationship with God and deepen their understanding of deep questions. It also supports them in writing their own personal prayers and reflections in response to everyday events. The strong emphasis on the value of prayer and reflection enables children to understand this as important in their own lives. They readily write deeply thoughtful prayers in their class reflection books which are prominent in each classroom. Formal prayers and those of the children are said at various times of the day including lunchtime and the close of the day.

Worship is very well planned with themes directly linked to the school's Christian values and appropriate Bible passages. Themes are further reflected in the classroom areas. Bible stories have a central place in worship (and in RE) and are reinforced through the high quality displays around the school. Children readily recall these stories and also the messages that they teach. Children experience a range of worship leaders including the local clergy.

The worship co-ordinator leads this area very well and is fully supported in this by the head teacher and the former leader of this aspect. Together they ensure that through worship children experience the main festivals of the Christian year as well as the key traditions and teachings of the Anglican church and core messages from the Bible. Children have a very good understanding of the significance of these festivals for Christians and also how the teachings of Jesus underpin the school's values. They are not yet fully involved in planning, preparing, presenting and evaluating acts of worship themselves. The collective worship committee would welcome this opportunity as would other children not on this committee.

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

The headteacher provides the inspiration for staff and governors to implement their vision for the school which places children at its heart. This vision is firmly based on the belief that 'we are all children of God'. Together they have ensured that this is a very happy school that lives out its Christian message on a daily basis, giving its children quality experiences and high expectations to achieve well. All staff, governors, children and parents share the school's vision with similar enthusiasm and commitment and clearly articulate the school's core values.

Parents and carers feel part of the school family. They value the welcoming distinctive Christian ethos and refer to the school as a place where their children 'develop the skills to make their own choices'. They speak of the positive difference the school is making for them and their children. They say their children are nurtured not only in their spiritual and moral development, but also in their aspirations to succeed. They affirm that the school is very supportive in times of personal difficulty.

Governors show strong leadership and are highly committed to ensuring that the school lives out its Christian values on a daily basis. Explicit Christian values, along with the mission statement, inform all decisions made by the governing body who know the school well and fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Although governors have undertaken monitoring activities, some aspects of church school distinctiveness are not yet fully incorporated into overall school improvement monitoring, evaluation and improvement planning. Therefore the potential for the Christian ethos to support whole school improvement has not been fully realised.

The vicar of St Mary and Saint Martin's in the neighbouring parishes, is currently the chair of the Local Governing Body. This supports and reinforces community links and the church's profile in the school. Leaders and teachers have developed strong partnerships with church and community primary schools undertaking activities such as reviewing each other's schools (peer review). All staff are valued and inducted well and understand what is expected of them in relation to promoting the Christian ethos of the school. Staff say that their ideas are listened to and valued. One said, 'Christian values are integral to all we do'. Potential future leaders of church schools are prepared well through a strong emphasis on supporting professional development. Children have a significant role in leadership through their many and varied committees for example, Collective Worship Committee, Young Governors and Lunchtime Team. However, they are not yet fully as fully involved in monitoring the effectiveness of the school's Christian character, particularly in collective worship, as they would like to be.

Statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are fully met.