

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

### Rushton (Voluntary Controlled) CE Primary School

Sugar Street, Rushton, Macclesfield SK11 0SG

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	Lichfield
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Staffordshire
Date of inspection	29 September 2017
Date of last inspection	2 October 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 124272
Headteacher	Sarah Cockersole
Inspector's name and number	Reverend Alison M. Morris 759

#### School context

Rushton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is a very small rural school which serves the village of Rushton and surrounding areas. It operates as a first school, with pupils moving to middle schools in Leek. There are 37 pupils on roll aged from 4-9 years plus 4 pupils in a fully established nursery. All pupils are from White British backgrounds. Very few pupils are supported through additional government funding for additional educational needs. The headteacher who has been in post since September 2016 has a teaching commitment. There are close links with the vicar and St. Lawrence's parish church.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Rushton as a Church of England school are good

- Dedicated and committed leadership by the headteacher who confidently lives out and effectively promotes the distinctive Christian vision which is based on Christian values.
- Embedded Christian values are seen particularly in the relationships fostered through pastoral care and intervention strategies that overcome barriers to learning and enable pupils to realise their potential.
- Significantly improved relationships between the school and church enhance the substantial work of the vicar to nurture pupils' and staff attitudes to faith and support their personal spiritual journeys.

#### Areas to improve

- Implement more rigorous and robust formal systems for governors to monitor and evaluate church school development.
- Foster more partnerships and develop strategies which will allow pupils to encounter different religious lifestyles and cultural traditions to deepen pupils' understanding of a multi-faith and multi-cultural world.
- Build upon the already existing imagery with more Christian symbolism in the school grounds, which will enhance opportunities for spiritual reflection for all.

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

A distinctive Christian character and ethos is immediately apparent and is being embedded into all aspects of this safe, happy and inclusive school. Core Christian values, which are rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ are impacting upon the Christian distinctiveness and character. Carefully structured plans have been identified since the last inspection to successfully enhance further the Christian ethos and distinctiveness. This is being partly achieved through reviewing school practices and the use of Anglican terminology wherever appropriate. As a result, a clear Christian distinctive vision permeates both policy and practice. This is being articulated and shared clearly by the school community. Explicit Christian values such as kindness, care and respect help to create the atmosphere of a church school family. Through this approach the individual needs of all pupils are being met in a secure environment where differences are celebrated. High aspirations and expectations within a supportive school culture also motivate all pupils to achieve. The strong Christian character strengthens the school's total commitment to develop personal learning within a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils benefit from a stimulating atmosphere for learning where pupils can thrive, no matter what their ability or background. Heeding caution with very small numbers of pupils and good progress measures, attainment is generally very good although progress in writing still need to be improved. Pastoral support and care is very good and ensures that safeguarding arrangements are effective. Pupils are valued as individuals, treated with respect and nurtured as children of God. Pupils are also encouraged to enjoy their learning, to achieve well and to celebrate success. Effective intervention strategies such as Forest School and the status of a dyslexia friendly school have a direct impact on pupils and especially those with additional needs. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) development is being nourished and challenged through this welcoming Christian community as well as through the school's ethos. Some older pupils understand what it means to be a pupil at a church school and make the link to Christian teaching in the Bible. An effective school council allows the pupil voice to contribute to decision making. For example, discussion is taking place about new playground equipment. Pupils are also encouraged to think about others and so participate in the mission of the wider community through charitable work supporting the Leek and district food bank, for example. Pupils feel happy, secure and enjoy school life. Attitudes to learning are positive and enhanced through a culture of praise and reward. Standards of behaviour are very good and promoted within a learning environment which provides a clear understanding of right and wrong underpinned by Christian values. Pupils are polite, keen and motivated to attend school because learning is fun, purposeful and challenging, so absence is minimal. Religious education (RE) also contributes to SMSC development as belief matters in this school. It also partly develops some understanding of cultural diversity and increases knowledge of other world faiths. However, creating planned opportunities to meet people of other faiths is an important next step. Enthusiastic and committed staff model core Christian values which optimises learning for all pupils. Relationships are very good, based on mutual respect and trust as staff and pupils work co-operatively together. Classrooms have worship tables and reflection areas which, when used, make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Some displays of artefacts and symbols in the foyer express the school's Christian distinctiveness and encourage discussion. However, the school realises the need to develop more expressions of Christian symbolism in the school grounds which will foster understanding and encourage wider acknowledgement of the school church status. A calm and stable atmosphere is promoting a Christian learning environment which has the capacity to raise achievement for all pupils.

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

The daily act of worship is an important aspect of school life which forms part of the school's Christian distinctiveness. Worship uses a biblical approach which has a focus on the person of Jesus Christ and a developing understanding of the Trinity. During worship, a range of experiences such as prayer, silence and music are used to stimulate and energise pupils' attention. For example, visual images, symbols and lighted candles are used to encourage a sense of awe and wonder. Attitudes to worship are good because worship provides some meaningful experiences rooted in Christian beliefs and festivals which are appropriate and significant to pupils' needs, age, development and interests. A greater sense of spirituality is also enhanced through opportunities for both collective and private reflections. These are being built into worship and also curriculum topics to allow for pupils to be still and to reflect in an atmosphere of peace. This encourages pupils to reflect and evaluate their own lives. It also makes it an experience which not only impacts on spiritual development, but also on reinforcing Christian values throughout school life. SMSC development in worship is also effective, the latter being effectively promoted alongside the curriculum and religious education. Worship is engaging and pupils at times take an active role in delivery or retelling of Bible readings. However, the co-ordinator has identified this as on-going development to purposefully increase more pupil involvement in planning, leading and evaluation. The school has also prioritised the need to explore the introduction and discussion of Holy Communion with pupils and to increase the number of visits to other places of worship. Pupils enjoy worship, speak positively about it and are keen to sing and pray. Their behaviour, attitudes and relationships are influenced by both the values and moral messages explored in worship time. Worship is well planned using the Roots and Fruits scheme. It follows the liturgical calendar combined with threads of Christian values and beliefs taken from biblical material. Pupils' knowledge of Bible stories reflects the increasing impact that worship has upon pupils' understanding. One pupil was able to explain

the Trinity as, 'He is one person with three different things'. Prayer is a natural part of school life reinforced by daily routines. For example, there are prayers at lunchtime and at the end of the day, including the Lord's prayer. As a result, pupils understand that prayer has a purpose and is important in the life of a worshipping school community. They enjoy writing and singing prayers and occasionally lead prayers in services. Personal spirituality is further encouraged through availability of prayer spaces and reflection areas around the school. Key Christian festivals such as Easter, Harvest and Christmas are often celebrated in St. Lawrence's church. This reinforces the spiritual link between the church and school. Substantial links with the clergy and foundation governors also ensure that Christian values are being reinforced alongside many Anglican traditions and practices. However, knowledge of Christian diversity across the Anglican Communion is a next step for deeper understanding. Parents are starting to respond positively to invitations to attend services and to share in worship. For example, a newly introduced Welcome Service for pupils and parents has promoted positive relationships with the local church, parents and wider community. Evaluating the impact of collective worship on pupils to inform future planning is now in place and is being developed by the governing body. However, this needs to be more formal and systematic using a wider range of stakeholders including the pupils. This is to ensure the quality of worship offered remains substantial, engaging and relevant to pupils' lives and their spiritual development.

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

The headteacher, supported by the governors and staff, has a strong personal vision for the future and a commitment to the Christian distinctiveness within this school community. This vision is explicit and clear and based on distinctive Christian values and beliefs. As a result, the headteacher and governors are exemplary role models for promoting this Christian vision which is positively lived out between stakeholders in the community. As a result there is an inclusive and caring Christian ethos that extends into the village community. Governors' plans show their ability to develop strategically and they have an honest and challenging view of the future needs of this school. Key stakeholders are supportive of the strategic drive to further improve academic progress and to move this church school forward with clear priorities for Christian distinctiveness. Professional development and succession planning is planned well for both staff and governors so that these priorities can be achieved. Accurate self-evaluation and reflection by governors impacts effectively upon the school's progress as a church school. Governors are showing some capacity to monitor and evaluate the data on pupil achievement and their performance and the work of the governing body makes a distinctive Christian difference to this school. A more formal and robust monitoring schedule on church school development, including the monitoring of RE and collective worship is the key for future development. Statutory requirements for both RE and collective worship are met. Both areas are well led with enthusiasm which permeates across the school. RE has a high profile in school. The RE Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus is being combined with the Understanding Christianity resource to develop a bespoke curriculum. However, this needs more development to enable pupils to gain a thorough knowledge of the Christian faith. The RE curriculum does offer experiences for deeper respect of Christian values and beliefs, whilst also developing an understanding of other faiths such as Islam. Books are scrutinised and further monitoring is planned for the future. Effective partnerships exist with the diocese, multi-agencies and with some members of the church community. These links contribute to meeting the needs of all pupils. Addressing a focus from the last inspection, links with the church of St. Lawrence have been re-established through the work of the local vicar. This improved relationship has a positive impact in how the school sees its distinctive character and understands its Christian vision. Purposeful and effective partnerships exist with parents, the diocese, multi agencies and wider community which helps to meet pupils learning needs. Parents appreciate the distinctive Christian values and ethos where visitors are welcomed and valued. This is adding to the understanding of what Christian distinctiveness means at this school. Parents speak of the care and concern shown to their children which enables their children to flourish spiritually, socially and academically. They have confidence in the school and recognise the improved channels of communication with the leadership team. They also believe pupils' academic and personal needs are being met and are enhanced through extra-curricular activities. For example, pupils participate in a range of experiences, including participation in music, art and sports club. Pupils have a deepening sense of Christian identity and are being encouraged to be aware of their wider responsibilities. Current strategies to celebrate diversity include the study of the Festival of Lights (Diwali) and the Chinese New Year through the curriculum. This is supplemented with trips to places of worship such as the local Mosque and links with an orphanage in India. Such initiatives are providing experiences to explore diversity and to celebrate differences within a multi-faith and multi-cultural society. Yet, the school recognises the need to foster a link with a different cultural area and to develop further activities for pupils to encounter and appreciate the lifestyles of people of different faiths.