

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

<b>St Matthias Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary Academy</b>	
Cromwell Road Malvern WR14 1NA	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Worcester</b>
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Worcestershire
Date of inspection	16 November 2017
Date of last inspection	1 May 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 137185
Acting Headteacher	Fiona Cullerne
Inspector's name and number	C. Ann Stone NS812

### School context

St Matthias Primary Academy is a one form entry primary school with 206 children on roll. The school has an established nursery which provides an option of full time day care for families. The vast majority of children are of white British heritage and numbers with special educational needs and those eligible to receive Pupil Premium funding is higher than the national average. The acting headteacher has been in post since September 2017 following the promotion of the previous headteacher. The school has close links with St Matthias parish church which is without a priest at present due to retirement.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Matthias VA Primary Academy as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The clear and distinctive Christian values which guide all aspects of school life ensure every child feels secure and loved.
- The strong links between the school and the church community promote a shared Christian vision for development and learning.
- The religious education lessons challenge children to think for themselves leading to outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The vision and passion of all staff ensure that the school is on course to fulfil its mission to 'Aspire, Believe, Achieve.' enabling children to accomplish the very best they can academically and socially.

### Areas to improve

- Provide a more structured approach to the planning of collective worship to ensure that a broad and balanced programme of themes is covered leading to a greater impact on the spiritual development of the children.
- Ensure that social, moral, spiritual and cultural experiences are planned and embedded into the whole school curriculum enabling children to explore, reflect and develop their own beliefs and values.

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

Christian values are at the heart of the school and create an ethos that enables children to achieve academically and socially. The six Christian values are chosen annually following a period of consultation with parents, governors, staff and children. The school works hard to ensure that these values are evident in all aspects of school life. Children readily acknowledge the impact that Christian values have on their daily lives and confidently explain the links to Christian teaching. One child explained how the conversion of Saul highlighted the Christian value of courage. At present previous values are not regularly revisited so that their impact is lost over time. The new vision of 'Aspire, Believe, Achieve' is clearly understood and articulated by all staff and governors. The involvement of the children to create a mosaic depicting the new vision, which is displayed at the front of the school, has reinforced and deepened their understanding of it. The behaviour of the children is of the highest standard and relationships are consistently attributed to the Christian character of the school. Vulnerable children and those with special educational needs are nurtured throughout the school day with initiatives that clearly demonstrate the Christian values of care and compassion. Parents value the support given by the school. A letter received from a parent states that 'St Matthias has not only provided my child with a solid education, but it has also surrounded her with love and care.' The relationship between the church and school is strong and is characterised by mutual respect. Through varied community experiences children understand the need, and have the ability to put others before themselves. One example given was the involvement of the children working in the vegetable garden at the local hospital. Children talk enthusiastically about 'Friendly Friday' when they play and work with children across the key stages. Fundraising for global charities results in children appreciating and respecting global diversity. Links with a school in Portsmouth have encouraged children to celebrate similarities and appreciate differences in culture, faiths and way of life. This link has now ceased due to distance and the school is now developing a link with a school in Sandwell, West Midlands to ensure this understanding continues. In all these ways, the Christian character of the school has an impact on the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of the children. The academic achievement of all children can clearly be linked to the school vision and Christian values which provide children with a rich learning environment where children learn in a loving and caring ethos. Christian values are at the heart of religious education planning and experiences to link these together are continually sought by all staff. The school has an understanding of spirituality that is shared by all stakeholders. Children deepen their personal understanding of spirituality through the use of outside space, planned experiences throughout the curriculum and off-site visits. An example seen of how creativity was used to enhance spirituality was the whole school project to create large 'Prayer Candles.' These allow children to make their own links between belief, practices and Christian values. Governors are regularly involved in 'Atmospheric Walks' which monitor the Christian distinctiveness of the school and which lead to continuous improvement.

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

Collective worship is central to the life of the school and is a time to meet together as a whole school to share love of God and celebrate achievements. Children speak with confidence about the way in which worship shapes their thinking and actions. It is planned using a variety of resources and incorporates Christian values, Bible stories, major festivals of the church year, festivals of other faiths and relevant world issues. Identified is the necessity to further develop the planning of worship to provide children with a more structured, richer and diverse experience of worship. A cross, Bible and candle are displayed on a worship table and children are able to explain what they mean to Christians. A coloured cloth to reflect the seasons of the church year is also used but children are unable to explain the significance of this. 'Open the Book' worship, led by members of the church community, is well received and has a direct impact on the life of the children. Until his retirement the parish priest regularly delivered worship and during the interregnum the licenced lay reader is now involved. All classrooms have a cross and a reflection area which allow children to write prayers, evaluate worship and reflect on important aspects of their lives. Parents and the school are fundraising to develop an area in the school grounds to enable worship to extend beyond a set time and place. Children have a clear understanding of prayer and prayers written by children are used regularly in worship. Children are able to talk about the importance of prayer and how it helps them in their daily lives. One child explained 'I pray in my head when I am working because God can help me.' The 'Lords Prayer,' learning about Jesus Christ and a developing understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit enables children to make links between the Bible and lessons for their own lives. Children plan and lead collective worship regularly and are able to link worship to the Christian values of the school. Parents enjoy celebrating the successes of their children at the Friday celebration worship to which they are invited. The parish church is used to celebrate major Christian festivals which is well supported by parents. Governors, children and parents evaluate worship which leads to improvement. Following comments from parents regarding the formality of church services there have been more times of joyful singing, bellringing and dancing thus enhancing the worship.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.**

Religious education (RE) has a high profile within the curriculum. It is recognised by staff, governors and children as being important to the life of the school. The school has been awarded a 'Gold RE Quality Mark' in recognition of the commitment to quality teaching and learning in RE. From April 2017 the school has been recognised by Worcester Diocese as a SIAMS leading practice school. The RE subject leader is passionate, knowledgeable and regularly attends diocesan and other relevant trainings. She passes training onto staff where appropriate and offers support and advice when needed. She works closely with staff when assessing and monitoring children's work and has a very good overview of progress throughout the school, thereby effectively informing future planning. Teachers are confident to deliver outstanding RE teaching and learning experiences, including Godly play, which fully engage children in their learning. RE lessons are lively, interesting and link to the Christian values of the school. All this leads to enabling children to question and deepen their understanding of the impact that religion has on others. Their knowledge of Christianity is secure and children are developing an understanding of diversity within faiths, but recognised is the importance of introducing more visits to places of worship. The children talk enthusiastically about their recent work on Hinduism and the importance of valuing and appreciating other world faiths. As a result, children's knowledge and understanding of cultures different to their own is of a good standard. RE is developed at home through the school 'Learning Logs' where children are encouraged to research RE topics and values. For example, in Year Four the children were asked to research how Christmas is celebrated in other countries. This enabled children from other faiths to share their experiences. Following the last inspection children are confident with self and peer assessment activities and have an understanding of what their next steps are. Progress and achievement of all children in RE is tracked and evidence shows that the majority of children are working at age related expectations or above. Lesson observations, book trawls, learning walks and critical discussions take place regularly which leads to continuous improvement. The foundation governor responsible for RE is involved in reviewing the RE curriculum and monitors and challenges staff which leads to further improvements in the future delivery of the subject.

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

The acting headteacher and leadership team have a clear understanding, and articulate well, the newly introduced school vision, which was created through discussion with various stakeholders. All members of the school community are working to ensure this vision is intrinsically interwoven into the Christian values already recognised by all at St Matthias Voluntary Aided Primary Academy. The acting headteacher was involved in the strategic planning of the school prior to her appointment and has a strong vision about the next steps which will lead to improvement. All leaders are able to articulate how the vision and Christian values of the school have an impact on standards of achievement and the well-being of the children. An example given was the 'Parent Engagement' events where parents are invited into school to share learning activities with their children, which creates a mutual respect between children, parents and staff. The understanding of all adults of how Christian values and spiritual development make a difference to the whole school community ensure these are at the heart of school life. The development of all staff and governors is achieved through individual support, attendance at diocesan training, partnerships with other local schools and the mentoring and support of each other. The development of future leaders of a church school is achieved through developing leadership qualities within the school and allowing staff to be seconded with leadership roles to other schools. Governors know the school well and articulate the understanding of their role as strategic leaders of a church school. They are an intrinsic part of school life, often involved in community events, outings, formal and informal visits. Governor meetings start with a prayer asking for wisdom in their deliberations and end with a prayer of thanks highlighting the importance of God's guidance within their meetings. The licensed lay reader from the parish church has a very strong link with school. An example of this is her close involvement with the children and the Malvern Well Dressing Festival. She also has an effective pastoral role within the school which is valued by staff, governors and children thereby strengthening links with the school and church community. Mutual respect and support between the parish church and school enable them to flourish and fulfil their mission to the school, the local community and beyond. Parents know that their views are welcomed, and concerns are dealt with efficiently and sensitively but are not yet able to confidently link this to the Christian distinctiveness of the school. A re-established 'Friends Association' volunteer their time and talents as well as give financial support to the school enabling parents to become more involved in the life of a church school. Leaders and governors ensure both worship and religious education meet statutory requirements. The supportive relationships between all members of the school community are clearly rooted in Christian values, providing a school which is both distinctive and effective.