

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

### St Aldhelm's Church of England Primary School

Chelynch Park, Douling, Shepton Mallet, Somerset. BA4 4PL

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Bath and Wells</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Somerset
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	N/A
Date of inspection	30 November 2016
Date of last inspection	05 April 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 123753
Acting Headteacher	Amanda Phillips
Inspector's name and number	Jane Tibbs 226

#### School context

St Aldhelm's Church of England Primary School is situated in the village of Douling. It serves the local village and surrounding area. The majority of the 209 pupils are White British, with a very small number coming from other ethnic heritages. Pupils in the school are currently taught in eight classes. The school is accredited with several awards including the Healthy Schools Plus Award and the International Schools Award. The headteacher is presently on a phased return to work following a period of compassionate leave.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Aldhelm's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Pupils are overwhelmingly articulate in sharing their views on matters of faith and belief in an environment that values each child.
- Acts of worship make a significant contribution to the pupils' understanding of Christian values and how they make a difference to their everyday lives.
- The sustained Christian vision of leaders and managers promotes the school's mission to ensure that Christian values are the bedrock of the school.
- The commitment of leaders to the Christian vision, values and character of the school is clear from the significant and focused developments made since the last inspection.

#### Areas to improve

- Strengthen further existing high quality opportunities to develop personal spirituality so pupils throughout the school are consistently able to engage with questions of meaning and purpose, thereby deepening their growing spiritual awareness.

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

It is obvious as soon as you enter St Aldhelm's school that this is a vibrant, Christian community. The school's core values (thankfulness, trust, friendship, happiness, respect, forgiveness) are well embedded into the life of the school. They make a significant contribution to the high quality of relationships throughout the school community. The pupils are clear that the values have a central place in the life of the school. "Our values make us a church school," is a typical comment from pupils who explain that the way they behave shows that the values are integral to school life. Pupils explain that the values link with one another and work best when connected. They are sure that the values are expressly and clearly linked on Christian teaching and specifically on the teaching of Jesus. The values are recognised as being those which 'any person might have but for us they are important because Jesus wants us to live by them', as one pupil reflected. There is a strong sense of belonging and relationships are constructive and caring, reflecting Jesus' commandment to 'love one another'. Consequently pupils feel safe in school. Behaviour is exemplary and attendance is consistently high. The Christian character is outstanding because the core set of Christian values has explicitly strengthened the school's Christian ethos and has had an exceptional impact on the lives of children and their families. Pupils readily name many Bible stories which link with each of their core values. For example, they talk of how friendship and compassion was shown when 'the Good Samaritan helped and was willing to pay any expenses for a complete stranger to be made well'. These values are used as part of everyday language to support the personal development of pupils, staff, governors and those who come into contact with the school. The school has worked hard to develop its understanding of spirituality. A visioning day helped to identify opportunities to explore a spiritual dimension of the pupil's learning. The use of "windows, doors and mirrors" as an approach to spiritual development is giving pupils the language to explore their own spirituality. They have developed the ability to reflect on their experiences and learn from them so that they make a difference in their lives. Across the curriculum and through an excellent range of extra-curricular activities pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is explicitly and positively nurtured. Pupils know what is right and wrong and act on this knowledge appropriately. A strong teaching and support team work collaboratively and effectively together. This contributes to the school having a detailed knowledge of each pupil and their learning needs. Pupils do well academically, make good progress and attain standards that are at least in line with national expectations. Their well-being is a priority and pupils make very good progress as they grow through the school. Adults and children treat each other with respect. Pupils have a growing awareness of the diverse nature of British society and that Christianity is a world-wide religion.

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

Collective worship is outstanding because pupils have an excellent understanding of the relationship between the Bible messages they hear and how values, based on the teachings of Jesus, have meaning for them today. Acts of worship are thoroughly planned around the core values and closely linked to Bible stories. There is a half-termly focus on a different value. This allows time for a full exploration of each theme. Pupils are animated when they share recollections of acts of worship they have particularly enjoyed, identifying, for example, spontaneous role play. A wide range of leaders enhances the worship experience for pupils. An Advent trail, leading to Christmas celebrations, is helping pupils become more aware of the real meaning of the birth of Jesus and reflecting on its significance to Christians. They have a detailed understanding of the rhythm of the Church year because worship engages them with less well-known festivals and they can identify the different colours used in church, linking to different seasons. Pupils have a mature understanding of prayer and have plenty of opportunities to pray throughout the school day. They explain that prayers are "open to everyone" and that "God listens to everyone whether they believe or not". Pupils are adamant that God treats everyone equally and cares for all regardless of who they are or where they come from. Older pupils are developing their understanding that prayers aren't always answered as they might want. They explain that prayers in school can be said by everyone, "as long as you are respectful, you don't have to join in". Pupils have developed a mature appreciation of the Trinity. There are opportunities for them to explore its meaning in acts of worship. Collective worship is thoroughly monitored in processes that involve pupils as well as adults. The information gathered informs the planning process and indicates how worship influences the everyday life of pupils and their families. Pupils have meaningful opportunities to lead and plan worship through class and whole school worship which they do confidently. They are also involved in the planning of church services. Their feedback has led to improvements being made. Strong and mutually supportive links are made between worship and the RE curriculum. Whilst being explicitly Christian, the programme is properly inclusive of those from other backgrounds and faiths. Thus it supports spiritual and moral development opportunities well.

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

Religious Education (RE) is recognised as an important subject within the wider curriculum. It benefits from the vision and leadership of the acting headteacher. A coherent curriculum has been developed from a combination of the diocesan planning and the Somerset syllabus and is continuing to develop using the new 'Understanding Christianity'. This enables topics to be revisited so that pupils' understanding of Christianity and other religions can be developed with a clear sense of direction. Planning is detailed and supportive. This, together with the expertise of the co-ordinator, enables teachers to approach RE teaching with confidence, reflecting the high levels of practice applied across the curriculum. RE teaching is well resourced. It is taught as a discrete subject and linked with other areas of the curriculum appropriately. Pupils learn exceptionally well because teaching is consistently good, drawing on a range of sources and activities that engage pupils' interest and support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoy the subject and talk with good recollection and age appropriate understanding and reflective insight on topics they have studied. Attainment is high and at least in line with the expectations of the Somerset syllabus. Work is well marked and identifies what has been done well and poses questions to extend pupils' thinking. Pupils' treasure their RE books which are full of examples and reminders of their learning. They talk animatedly about the work they have done and point out work from favourite lessons. The size of the school, detailed understanding of each pupil, team approach to the monitoring of teaching, learning and work scrutiny all help teachers understand the rapid progress pupils are making. The RE leader is committed to the further development of RE and is clear about how it makes a contribution to the school's Christian vision.

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

The school has made excellent progress since the previous inspection in developing a Christian ethos that has greater meaning and purpose for the school community. The acting headteacher has ensured that the school mission statement is known, understood and articulated by the whole school community. The school's vision to make 'Christian values the bedrock of the school' has grown through its core values, high expectations and a more explicit approach to developing a personal spirituality. She is fully supported by staff and governors. Together, their commitment has enabled the school community to create a vision that meets the academic and personal needs of all pupils. Governors share this commitment and have a good grasp of the strengths and areas to improve as a church school. Leaders have a thorough understanding of all aspects of the school which ensures high standards of achievement and well-being are maintained. Self-evaluation as a church school is excellent. Robust procedures are in place to regularly gather high quality evidence of the impact of the values, collective worship and RE. This evidence is scrutinised and from it further areas for improvement are identified. The RE leader ensures that developments in church school distinctiveness are shared with all staff through regular meetings and training events. Governors have contributed towards this process through learning walks when they gather evidence. Local clergy are a part of this process and regularly contribute to monitoring and evaluation and ideas to further develop the Christian ethos. The partnership with the local church and clergy is extremely strong and effective because of their involvement in the planning of worship and support for the staff. The school celebrates major Christian festivals in the church. The vicar and foundation governors recognise that the Christian ethos has become more overt and that pupils have a greater ability to reflect on the meaning of faith and belief. Parents say that their children enjoy, and are inspired by, worship in school. They explain how the Christian values are universal as they help their children flourish as individuals in a nurturing environment. They say that the school gives their children opportunities to ask questions about faith and belief so that they can make up their own minds. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report November 2016 St Aldhelm's Church of England Primary School, Doultong. BA4 4PL