Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

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| **St Chad’s Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School** | |
| St Michael’s Road, Lichfield WS13 6SN | |
| **Current SIAMS inspection grade** | **Outstanding** |
| **Diocese** | **Lichfield** |
| Previous SIAMS inspection grade | Good |
| Local authority | Staffordshire |
| Date of inspection | 26 April 2018 |
| Date of last inspection | 4 July 2013 |
| Type of school and unique reference number | Primary VC 124259 |
| Headteacher | Julie Smith |
| Inspector’s name and number | Rosemary Woodward 583 |

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| **School context**  St Chad’s is a one form entry primary school and nursery situated to the east of the cathedral city of Lichfield. The majority of its 202 full-time pupils come from white British families although a few come from other ethnic heritage. Deprivation levels are close to the national average although the number of pupils needing academic or emotional support is increasing. The headteacher has only been in post since the beginning of the current academic year but works with an established leadership team. Both the parish church and the cathedral are located within easy walking distance of the school. |
| **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Chad’s as a Church of England school are outstanding**   * The inspirational leadership of the headteacher who works with a very committed team to realise a shared vision of a school built on Christian teaching. * A holistic approach that nurtures each individual in God’s love, enabling every pupil to feel special and valued and so flourish as confident individuals. * Christian values and relationships that are lived out in all areas of school life. * Appropriate and varied opportunities for prayer and reflection that underpin school life. * Lively worship that is valued by the whole school community. * Extremely strong links with the local church that enrich the school’s spiritual life. * The important role given to the school Eucharist celebrations. |
| **Areas to improve**   * Ensure that collective worship allows all pupils to encounter and be inspired by the stories and characters found in the Bible. * Create opportunities within religious education (RE) lessons to explore the concepts and   beliefs at the heart of each faith studied with appropriate depth and challenge.   * Extend opportunities for the governors to explore the pupil voice directly and respond to their findings as they develop a rigorous system to monitor the school’s progress. |

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| **The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding**  **at meeting the needs of all learners**  The school clearly declares its vision for ‘Growth through Jesus’ love, so that we can learn, persevere and achieve’. The motto ‘Achieve through belief’ is augmented by constant reference to the biblical ‘Fruits of the Spirit’. These provide explicit Christian values that underpin all areas of school life. They are clearly linked to Bible teaching and are modelled very well by staff. Every individual is valued and loved at St Chad’s, and there is a strong ethos of respect for every member of the community, regardless of any difference. Indeed, there is excellent support for those with specific challenges to learning. Pupils take real pride in their school and speak with passion about how they feel safe and enjoy being there, clearly linking its caring support to the school’s Christian character. Pupils are treated with love and trust and as a result care well for each other. The school’s vision is also clearly stated on the school’s website and documentation as the whole school community work, worship and celebrate the Christian faith together. Recent discussions involving the whole school community have resulted in a new logo and uniform, in which St Chad’s cross is central, as the school is very proud of its links with Lichfield’s first bishop. The school has worked hard to ensure that its Christian values result in pupil behaviour that is consistently excellent. Any conflict or bullying is dealt with in a proactive way. High attendance figures indicate that pupils want to come to school and are supported and happy while there. Pupils declare that learning is fun. Recent initiatives are giving them the confidence to try their best and not be afraid to fail. Data shows that pupils are encouraged to work to achieve their potential and focussed learning, supported by new tracking systems, are targeting areas in which progress has been identified as less rapid. Achievements are highly valued and parents are actively involved in their children’s learning. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the pupils’ journey are central to life in the school. Older children are offered many roles that support and enrich the lives of those who are younger or less confident. In addition to conventional systems that celebrate success, awards are given to those whose behaviour demonstrates one of the spiritual fruits. The class who gain most are rewarded by a donation to their chosen charity. This ensures that pupils’ good behaviour is used to serve others and not just for personal reward. Pupils also show compassion and generosity through opportunities such as regular visits to a local church senior lunch club. There is also a strong interest in advocacy for issues of global inequality driven by an extremely enthusiastic and well-informed pupil ‘rights and responsibilities’ team. Pupils clearly link such opportunities to the school’s values and the call to share God’s love with others, building fully on the widely displayed diocesan call to ‘Come follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad’.  Well planned religious education (RE) lessons offer opportunities for further study of Christianity and an exploration of other faiths. These are enhanced by visits to a variety of places of worship and visits from people of faith. The use of new resources such as Understanding Christianity is beginning to add depth and challenge to learning about the concepts at the heart of Christianity. Plans to add similar rigour to the study of other faiths should ensure pupils develop a good level of religious literacy. These plans are being supported through staff training and monitoring to ensure staff are all confident in moving the subject forward. |
| **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**  Lively worship underpins school life and has a key role in developing and inspiring the pupils’ personal spirituality. Reflection, praise, prayer and Bible teaching offer varied opportunities for pupils to participate and deepen their understanding. The fruits of the Spirit are constantly referred to within worship to reinforce their importance and root them in Biblical teaching. Pupils are very confident in talking about the meaning of the Christian faith and the impact of its beliefs on their daily life. They explain that Jesus’ death and resurrection offers forgiveness and hope and understand that, for Christians, God can be known as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Easter story was brought to life by both ‘Messy Easter’ and a ‘Stations of the Cross’ event which resulted in even the youngest pupils realising the importance of this Christian celebration. They are equally confident when discussing the meaning of Christmas. However, pupils are much less secure when discussing the events of Jesus’ life and ministry, the adventures of the early church and other stories from the Bible narrative. Every child has their own Bible for their journey through the school and beyond and is encouraged to undertake the challenge of reading it for themselves. Pupils very much enjoy singing and can link the songs’ words to the Christian message. The Lighthouse Song is a particular favourite that clearly proclaims the school’s vision. The school strongly values the place of prayer and reflection. Prayer is not limited to formal worship times but extends to classrooms and beyond as it underpins school life. It forms part of governor and staff meetings and there are regular prayer opportunities for both staff and pupils. This is valued by pupils who are confident in contributing their own prayers. Each has their own decorated prayer stone to remind them of prayer’s importance. Parents also speak of the school’s willingness to pray with or for them at times of need. The very enthusiastic spiritual committee take a role in planning and leading worship, both centrally and in class. This group has their own regular time of bible study and teaching with the head teacher. They have begun to explore the opinions of other pupils as to what next steps would enrich worship further. Staff and governors also have some effective monitoring strategies, but the enthusiasm for worship found throughout the school suggests that offering increased opportunities for every pupil to be more actively involved in planning and leading at their own level would help them to move further in their journey towards spiritual independence.  The pupils’ understanding of the Anglican tradition is good because of the strong partnership with the local church. They are confident in using the Lord’s Prayer and have a good understanding of key church festivals. The use of liturgical colours reminds pupils of the season of the church’s year. Well-structured teaching about the Eucharist celebration from the church team is followed by full participation in Holy Communion by many older pupils. Worship in the parish church is very popular with pupils and parents who also attend and are very supportive of these times. A weekend pilgrimage to Walsingham has also strongly enhanced the experience of those pupils able to participate and will be repeated. The diversity of worship found within the Christian faith is also explored through the input of visitors from other local churches. The neighbouring cathedral also provides a powerful stimulus for further worship, praise and study. |
| **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding**  The headteacher has a very clear vision for a holistic church school shining from its hill as a beacon of God’s light over the city. Others speak of her passion as she has used her personal faith and determination to drive an already good school further towards excellence. Her vision is fully endorsed and proclaimed by the senior leadership team and governing body. Governors are very active within the life of the school and are involved in taking a role in strategic planning for its future. They monitor the impact of the school’s Christian effectiveness and development plans with confidence, providing challenge as they hold the school to account. However, their opportunities to explore the views of pupils directly are limited. The Christian foundations and values are clearly modelled and lived out by the whole leadership team. Staff are enabled to flourish and develop their role within this community where care and support are not limited to pupils. Positive steps are taken to ensure their personal wellbeing and spiritual refreshment, as they are also recognised as important individuals. They are also given good opportunities to develop professionally, with structured coaching and support.  Links with the local church are very strong. Pupils speak very positively of the times when the school worships in church, often with pupils planning and leading. The school is now assuming a regular responsibility to contribute each month within Sunday worship. The vicar, others from the congregation and representatives of a number of other neighbouring churches are frequent visitors to school. They not only lead worship, but also provide mentoring and support for pupils where needed. This prayerful care also extends to embrace the welfare of staff and families. Parents, including those of other faith or none, recognise and celebrate the strong partnership between school and church. They speak extremely highly of the school’s loving support for pupils and their families, which begins the moment their children enter the school and ensures that they feel welcome and listened to. Partnerships and collaborations beyond the local area, including links with the Diocese, help to enrich and develop this caring Christian community. |

SIAMS report April 2018 St Chad’s Primary, Lichfield WS13 6SN