

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Swinford Church of England (Aided) Primary School	
School Lane, Swinford, Leicestershire. LE17 6BG	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Leicester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	April 2017
Name of multi-academy trust	Diocese of Leicester Academies Trust (DLAT)
Date/s of inspection	06 March 2018
Date of last inspection	07 March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy 144118
Headteacher	Edy O'Connor
Inspector's name and number	Wendy Wakefield 867

School context

Swinford CofE is a small rural primary school serving Swinford and surrounding villages. The school was completely rebuilt in 2007 to provide a spacious learning environment. Since the retirement of the local incumbent in October 2017, the school has been supported by other local clergy. The school became an academy in April 2017 and is a member of the Diocese of Leicester Academies Trust (DLAT). Currently there are 106 pupils on roll, the majority from a White British background. The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives extra funding is below average. The headteacher has been in post since 2012.

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

- A caring and inclusive ethos built around the school's Christian foundation leads to high levels of confidence and self esteem for all pupils. This in turn impacts on achievement and wellbeing.
- The headteacher's passion, commitment and drive in developing the Christian character of the school is well supported by the staff and governors which ensures that this aspect of the school's work has high priority.
- The provision for collective worship and religious education (RE) has a clear impact on the very positive relationships that exist between all members of the school community and on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

Areas to improve

- Make explicit reference to the school's Christian ethos and specific values in all documentation and communication with parents and the wider community in order to raise the profile of its church foundation.
- Develop opportunities for children to plan and lead collective worship on a regular basis in order to fully recognise their importance as members of the worshipping school community.
- Ensure that all leaders, including governors, are fully involved in the evaluation of Swinford as a church school in order that they can use their knowledge to accurately evaluate the impact of any actions and improvements.

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

Swinford is a welcoming, inclusive church school where pupils make good progress and attain well. Attendance is good and families are well supported. The needs of pupils are at the forefront and a high level of nurture and care through a strong Christian ethos is provided. This is evident in the positive, caring relationships across the school community and the good behaviour seen around the school.

The school vision and values statement is taken from 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and effectively places love at the forefront of school life. This in turn ensures that a range of other Christian values are evident in action including trust, hope and perseverance. However, the articulation of these values by all stakeholders and in school documentation is not always clear. The pupils have a natural care for each other which can be seen across school in their support and acceptance of one another. It is clear that all children are valued and included especially during lunch and play times. There is a strong sense of family, where everyone plays a vital role in ensuring the safety and happiness of the whole school community. The different makeup of families within the community is recognised and celebrated, ensuring an inclusive approach and a knowledge that all are loved by everyone in the school and by God. Parents talk with great enthusiasm about their 'partnership' with school and the hard work put in by all staff to ensure that they know and support each individual child. They report that 'Children are confident and happy to talk about God and that if they have a problem, faith is a cushion to support them and give comfort.'

RE contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural (SMSC) growth. They are passionate about helping others and an RE lesson on the day of the inspection saw children independently researching a range of charities offering support around the world. One child commented that by helping others, he was 'following the example set by Jesus' linking this to stories from the Bible. The pupils have a good knowledge of other faiths and a good concept of world religions. However, pupil's knowledge about Christianity across the world is still developing. The beautiful outdoor environment, including quiet areas for reflection, gives many opportunities for pupils to explore and think about the beauty and wonder of the natural world. This in turn contributes to their spiritual development and understanding.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is of central importance within school and is carefully planned and delivered by the adults, with a clear link to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of stakeholders. Pupils enjoy taking part and value all opportunities to do this. They talk animatedly about the 'Flying Fish' group where they take it in turns to choose opening and closing prayers and liturgies to enhance acts of worship. They do not yet have regular opportunities to plan and lead worship.

Feedback and monitoring suggests that collective worship is highly valued across the school community. Pupils and staff participate and use this opportunity to be together as a whole school, joining in the range of activities within the worship. They value this time for personal reflection. The school uses a range of resources to support worship and ensures that it is engaging and gives pupils the time to pray and reflect. An act of worship shared on the day of the inspection saw the effective use of 'Godly Play' support the creation story and the celebration of our wonderful world. Worship is relevant and interactive and all pupils recognise this as a special time in the school day. Members of the school community talk positively about collective worship and the impact upon pupils' lives. One parent commented, 'My children enjoy collective worship, it supports their belief in God and the teachings of Jesus. They come home and tell me about the Bible stories that they have heard and sing the hymns that they've learned.' The programme for collective worship is based around Diocesan themes.

Since the retirement of the local incumbent, Rev Emma and Rev Alison from local parishes have worked in partnership with the school to ensure that the previous strong and relevant link continues. A variety of adults lead worship in school to ensure that it is meaningful, engaging and special. The environment for collective worship is calm and a designated area in the hall with a cross, Bible and candles provides a focus for reflection. Children and staff see the symbolic lighting of the candle as very important, it acts as a spiritual focus for reflection. Pupils are aware of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and can articulate some understanding because of teaching in RE. There is a clear understanding that the teaching of the Bible is reflected through mutual respect, caring relationships and good behaviour. Pupils, including those from different faith and non-faith backgrounds, talk with ease about their engagement within worship and that sometimes they use the time to think about their own lives or the lives of others. The adults also encourage pupils to share their thoughts either as a group or privately depending on the theme. Prayer is clearly valued and pupils enjoy writing their own prayers to share during acts of worship. Services held in church to celebrate special times like Christmas, Easter and the end of the school year, have given children a greater understanding of Christian festivals and the seasons of the church year.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Pupils enjoy and value RE saying that lessons are usually fun and interesting. 'We talk about different questions and share opinions, but there are no right or wrong answers,' explained a Year 6 pupil. Teachers are well-supported and resourced. As a result their confidence and subject knowledge has increased. Lessons are planned to meet the needs of all learners, using a range of activities which engage pupils and develop essential skills. Pupils are challenged to consider, investigate and reflect using art, drama and discussion to express their ideas. Pupils in KS1 were thinking about thankfulness following the sharing of the Bible story about the ten lepers. They demonstrated confidence, compassion and creativity when re-enacting the story and prioritising what they should be thankful for.

The quality displays of RE work in each classroom and in public areas of the school and the high-level discussion demonstrate the high priority given to the subject. The leadership and management of RE is good and the very able and enthusiastic coordinator is developing a wider evidence base from which to evaluate standards. Work on assessment following the last inspection has ensured that progress and attainment in RE is carefully tracked. As a result of the range of opportunities given and of good teaching, pupils make good progress in RE. Standards are in line with those achieved in other core subjects where the majority of children are at or approaching age related expectations.

The curriculum is well-balanced and based on the locally agreed syllabus and the 'Understanding Christianity' materials. This ensures that RE makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Through the study of religions other than Christianity, children learn to respect and understand diverse faiths and cultures. First-hand experiences, such as the recent visit to a mosque, inspire and excite children and support their understanding. Older children talk knowledgeably about the similarities as well as the differences.

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

The drive, passion and commitment of the headteacher are clearly shared by all stakeholders and have ensured that the development of the distinctive Christian character of the school remains a priority. His openness and enthusiasm encourage all staff and ensure a continued focus on meeting the needs of all learners. One member of staff commented 'We are a team. Everyone is a valuable and integral part of the school family.' The safety and well-being of children and staff are of high importance in school and this can be seen by the relationships in the school. The vision and values are clearly evident in action, however, the very good practice and importance placed on the Christian foundation is not yet evident in school documentation or on the website.

The school benefits from support and advice from the diocese particularly since becoming a part of the Diocese of Leicester Academies Trust (DLAT) and the headteacher regularly meets with the DLAT school improvement advisor in order that partnership working ensures continued school improvement. Regular staff training and attendance at courses and meetings ensures that staff are aware of the latest developments in relation to church school distinctiveness and RE. Support for future leaders of church schools is very effective. The current deputy head has accessed training in church school leadership and has been fully supported by the head, diocese and governors in her temporary secondment as headteacher at another local school.

Governors are very supportive of the school and relationships with staff are clearly based on mutual respect. They regularly visit the school and are keen to support a range of day to day activities. Whilst governors are aware of the SIAMS self-evaluation document and are active in monitoring the school as a church school, they have not yet had the opportunity to be involved in the initial self-evaluation process.

Leaders recognise the contribution a strong partnership with parents makes to both pupils' learning and to forming a community based on Christian values. Parents are actively encouraged into the school and a regular parent/carer session in EYFS is just one of the initiatives set up to achieve this. Partnerships with multicultural schools in Birmingham and China have also ensured that children are developing an understanding of national and global communities. Whilst there is currently no incumbent in post, the school has been well supported by two local members of the clergy who are continuing the previous good work of Father Chris, and whose contribution is valued by the whole school community.

Statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are met. Key issues for development from the previous inspection have been fully addressed. Overall the leadership and management is outward looking and actively seeking a future which protects and enhances its distinctive Christian character and benefits the whole school community.