

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Andrew's Church of England Primary Academy

Chardstock, Axminster, Devon, EX13 7BJ

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Diocese

Exeter

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Satisfactory

Local authority

N/A

Name of multi-academy trust

Acorn Multi Academy Trust

Date of inspection

21 March 2017

Date of last inspection

22 February 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Aided 141527

Executive Headteacher

Andrea Rice

Inspector's name and number

Daphne Spitzer No 37

School context

St Andrew's is a village school in a rural location situated between the towns of Chard and Axminster on the Somerset and Devon border. There are 117 children on roll, with 17 children in the pre-school. The numbers have increased significantly since the last inspection. The vast majority of children come from outside the village of Chardstock and are from White British heritage families. The proportion of children with special education needs and /or physical disabilities (SEND) is in line with the national average. The proportion eligible to receive the pupil premium grant is lower than the national average. In November 2014, together with its federated school Mrs Ethelston's CE Primary School under the leadership of the executive headteacher, it converted to academy status. The Acorn Multi Academy Trust (MAT) was formed with four other schools, two of which are church schools. There have been significant changes to the teaching staff over the last five years.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Andrew's VA as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The school's set of Christian values are having a significant impact on children's academic achievement and personal development and well-being
- The outstanding leadership of collective worship by children is integral to the life of the school and is highly effective in promoting spiritual development for the whole school community
- The support and expertise of the MAT has had a strong impact on staff professional development and consequently the school's distinctive Christian character.

Areas to improve

- Plan explicit opportunities for spiritual development in the curriculum across all age groups to ensure consistently effective practice throughout the school
- Enable children to develop an understanding of the Trinity in order that they can appreciate the Church of England character of the school to a greater extent
- Update and refine assessment procedures in religious education (RE) so that they are in line with the new curriculum and current expectations

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

St Andrew's Church of England Primary Academy is warm and highly welcoming Christian community. The school's explicit set of values, with God's love at their heart are deeply rooted in Christian teaching and are having a profound impact on all aspects of the life of the school. This is because a secure inclusive environment is created in which all children are cherished and highly valued in line with the core Christian belief that each is unique and made by God to be special. The knowledge that they are loved by God, their teachers and the whole school community has a significant impact on their confidence and self-esteem. As a result, academic achievement has risen considerably since the previous inspection. Relationships at all levels are outstanding. Children are very caring and highly supportive of one another. Their interactions are characterised by mutual respect and the values of selfless love and friendship. Although spiritual development is not planned explicitly into the curriculum on a daily or weekly basis it is integral to the life of the school. This is evident in the way children speak with a growing understanding of spirituality and its impact at a personal level on their lives. The children's ethos committee plays a significant role in promoting the school's distinctive Christian character. This is evident in the way they promote the use of the outdoor classroom for quiet reflection and take pride in each classroom's prayer spaces. Children lead fund raising activities for international Christian charities and this is enabling them to have a good understanding of Christianity as a global faith. The school provides a rich curriculum of visits and visitors from other faiths including regular trips to London enabling them to understand the lives of people of diverse communities living in this country. As a result, children demonstrate high levels of respect, tolerance and acceptance of people of other faiths and a strong desire to treat all with equality and help others at a national and international level.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is distinctively Christian and an enjoyable time of central importance in the life of the school. All teaching staff as well as support staff attend and participate demonstrating that they find it relevant at a personal level as it is for children. Worship plays a significant role in promoting the school's Christian values. For instance, an act of worship planned and led by children on the value of friendship was illustrated in a very effective way by the parable of the Good Samaritan. Their good use of drama enabled all present to recognise its meaning and relevance to their lives at a personal level. Worship is highly effective in developing spiritual awareness. Times of stillness, prayer and reflection are integral to the school day as well as collective worship. Singing is interactive, lively and heartfelt. Prayer spaces in classrooms are very well used, often deeply thought provoking and linked to current learning in RE. Regular prayer meetings led by a member of staff include children who offer their own spontaneous prayers on matters of concern to them. These are good examples of the strength of the spiritual life of the school community and its key role in developing children's personal spirituality. All members of the school community have developed a good understanding of Anglican tradition through the use of liturgical greetings, regular communion services held in school as well as worship that takes place in church. They have an excellent understanding of the central role of Christ in worship, evident in the way children say that the candle is lit 'to welcome Jesus into our worship'. However since practice does not include a symbol or reference to the Trinity their understanding of this is underdeveloped. The acting head of school's leadership and management of worship is excellent. She is supported very well by the Christian Distinctiveness lead for the MAT. This has ensured that planning for worship is comprehensive, detailed and very supportive of all leaders, including children. Their leadership of worship is wide ranging and frequent enabling all to feel valued and understand that they have ownership of this important aspect of the day, enhancing its status. This understanding is affirmed by the way that their views and evaluations are valued and actioned as well as the involvement of governors in monitoring worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards in RE for the majority of children are at least in line with national expectations and often higher. This is because teaching is good as verified by the subject leader's monitoring. Progress between key stages is also good. Teaching methods make good use of key questions and thinking skills and are lively and interactive. Children's understanding of Christianity is exceptionally good. This is evident in their knowledge of Bible stories, good use and understanding of the Bible as well as of Anglican tradition. Younger children recognise the Christian significance of the bread in a hot cross bun from their regular communion services in school. In the same way Easter symbols such as the cross and the candle are recognised as integral to daily worship. Older children use skills of analysis and interpretation to answer the big question 'Are religion and science compatible?' and give their opinions based on evidence. They value others' views and listen with respect. In this way RE contributes very well to children's spiritual development. The curriculum is engaging, exciting and relevant to children's needs enabling them to enjoy the subject. Religious education is taught discretely, emphasising its importance as a core subject. Children show good interest in other faiths. Visits to Exeter mosque provide positive experiences which are valued by children and parents. The acting head of school who has led RE since October is capable and enthusiastic. She ensures that the subject has a prominent role in the school curriculum. This is evident in the way that learning is assessed and marked in a supportive way in line with other core subjects. However, it is acknowledged that further work has yet

to be done to refine and improve assessment procedures in the light of current national changes to the curriculum. Diocesan training and the support of the MAT Christian Distinctiveness lead is enabling the school to give careful consideration to the adoption of the new resource 'Understanding Christianity'.

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

The school's distinctive Christian character is of the highest quality, is deeply embedded and has a significant impact on the whole school community and beyond. The improvement in the school's distinctive Christian character since the last inspection has been profound. The school leadership's strong Christian vision 'Deep Christian Roots, Nurturing Strong Growth, Flourishing Children' is the driving force at the heart of the school's success and ongoing improvement as a church school. It is also reflected in the very effective way the issues for development since the last inspection have been addressed and the leadership's continuous drive to improve. The school's self-evaluation process as a church school is thorough, pro-active and integral to the whole life of the school. The governors are very knowledgeable due to their regular links with the diocese and their work in sharing good practice amongst the other church school in the MAT. They have high expectations of the school leadership. Their contribution to the life of the school is exceptional. As a consequence, they have an excellent insight into the school's performance as a church school. Succession planning is a high priority and a strength, reflected in the forthcoming appointment to the post of head of school of a member of another school within the MAT. Highly effective strategies provided by directors and governors include a strong focus on providing support and challenge. As a result, significant improvements in the impact of the school's distinctive Christian character have been made since the last inspection. Self-evaluation processes are robust. The children's ethos committee plays a major role in monitoring the school's Christian distinctiveness by liaising with governors and the MAT ethos committee. The staff are a strong team who live out the school's Christian vision and are highly valued by parents and children. Parents feel highly involved in the life of the school and value the way they are included. For instance, a 'regular thought for the day' in newsletters is appreciated as providing a moment of spiritual reflection. The school's partnership with the church has been strengthened recently by the work of the acting head of school, is exceptionally strong and of mutual benefit. Children have a substantial role in monthly church services, contributing in a variety of ways ensuring the school is at the heart of the worshipping community. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report, St Andrew's C of E Primary Academy, Chardstock, Axminster, EX13 7BJ