



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Matthew's Church of England Academy

Lightwood Road,
Stoke on Trent
ST3 7NE

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Lichfield

Local authority: N/A

Dates of inspection: 15 September 2016

Date of last inspection: 21 September 2011

School's unique reference number: 124346

Executive Principal: Paul Mitchell

Inspector's name and number: Marianne Phillips 586

School context

St Matthew's CE Academy is one of the schools within the Church of England Central Education Multi Academy Trust (CECET). It converted to Academy status in 2013. It is a smaller than average school with 94 pupils on roll. Over 38 percent of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. There have been a number of staff changes since the previous inspection. The executive headteacher and head of school have only been in post since the start of this term.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Matthew's as a Church of England school are good

- The embedded Christian values that create a sense of unity and common purpose.
- The commitment of all staff to encourage individual pupil self-reflection.
- The inclusive use of prayer to support the spiritual development of all pupils regardless of background or faith.
- The very strong partnership between the executive principal and head of school that is committed to driving the Christian distinctiveness of the school.

Areas to improve

- Develop the role of the governors, ensuring they work strategically to provide appropriate levels of support and challenge to drive the distinctive Christian character of the school.
- Build on the existing systems for pupil leadership in worship encouraging pupil response in reflection to monitor personal spiritual development.

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

This church school is good in providing nurturing Christian care through an environment where children, regardless of back ground, faith or ability, thrive. Parents appreciate the inclusive approaches which successfully unite the richly diverse school family. The motto, 'Together we work, play, learn and pray with Jesus' is known by all and the embedded.

Christian values, lived out daily, create a sense of harmony and common purpose. The teaching of Jesus, underpins the strong relationships that exist. Parents of all faiths are happy that all children learn about religion through daily worship in St Matthew's church, religious education (RE) lessons and half-termly visits to St Francis church. Questionnaires reflect this. The curriculum is rich in providing many learning experiences through the range of clubs offered, during and after school and through visits and visitors. Pupils have also visited the local Mosque. Children are happy and feel safe and protected. There is a worship committee and a school council. Representatives from both groups are very proud of the work they do. They share that, "we feel closer to God because teachers help us to learn about different religions and to pray together". Consequently, behaviour is excellent, attendance high and pupils of all backgrounds and faith play together and respect each other. The councils are committed to fund raising and supporting others less fortunate than themselves. Prayer is also important to the pupils. Classroom reflection areas, the worship board and St Matthew's church, which is used daily, as the school hall, witnesses this. The school is rich in artefacts and resources, with which pupils are encouraged to engage. School leaders are considering ways in which pupils can make personal responses to God's teaching, through daily reflection, to monitor their spiritual development and growth. This is a priority for the school. Pupils during half-termly mass services in St Francis' church can participate in the Eucharist. They enjoy this and are developing an understanding of the Trinity through the experiences offered. Pupils enter the school displaying skills that are below national expectations. The small cohorts make it very difficult to determine trends in attainment over time. In the current year 6 cohort, at least 3 pupils, 25% of the group have been identified through the school's tracking systems with specific learning needs. Intervention and skilled support are in place, funded through pupil premium grants (PPG), and supplemented by the school's own budget to enable each individual to achieve success. As a result, by the time they leave the majority of pupils are at least in line and often above national targets. The newly appointed executive headteacher and head of school are skilled in analysing pupil data and are committed to raising the standards for all pupils through their shared vision. There are established links with the church of St Francis and St Matthew's. The latter run a Christian 'Busy Bees' club weekly, which is popular. The school has an established network of support through CECET and is effectively developing an understanding of Christian and other faiths globally and locally. This enables their pupils to be prepared for their future lives as citizens in a richly diverse world.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The very good act of worship, led by the head of school emphasised that we are all part of one body in God, through reference to Paul's letters to the Corinthians. Evaluation records and pupils questioned evidence that worship experiences are varied and enjoyable. All staff lead worship weekly. Pupils have fun whilst worshipping and sing enthusiastically. The worship committee takes a leading role. This can involve leading prayer, welcoming the Trinity and lighting the candle during worship. The school has pupil leadership as a priority for further development. 'The Grace' is well known and signed to conclude worship and this illustrates that pupils are comfortable and participate fully in worship. Prayer and reflection is inclusive and pupils are regularly encouraged to use these experiences to help guide their day. Christian values are central to worship. Pupils and staff are empowered to nominate those who are applying these values, in response to 'Jesus the shepherd' in their lives daily, through the 'sheep wall'. Worship is a crucial part of school life and through it pupils are learning about Anglican tradition and biblical teaching. Parents and other stakeholders, encouraged to attend worship and celebrations, are asked to evaluate their experiences. These responses are very positive and parents confirm their views are often acted upon by school leaders. Occasionally governors attend worship and visit school in their formal role as link governors to consider the provision for worship and RE in school. The school's emphasis on providing quality worship that is enjoyable and supportive of the spiritual development of the pupils and all stakeholders, firmly 'rooted in the teachings of Jesus', and is effective.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious Education (RE) has a high status in the school curriculum. It is very effectively led by the head of school, whose passion for the subject is having very positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Regular monitoring through weekly 'drop-ins' and the 'Top tips for consistent teaching and learning' booklet are two examples of effective strategies to drive standards. The school was invited last year, to be part of the 'Understanding Christianity Project' and this work has now been completed. The Christian Distinctiveness Adviser (CDA) from the diocese, is supporting the RE leader in amalgamating the work done from 'Understanding Christianity' with the guidance offered by the new Stoke on Trent SACRE to ensure the quality of RE is continually improving. The two lessons observed provided evidence of quality and consistency in planning across the school. Pupils' books show good and some outstanding examples of learning offered through this provision. Marking is effective in creating a learning dialogue between adults and pupils to ensure quality outcomes. Pupil self-evaluation is a feature of every lesson. These assessment procedures are effective and follow guidance from the diocese. Questioning by teachers and staff is a strength. Both lessons used targeted questions to challenge thinking in response to biblical and Christian teaching. For example, the Year 6 pupils reflected upon the concept of 'stewardship' and how that helped them to consider the role of humans in supporting God's creation. On a similar theme, Year 2 pupils discussed how 'they might look after the gifts of creation'. The lessons motivated and engaged pupils to learn about and from the topic and outcomes observed were at least in line with diocesan (national) expectations. RE links closely with worship and PSHE and is effective in enabling pupils to articulate their views about religion, faith and belief through 'talk partners' and other creative strategies.

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

Although new in post, the head of school knows the school very well and has been part of the school, in other roles for the past 8 years. She and the newly appointed executive principal have formed a very strong partnership and share a common vision for the school, building on its existing strengths. They display outstanding ability to analyse and communicate and are fully committed to the core values and further development of the school as a church school. Their Christian witness is very strong and is appreciated by the stakeholders questioned. They are knowledgeable about their school strengths, their pupils and the families they serve. The school leaders use effective self-evaluation to identify areas of development. One of these is to review the role of governors and the structures that are in place. Then, to agree an action plan to support governors in working more strategically to provide appropriate levels of support and challenge to them in their monitoring role in school. This is good and strengthens the quality of leadership in practice. Parents appreciate the way they are welcomed by the school and encouraged to express their views regularly. They feel they have a voice and that, "the Christian values are lived out and teach their children to care and respect others". In turn they feel they are making a difference to them as a family. They confirm the close links which exist between the community and the school and how highly it is regarded by those it serves. Continued professional development (CPD) for teachers and governors underpins school improvement and is effectively supported through the CECET network. The developmental points from the previous inspection have been met, but plans are in place to further develop the outside areas following the completion of the recent classroom extensions. The Christian distinctiveness of this school is made explicit through its Christian values, vision and prayer and respected and appreciated by stakeholders for the positive way this influences their lives.

SIAMS report September 2016, St Matthew's CE Academy, Stoke on Trent ST3 7NE.

