

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

### St Nicolas Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Downderry  
Torpoint  
Cornwall  
PL11 3LF

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Truro</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Local authority	Cornwall
Date of inspection	20 March 2018
Date of last inspection	04 March 2015
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 140342
Academy Principal Head of School	Julie Simpson Jake Imrie
Inspector's name and number	Patricia Morris 626

#### School context

St Nicolas is a smaller than average sized primary school with 108 children on roll. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average as is the number supported by Pupil Premium. The majority of children are of White British heritage. The school became part of St Barnabas Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) in December 2013, which consists of six church primary schools. The head of school has been in post since May 2016. A new Board of Directors were appointed six weeks ago. Attendance is above the national average.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Nicolas as a Church of England school is good

- Distinctively Christian values are deeply embedded and make a positive impact on the Christian ethos of the school where every child feels nurtured and valued as an individual.
- The head of school, extremely well supported by the Academy Principal, has been instrumental in moving the school forward and is making a significant impact to the Christian distinctiveness of the school.
- The impact of the Junior Worship Team is impressively impacting on children's involvement in worship.
- The excellent links with church members and the local community are mutually beneficial and make a fundamental contribution to the life of the school.
- The newly appointed Board of Directors have made an excellent start, but their work is yet to fully impact on children's learning.

#### Areas to improve

- Ensure that the newly appointed Board of Directors work with the schools existing leadership, to use the school's strong Christian ethos to improve academic standards as well as personal development.
- Monitor progression in spirituality opportunities across year groups in order to evaluate the impact on children's spiritual development.
- Embed the newly initiated links with the international school to further develop children's appreciation of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith.

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

St Nicolas Primary has made impressive progress since the previous inspection. The school has taken on board the need to develop a set of distinctively Christian values and firmly established twelve core Christian values that are explicit and deeply embedded in the life of the school. The whole school community were involved in deciding on the values, generating a real sense of ownership. Children have an excellent understanding of values and realise how important they are to their school and to them as individuals. They say, 'They guide us along our way.' and 'By using our values, we are good role models for new children coming to our school.' Values are firmly linked to the teachings of Jesus and children confidently relate examples of Bible stories that establish each value within the school. One of the many vibrant display boards shows how children have invented Christian superheroes to represent values and used comic strip story boards as examples of how they 'saved the day' in everyday situations. This sets aspirations for children to consistently put them into practice. Values firmly underpin the school vision of, 'We learn together. We play together. We worship together.' This is making a significant contribution to the high profile of the Christian character of the school and impacting on the excellent relationships between staff and children, very good behaviour and positive attitudes which are now being applied to learning. There is a united vision in promoting the development of children's individual spirituality within the school. One child thoughtfully explained, 'Our spirituality is what we are, what we think, our soul.' Opportunities to support children's spiritual development are identified across the curriculum such as the exciting experience of seeing chicks hatch in an incubator, inspiring real 'awe and wonder' responses. Outdoor opportunities such as 'Forest Friday' and a sensory garden, which children designed and successfully applied for a grant to fund, contribute to their appreciation of the world around them. Such experiences have a positive impact on children's spiritual development and encourage positive attitudes about themselves, others, and creation. The school are now exploring ways to monitor progression in spiritual development across the school. Religious education (RE) makes good contributions to children's spiritual development by providing challenging questions to extend children's thinking. It consistently promotes Christian values and makes a significant contribution to the Christian distinctiveness of the school. Children are aware that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith. Their good understanding and respect for diversity in other faith communities is very well supported through inter-faith days and multi-cultural weeks. Such experiences are invaluable in supporting children's understanding of the wider world in which they live.

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

Collective worship has a very high priority and plays an important role in the life of the school. Worship is strongly underpinned by Christian values, their links to Bible stories, the teachings of Jesus and their relevance to children's lives today. Planning of worship is well organised and supported through a variety of resources, including 'Values for Life' and the 'Twelve Baskets' materials. The introduction of a Junior Worship Team is significantly impacting on children's involvement in worship. They plan and deliver their own worship on a weekly basis and the worship seen on the day of the inspection was impressive, from the organised altar table to the way they involved other children through drama and science by confidently experimenting with a peeled and an unpeeled orange in water. As the unpeeled orange floated, they compared the peel to the love of God, protecting the individual inside. Such experiences totally engage children and contribute to spiritual development. The team are now ensuring continuity by training a second team to take over when they leave. As there is no school hall, the local church is used on a daily basis for worship, impacting on the very respectful atmosphere. Children are proud of their connections with the church and see it as an extension of school. This leads to a very strong partnership with the church community who, as there is no vicar, have worked extremely hard to maintain and develop further links with the school. This includes leading an act of worship on a weekly basis, such as the 'Open the Book' team, and supporting the celebration of Christian festivals. Prayer is an important part of worship and opportunities are taken to say prayers throughout the school day. Children appreciate opportunities to write their own prayers to hang on a prayer tree to share, whilst acknowledging that some prayers are private and between them and God. Worship contributes to children's spiritual development through regular reflection time and opportunities to worship outdoors in the grounds or on the nearby beach. This aspect of worshipping is very much appreciated by children who say it enables them to feel closer to God. Worship includes a regular focus on God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and children develop their understanding through class discussions, confidently explaining, 'The Holy Spirit is God inside us.' Monitoring and evaluation of worship takes place regularly and in a variety of ways, by all stakeholders, providing a comprehensive insight into the positive influence of worship across the school community and leading to significant improvement.

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

Religious education has a high profile within the life of the school and significant improvements have been made since the previous inspection. Children enjoy RE and appreciate that it is now more engaging through the use of

drama, music and art. One child commented, 'Learning has become an adventure!' The key lead of RE across the MAT has very good subject knowledge and is effectively supporting the school RE leader. The introduction of the 'Understanding Christianity' resources has rapidly developed and improved teaching and learning in Christianity. Standards in RE are now in line with expectations in other subjects. The curriculum is rich and varied, providing children with opportunities to acquire a good knowledge and understanding of Christianity. Religious education raises children's awareness and develops tolerance and understanding of other faiths and their similarities and differences with Christianity. This is particularly effective through annual inter-faith days when visitors come into school to talk about what their faith means to them and to provide children with experiences of their way of life and culture. Leaders acknowledge that a wider range of opportunities, such as visiting different places of worship, would benefit children and give them a wider knowledge of different faiths. The introduction of key questions in RE, to encourage children to think more deeply, successfully contributes to the development of children's spirituality and supports them in developing their own thinking, their understanding of the world and their own experience within it. Religious education makes a good contribution to the Christian character of the school with displays reflecting strong links to values and challenging questions to make connections with their lives today. Monitoring and evaluation of RE is also improving with each child's progress being carefully tracked. Observations incorporate cross-curricular links ensuring children understand the relevance of RE in the world today.

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

Leaders within the school articulate, live out and promote a vision rooted in distinctively Christian values and the importance of this is being shared with the new Board of Directors. The head of school, extremely well supported by the Academy Principal, has been instrumental in moving the school forward, since his appointment, and is making a significant impact to the Christian distinctiveness of the school. Staff are motivated, by his enthusiastic and often inspirational leadership, in developing a vision underpinned by values and their positive impact on children's lives. All areas from the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. The MAT is now enabling staff to share expertise and children to have opportunities for wider, exciting experiences such as joint residential trips. A new Board of Directors has been recently appointed to bring greater effectiveness to the work of the schools in the MAT. The newly appointed Chair of the Board of Directors is very focussed on the Christian distinctiveness of all schools in the MAT and has a clear vision for the future of St Nicolas school. He is gaining a good understanding of effective practices and is enthusiastic to ensure that in the future the school's strong Christian ethos will be used to support improved academic standards as well as the current good personal development. Standards in core subjects have been below national average over the past few years but children are now on track, according to the school, to achieve the standards expected of them. He recognises the importance for this drive for improvement across the MAT to be an integral part of the Christian vision and for the Board of Directors to ensure that monitoring by the Christian Distinctiveness Team is challenging as well as supportive. Historically, their reports have been descriptive rather than focussing on impact, resulting in missed opportunities. Strong links with the diocese ensure that continual professional development of staff is beneficial in supporting future leaders of church schools. The excellent links with church members and the local community are mutually beneficial and make a significant contribution to the life of the school. For example, for Remembrance Day, children made poppies from clay then visited the local care home to make them with residents. This culminated in a joint service at the war memorial. The school participate in many community projects, which contribute to children's good awareness of others who are not as fortunate as them. Children's global awareness is further enhanced through regular links with their twin village in France and the school are beginning to develop an international connection to a school in the Philippines. The partnership with parents is highly valued by the school and parents readily share their skills and connections such as initiating the installation of a camera to observe the chicks hatching and arranging a visit to a local naval base. Parents speak positively about the school and acknowledge the caring ethos that has been created since the appointment of 'the inspiring new head of school'. They appreciate the 'open door' policy and the focus on Christian values saying, 'they have helped my children's understanding of what it means to be a child of God' and 'teachers really care and treat each child as an individual'. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report March 2018 St Nicolas Church of England VA Primary School Donderry Cornwall PL11 3LF