Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

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| **Anson Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School** |
| Main Street, Great Haywood, Stafford, ST18 0SU |
| **Current SIAMS inspection grade** | **Outstanding** |
| **Diocese** | **Lichfield** |
| Previous SIAMS inspection grade | Good |
| Local authority | Staffordshire |
| Date/s of inspection | 26th January 2017 |
| Date of last inspection | 11th January 2012 |
| Type of school and unique reference number  | 124379 |
| Headteacher | Edward Howard |
| Inspector’s name and number | Mark Cooper 425 |

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| **School context**Anson CE Aided Primary School is a popular school in the rural village of Great Hayward. The school buildings have recently been improved under the leadership of current headteacher and now provide a very good learning environment for its pupils. Most pupils are from a White British background and the number entitled to free school meals is below the national average. There is a strong relationship between school and St Stephens Church. Since the last inspection there has been a change in the headteacher. |
| **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Anson as a Church of England school are outstanding*** The distinctive Christian vision and values that underpin the academic and spiritual development of pupils.
* The centrality of prayer which strengthens the Christian distinctiveness of the school.
* The outstanding teaching and learning that takes place in religious education (RE).
* The strong Christian leadership of the headteacher which drives forward the Christian vision of the school.
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| **Areas to improve*** To provide pupils with the opportunity to explore specific religious ideas and concepts in order to deepen and embed their theological understanding.
* To explore and deepen pupils understanding of the Eucharist and its centrality in Anglican Worship.
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| **The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding** **at meeting the needs of all learners**The headteacher has a strong, clear Christian vision for the school. This is clearly based on ‘a family, a school and a community’ all firmly grounded in the Christian faith. This vision permeates throughout the entire school. All stakeholders are fully aware and have ownership of it. Parents, pupils, teachers, the incumbent and governors all have had some input into its development and they all want to ensure that it is fulfilled in their school. The school is a safe place for pupils to learn, the headteacher being fully aware of ‘Valuing All God’s Children’. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) awareness of pupils is excellent. Prayer is fundamental to school life and underpins the Christian values whilst developing pupils’ spiritual awareness. This is enhanced by ‘Space for the Spirit’, an area set aside in school for pupils to go and pray, write prayers or just quietly reflect. Also ‘Prayer Partners’ where older pupils mentor younger ones and pray with them. Pupils are not embarrassed to talk about their own spiritual journey and prayer seeing it as a natural part of school life. The Christian values of honesty, love, integrity, caring, forgiveness, faithfulness and justice are evident throughout the school and feature strongly in RE lessons, collective worship and contribute significantly to develop pupils’ SMSC awareness. Pupils talk with clarity about these values, in particular caring and forgiveness. They understand that when there are disagreements then they must seek reconciliation and forgiveness. Pupils associate this with Jesus’ death on the cross. As one pupil said, ‘God was kind to us because he sent His Son to forgive us’. Pupils also recognised that God is caring father which they equated to the parable of the Lost Son. The school is a very caring school where ‘kind hands’ that help rather than hurt are at the forefront. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent. This resonates from the deeply rooted Christian values where everyone is to be loved and cared for. The outstanding behaviour and respect that pupils have towards each other is supported by them saying that there is no bullying in school. Pupil progress and attainment is therefore excellent, all achieve and make progress irrespective of background or ability because the school regards every child as a unique creation of God. Parents confirm that the school is a very supportive of their children both academically and pastorally commenting strongly on the family feel of the school. All the parents interviewed liked the positive message that the Christian character of the school gave their children. However they were clear that this message is not forced on their children but is a natural part of what the school is. One parent in particular believed that this had encouraged her child to want to be baptised so that they could be ‘more part of God’s family’. All spoke very highly of the headteacher and teachers commenting on their support and approachability. Pupils understanding of charity and helping others who are less fortunate then themselves is well developed grounded in the story of the Good Samaritan. |
| **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**Collective worship is well planned and developed following the Anglican liturgical year. It is central to the life of the school. Worship follows a set formula of ‘Gathering, Listening, Action and Mission’ (GLAM) which helps pupils to understand that what is learned in worship should be carried into and outside of school. The headteacher has the responsibility for its development but there are regular opportunities for pupils and staff to contribute and lead worship. There are strong links between the school and St Stephens’s Church. Each week one class will attend morning prayer at St Stephens Church. This has encouraged parents to attend and has led to an increase in Sunday church attendance. Morning prayer has both helped pupils to recognise the connection between their school and church and familiarised them with the shape of Anglican liturgy. Reverend Pam regularly visits the school, leads worship and has a strong working relationship with the headteacher. Collective worship is pupil focussed and led. The act of worship observed was led by ‘Key Stage 1’ focussing on St Paul’s conversion. All pupils were actively involved either through singing, praying, lighting candles or drama. It was clear that pupils enjoy worship, are confident and grow in their spiritual understanding. One pupil commented that worship, ‘always feels like I am in heaven talking to God directly’. Parents value what the school does in collective worship. One parent commented that for her collective worship and RE helped her child to, ‘enter a relationship with God’. Pupils talked about how collective worship deepened their knowledge and understanding of the Bible, stories from the Old and New Testaments and Christian celebrations such as Lent, Easter, Advent, Christmas and Epiphany. They have a good understanding of the Trinity, particularly Jesus as God the Son. Reflection areas in all classrooms provide additional focal points for pupil prayer and stillness. In particular the introduction of both the “Space for the Spirit” and “Prayer Partners” significantly enhances pupils’ spiritual awareness. One pupil said that the “Space for the Spirit” was a ‘peaceful place to tell God your worries’ and that a ‘Prayer Partner’ gave them confidence knowing there was always someone to pray with them. Governors, teachers, parents and pupils are very clear about the centrality of prayer in school. A well-attended weekly worship club helps pupils to further explore the Christian faith and the importance of prayer. Collective worship is monitored and evaluated by the both the headteacher and governors and take into account pupils’ views. Pupils now need to explore and deepen their understanding of Eucharist and its centrality in Anglican Worship. |
| **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding**The delivery of RE has many outstanding features which impacts very positively on the progress and attainment of pupils irrespective of background or ability. Lessons are well planned taking into account pupils’ needs and abilities. They are well resourced, imaginatively delivered and thought provoking. Pupils take the subject seriously, are active learners and keen to work to the best of their ability. Teachers encourage pupils to discuss and share their thoughts and feelings. Pupils’ skills of enquiry, interpretation and reflection are clearly developed throughout lessons. There is time for quiet and stillness which give pupils opportunities for spiritual reflection. In a past lesson reflection on Psalm 23 one pupil had written that this Psalm helped them, ‘not to be afraid because God is always with you because He is inside your heart’. Pupils talked very positively about RE lessons and how much fun they were, but more importantly how their understanding of the life and teachings of Jesus had grown. The RE lessons observed made clear connections between what was being taught and the school’s Christian values. This reinforced and deepened pupils’ understanding of them. The ‘kind hands’ approach was evident during pupils’ group discussions. Pupils therefore showed respect towards one another and listened intently to each other’s points of view and opinions. In pupils’ RE books it is clear that they are encouraged to focus on the similarities between faiths rather than the differences. Pupils are therefore able to recognise the commonalities between different faith traditions which develop their understanding of them. Pupils show an excellent understanding of Christianity and their understanding of other faiths and traditions is very good. They were very enthusiastic about their experiences on the Derby faith walk which gave them the opportunity to experience other faith traditions first hand. They believed this helped them to develop their understanding and appreciation of religious diversity. This is further enhanced by the ‘One World Week’ where pupils are able to explore other faiths and cultures. Pupils appreciated the visit from an Afghan refugee who talked about his escape from Afghanistan. This had a profound impact on pupils and clearly helped them to gain a wider understanding of global issues facing the world today. Links with a school in Kenya have also broadened pupils’ understanding of the wider world and different Christian traditions. In addition pupils are clearly aware of the difficulties facing Syria today and felt that RE gave them opportunities to ask questions about this. Pupils were clear in their understanding that any form of prejudice or discrimination was wrong saying we were, ‘all unique’ and ‘children of God’. They related this to Jesus’s story of the Good Samaritan and his teaching of, ‘loving your neighbour as yourself’. Parents commented very positively about RE and believed it gave their children the opportunity to explore not only religion but other issues facing the world today. Assessment procedures in RE are robust and it is clear that a great deal of thought and care has gone into this. Pupils make very good progress in the subject. It is well led by an RE specialist who is also the headteacher. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in RE has been delivered by the diocese and headteacher who has also undergone the “Understanding Christianity” course. The headteacher ensures that RE complies with the National Society Statement of Entitlement. There are plans to apply for the RE Quality Mark. Further exploration of specific religious ideas and concepts will help deepen and embed pupil’s theological understanding. |
| **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding**The Christian vision of the school is driven by a dedicated and very committed headteacher. Since his appointment he has transformed the school and strengthened its Christian distinctiveness, believing that this is crucial for the academic success and spiritual development of pupils. He sees each one as a unique child of God who should be encouraged and nurtured to strive to fulfil their God given potential. He has the full support of the governing body, teaching staff, pupils and parents in achieving this. Governors and headteacher meet regularly to discuss how the school can continue to move forward to benefit pupils both academically and spiritually. The foundation governors are actively involved in monitoring the school and the vice chair of governors understands the school well. There is a strong working relationship between the headteacher and Reverend Pam of St Stephen’s Church. Pupils can develop their leadership through membership of the School Council and Eco-Council. The Parents, Teachers, Friends, Association of Anson (PTFA) have built strong links between the school and the local community. This has drawn more families into the life of the school and St Stephen’s Church. Teachers feel supported and valued giving them confidence in their role. Parents believe the headteacher is a strong leader, but also very welcoming and approachable. Self- evaluation procedures have been tightened and are more robust. The school is constantly looking for new ways to improve, seeking both the opinions of teachers, pupils and parents. Teaching staff and governors have benefited from diocesan support, training and advice and believe this has helped to develop and strengthen the Christian distinctiveness of the school. Collective worship and RE are clearly central to school life. The headteacher ensures that these have specific action plans, and that their impact on pupils is closely monitored and assessed. The headteacher is planning for the future leadership of church schools by supporting one member of staff to develop the leadership of RE across the school. |

SIAMS report January 2017 Anson Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School ST18 0SU