

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

### Northern Saints Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

Rotherham Road, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR5 5QL

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Durham</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Local authority	Sunderland
Date of inspection	6 July 2018
Date of last inspection	15 June 2015
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 139425
Headteacher	Steve Williamson
Inspector's name and number	David Tait 887

#### School context

Northern Saints is a larger than average voluntary aided primary school situated in an area of significant disadvantage within northern Sunderland. There are 555 children on roll. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported through pupil premium funding is above average. The proportion of pupils with disabilities or special educational needs is above average. The vast majority of pupils are of white British background. The school is actively involved in supporting other schools in the region. A local authority commissioned alternative provision for pupils with speech and language impairment is based at the school.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Northern Saints as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Distinctive Christian values, rooted in the gospel and appropriate to the heritage and context of the school, have a significant impact on pupils' lives and achievements.
- Pupils are excited about religious education (RE) and relish the challenge it offers. It contributes significantly to the Christian character of the school.
- RE and collective worship are exceptionally well led, resulting in highly effective practice in these areas.
- The distinctive Christian nature of collective worship ensures that pupils have a very well-developed understanding of the significance of Jesus Christ in the Christian faith and of the Christian belief in the Trinity.
- Standards in RE are high and progress is rapid as a result of a well-planned and richly resourced curriculum.
- Leaders confidently articulate a shared vision for the school directly flowing from the school's Christian values and passionate advocacy of justice.
- Every opportunity is taken to empower and develop staff as future leaders in church schools.

#### Areas to improve

- Ensure a greater range of opportunities across all year groups to develop pupils' understanding of Christianity through engagement with biblical text.
- Strengthen links with local church communities in order to benefit both church and school.
- Increase the role of governors in planning for the development of and subsequently evaluating the effectiveness of the development of the school as a church school.

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

All members of the school community have a deep understanding of how explicit Christian values make a significant difference to their lives. Pupils are very articulate in describing the school's core values, which include faith, peace, courage, trust and hope. In turn, they are able to articulate how these values help them to build, and then sustain, positive and harmonious relationships with others. They speak insightfully and confidently, for example, about the value of peace and forgiveness and articulate clearly the ways in which these values support them both whilst at school and in their lives beyond. Pupils understand that the school's values have roots in the teaching of the Bible. As a result, they are able to give thoughtful examples of the varied Bible stories that support their understanding of these values. One pupil, for example, commented that, 'Jesus brings peace to all, just as he calmed the storm.' Adults too, are clear that the school's ethos is founded on Christian values rooted in biblical scripture. The values, and their application to daily school life, are an integral part of the school and they are lived out in the manner in which the community understand and approach their learning and personal development. The school is tenacious in addressing issues of low attendance. Its approaches are firmly rooted in an appreciation of the value and dignity of all grounded in Christian values. The school's 'firm foundations' rooted in Christian values make a considerable contribution to the pupils' exemplary attitude and behaviour. The school has successfully created an environment in which pupils are keen to learn and have excellent attitudes towards their studies. Indeed, progress and achievement outcomes are exceptionally strong and the school attributes this to the shared Christian values which nurture the whole community. Opportunities for pupils to reflect abound, with skilful and imaginative use made of reflection areas in both key areas and classroom spaces throughout the school, as well as in the outside environment. As a result of careful planning and skilled adaptation to the needs of individuals and groups, pupils are able to develop their spirituality. Pupils are provided with opportunities to reflect on questions that enable them to apply their reflection so that it has relevance in their own lives. When pupils are given opportunities to explore and describe their views and opinions on questions of significance and importance, they do so with enthusiasm and confidence. Pupils are zealous in their pursuit of justice and are able to apply a high degree of biblical understanding in this regard. They are developing their appreciation of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. They celebrate diversity and difference between a range of faiths and beliefs and are confident and respectful when expressing their beliefs. RE makes a significant contribution to the pupils' social and moral development as well as underpinning their understanding of the school's values and how these influence daily living. RE is highly valued within the curriculum and pupils respond with enthusiasm when applying their well-developed knowledge to support their understanding.

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

Collective worship at Northern Saints is inclusive of all within the community, offers both encouragement and inspiration and is central to school life. As well as offering a focus and source of togetherness for the school family, worship reaches out to the parish and wider parental community. Worship is thoughtfully and comprehensively planned and, as a consequence, challenges and supports the whole community to live out the school's Christian values. Worship includes a wealth of biblical material and content and as a result, pupils have an extremely well-developed understanding of the person of Jesus Christ and his significance for Christians. Anglican prayers and responses are used confidently and provide a liturgical structure to worship. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the times and seasons of the Church's year. The worship committee provides pupils with an excellent range of opportunities to plan and lead worship regularly. They utilise these with enthusiasm. The school makes excellent use of a varied range of leaders of worship, including the parish priest, ecumenical partners and church leaders, the local churches' youth worker as well as visiting guest speakers and school staff. This ensures a rich variety of Christians from a range of backgrounds regularly lead worship, which, in turn, provides the school with many different experiences of worship. Strong leadership by the collective worship leader ensures that variety in leadership and style is a strength and that coherence is maintained across the breadth of styles and settings for worship. Pupils have an age-appropriate appreciation of the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is a result of the well-planned opportunities worship provides to consider Christian understanding of the nature of God. Worship is stimulating, creative and engaging. It provides pupils with the opportunity to pray, reflect, ponder and offer praise to God. Opportunities for prayer abound throughout the course of the day and excellent use is made of class reflection areas and the whole school prayer spaces area. As one pupil commented, 'You can pray anytime and anywhere at Northern Saints.' These rich resources for personal prayer and reflection are increasingly led and developed by the pupils themselves. Staff are involved in planning, leading and delivering worship in school and value the wealth of opportunities available to pray. The innovative and experienced leader of worship has developed a clear strategy for the evaluation of worship. This is firmly embedded within the school and ensures that all members of the community, including pupils, staff, parents and governors, are able to impact on future developments in worship. Future developments in worship are planned in light of feedback received. As a result, the quality of worship continues to be sustained and developed.

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

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is excellent as a direct result of the skilled teaching evident throughout all year groups and the carefully planned and resourced curriculum. Consequently, attainment in RE is high and pupils' progress from their starting points is rapid. This ensures that all pupils have a well-developed understanding of both Christianity and other world religious traditions. Pupils demonstrate a palpable excitement and enjoyment for the subject. Indeed, as one pupil remarked, 'Everyone loves RE, it's about hopes and dreams and being open in the way you think and behave.' RE lessons challenge pupils through the breadth and depth of learning activities and the use of stimulating and engaging challenge questions for them to explore. Work from pupils of all ages demonstrates a wide range of activities ensure RE is engaging and challenging for all learners. RE books demonstrate high levels of pupil understanding and a sustained degree of pride in the work undertaken and so the value placed on learning in RE. Across the school, and in particular in those year groups trialling the school's new approach to engaging with biblical text in the teaching of Christianity, high levels of religious literacy are demonstrated. For example, the work undertaken in Year 6 to use St Paul's letters to explain aspects of Christian teaching. Teacher feedback and marking provide pupils with well-crafted and appropriate challenge questions. Consequently, pupils' thinking is constantly extended and pupils are developing a range of higher level skills, including enquiry, analysis, interpretation and reflection. The curriculum follows the diocesan syllabus, covers a wide range of different topics and faiths, whilst at the same time makes pertinent links to the school's Christian values. Pupils have an impressive knowledge of other world faiths and demonstrate a respect for different beliefs and experiences. Pupils particularly enjoyed a recent inter-faith week and receiving visitors from various religions into school. The leadership of RE is highly effective. Comprehensive and appropriately targeted support by the subject leader is firmly in place. This has ensured a clear focus on both the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and progress and standards achieved by pupils in RE. A range of evidence is utilised when evaluating the quality of teaching and learning in RE, including observations of teaching, pupil voice and scrutiny of work. These reviews have included governors and input from diocesan advisors. Monitoring of the subject is both proportionate and thorough. For example, monitoring has focused on challenge in RE with this improving as a direct result. Staff value feedback and support from the subject leader to maintain the high quality of teaching and learning in the subject and develop themselves as ever more effective teachers of RE.

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

The headteacher, ably supported by the wider leadership team, has ensured that the school's Christian ethos and character is substantially improved since the previous inspection. The introduction of new approaches to the working out of the school's values and in the support given to those who lead collective worship and RE has greatly improved the quality of provision. This, in turn, has made a sustained and significant impact on the pupils' understanding and appreciation of what it means to be a church school community. These improvements have borne fruit because of precise monitoring and evaluation resulting from a comprehensive understanding by leaders of the nature and purpose of a church school. As a result, areas for development and actions to support these are accurate and timely. The regular refinement of the school's Christian values and the adoption of a breadth of approaches to worship are examples of this good practice in action. The leadership team has an excellent grasp of how the distinctive Christian vision makes a difference to the pupils' learning and human flourishing. They are passionate in their pursuit of every child flourishing as a child of God. As a direct result of the school's commitment to justice, provision for all, including the most vulnerable, is excellent. Leaders have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and how it can develop as a church school. Self-evaluation is accurate and well-evidenced. This is because it is based on responses which come directly from hearing the views and experiences of children, parents and other members of the school community. Action planning responds to this evidence. The headteacher is passionate about the importance of preparing future leaders for roles in church schools. Consequently, all leaders within school are highly skilled and committed to their own development. This has a substantial impact on the development of the school's Christian distinctiveness. The school's Christian vision is clearly understood by those with parental responsibility. They feel strongly that it gives children opportunities to explore what faith means to them with confidence and sensitivity. As one parent commented, 'Our children love coming to school, it's a big family where everyone has a place.' Parents are able to give numerous examples of how the school's Christian values have influenced behaviour both inside and outside school, for example through children better understanding their own emotional needs and in their relationships with others. Pupils are confident in taking their place in the world. Governors understand their school well and are able to relate how Christian values contribute towards the school's academic and pastoral success. They are aware of the monitoring that takes place. However, this is not sufficiently formal in order to support and challenge leaders in the development, and subsequent evaluation of the effectiveness of, the school as a church school. The school has close links with the local parish church and clergy, as well as further links with other Christian denominations in the area. The school has plans in place to further strengthen these links. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.