

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Laurence's Church of England Academy

Old Church Road, Coventry CV6 7ED	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Coventry
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	1 April 2103
Name of multi-academy trust	Diocese of Coventry Multi-Academy Trust
Date of inspection	9th March 2017
Date of last inspection	October 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy 139383
Executive headteacher Head of school	Clare Lucas Joe Jennings
Inspector's name and number	Rosemary Privett 321

School context

St. Laurence's Church of England Primary School converted to an academy as part of the Diocese of Coventry Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) in April 2013. It is a larger than the average primary school serving an area of deprivation. The number of minority ethnic pupils is above the national average. The percentage of children with English as an additional language is broadly in line with national average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is lower than the national average. A new head of school, executive headteacher and chair of governors have been appointed since the last inspection.

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

- The strong shared vision of the head of school, executive headteacher and senior leaders for the best education for all within a Christian context
- High quality pastoral care provided by the school within a Christian framework enables pupils to make good progress.
- High quality relationships demonstrate the school's Christian values, such as love, respect, honesty, hope, courage and trust in action.
- Strong links with the parish, the wider community and its many professional partnerships, enables the school's distinctive Christian character to be shared widely.

Areas to improve

- Develop the involvement of pupils in the evaluation of worship and religious education (RE) so that they have more input into their on-going development.
- Develop the role of the worship team so that they are taking responsibility for planning and leading in a variety of settings.

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

A distinctive Christian ethos, sits at the very heart of this inclusive school. In response to an area for development, the school reviewed its vision and adopted a set of core Christian values. Values of love, respect, honesty, hope, courage and trust now shine through the life of the school. As a result, pupils learn in a safe and secure Christian environment where their wellbeing is of paramount importance. A Year 6 pupil said, 'School is like a happy home where we learn.' The gospel words, 'Do to others as you would have them do to you', form the school's golden rule. They are prominently displayed and serve as a reference point for the whole community. The school's behaviour policy follows 'in the footsteps of St Laurence', with compassion and understanding at its heart. Five 'do to others' rules for the classroom, are central to the policy. They help the school to meet its aim to, '...build courage of conviction to act according to our Christian values'. A Year 6 pupil said, 'The rules give us courage to talk about our problems and solve them.' As a result, behaviour is of a high standard and relationships between all members of the community are excellent.

The values strongly underpin the work of the experienced pastoral support team. Their dedication and commitment develops strong and trusting relationships. These build over time enabling pupils and their families to feel valued and supported. As a result of this, pupils enjoy coming to school, attendance is improving and exclusions are rare. Supportive relationships are also central to the success of the varied support mechanisms for groups of vulnerable pupils. The progress seen in both the academic achievement and behaviour of these pupils is a testimony to the quality of teaching, pastoral care and Christ like compassion given to all. The school's values are shared explicitly through worship, RE and in the school's visual environment. Pupils also experience Christian values in action, through the school's considerable charity work. Through donations to the foodbank for example, the school community demonstrate love in a very tangible way.

The school embraces the Church of England's vision of 'life in its fullness', through its wide-ranging programme of extra curricular provision. This provision enriches the main curriculum, giving pupils experiences that broaden horizons and raise aspirations. Strong and effective links are made across subject boundaries, ensuring that pupils grow spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. Themes such as 'A Fairer World', skillfully combine RE, literacy, and cultural work. The school has recently re-dedicated itself as a Cross of Nails school. As part of the re-dedication class pledges were written. These show that pupils are developing a clear understanding of reconciliation and the importance of forgiveness in their lives. All these learning experiences enhance the Christian character. Spiritual development is also well supported through age appropriate reflection areas in classrooms. Creative activities in class worship are often used to help pupils to reflect and think deeply. All art or writing is valued and displayed in the reflection areas, for the class to share. RE has a high profile, making a good contribution to the school's Christian character. It is enjoyed by pupils and gives good support to their spiritual development. Work on faiths other than Christianity help pupils appreciate the importance of respecting the beliefs of others. Using pupils as experts and visiting places of worship, enables them learn about religious diversity in their local area. Through cross-curricular links between RE and other subjects, pupils are beginning to develop an understanding of Christianity as a worldwide religion. The school has identified the need to involve pupils in the evaluation of RE as their viewpoints are valuable to inform its on-going development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The daily act of worship has a place of importance in the daily life of the school. It is an extension of the school's core purpose, which is focused on the development of the whole child. Pupils enjoy it because themes are relevant and help them to make meaning. In this way it supports their spiritual development. Worship is highly inclusive which means staff and pupils of all faith backgrounds are happy to be involved. Staff value the time when the whole school meets together seeing it as space for personal reflection. They feel it 'grounds' them at the start of the school week.

There is a rich visual environment in both the hall and in class reflection areas. Objects such as crosses, candles, coloured cloths and symbols of The Trinity are permanent features. As a result of this, pupils have a good understanding of the meaning behind key religious symbols. They talk confidently about aspects of The Trinity and the cycle of the church year. Worship themes are now carefully planned around the school's core values and the major festivals. They also expand on key Christian beliefs and regularly explore biblical material and the life and teaching of Jesus. This means that pupils understand his importance to Christians. Singing assemblies give time for pupils to explore the meaning and message contained in the hymns and songs they sing.

The vicar and his wife regularly support the worshipping life of the school and are welcome visitors. They meet regularly with school leaders to plan how the church and school can work together. Each key stage visits St Laurence Church on alternate weeks for collective worship. This means that the church holds a place of particular importance for pupils. A typical comment from pupils was: 'St Laurence Church feels like a special and holy place. I always feel welcome there.'

The weekly class worship time is a particularly strong feature of the school's worship provision. Pupils really enjoy

this time together. Teachers rotate around classes to lead, helping to build a shared worshipping community. The themes on these occasions, explicitly link the school's values with their biblical roots. They are shared in a thoughtful, lively and engaging way, relevant to the age of the pupils. Effective planning notes from the coordinator, support staff and ensure continuity of practice. Time for reflection is taken very seriously. Pupils value the space to reflect on the theme and record their thoughts. This, together with time to talk with their peers, helps them to link biblical themes to their everyday life experiences. In this way it strongly supports their spiritual development. Pupils understand the purpose of prayer in worship. A Year 6 pupil said, 'Jesus prayed to his father when he needed him so we do too.' The school prayer and Lord's Prayer are used regularly so pupils are familiar with them. Pupils also value composing their own prayers for use in whole school and class based worship. Recently, a pupil worship team has been created. Their role is currently developing through the planning and leading aspects of class worship. The times when they have ownership of planning and leading worship in other settings are currently limited. The impact of worship is carefully monitored and evaluated by leaders and staff so that the programme remains relevant and fresh. The role of pupils in the process is, however undeveloped, which the school recognizes as an area for future action.

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

The strong and focused leadership of the executive headteacher and head of school ensure that this school promotes a distinctly Christian vision. Leaders' expectations for the best possible education for all pupils within a caring Christian environment are passionately expressed. Through their nurturing ethos, they ensure that this is an effective school, which promotes pupils' spiritual development and academic achievement.

Since conversion to an academy under the MAT, an uncompromising drive to improve outcomes for pupils has been successful. This resulted in St Laurence's School coming out of a category as a good school, after only 16 months. There is now a strong sense of shared endeavour with all staff committed to its on-going development. The head of school and executive headteacher and their senior leaders know their school well. They have effective strategies in place to check on its overall effectiveness. This is demonstrated by the robust action taken in response to a dip in attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2016. Senior leaders also know the school's strengths as a church school and have effective strategies in place to check on its effectiveness. This careful self-evaluation has resulted in key actions on the school development plan, which are strongly focused on enriching the school's distinctive character. Leaders correctly identified the need for the whole curriculum to be informed by a distinctive Christian vision. To this end, they have planned effectively for the implementation of the 'Understanding Christianity' resources, ensuring all staff are appropriately trained.

As a result of training, the governing body has a better understanding of its strategic role and offers both support and challenge. The chair, in particular, challenges and supports other leaders to embed their actions and conduct within the Christian values. Governors monitor the effectiveness of the school as a church school as part of their monitoring of the school development plan. They visit regularly and their findings are shared with the full governing body.

The executive headteacher, head of school and governors are committed to the development of future leaders of education. This is a significant strength of the leadership of the school. Training and mentoring for staff at all stages in their career, is having a positive impact on standards and practice. Partnerships with the MAT, school improvement partners and Teach First are strong and beneficial. They enable staff to engage in professional dialogue and build mutually beneficial relationships. Newly qualified teachers value training received through the MAT. This helps them reflect on teaching in a church school context. Through their roles as school councillors, house captains and members of the worship team, pupils are also developed as leaders.

The Christian distinctiveness lead teacher is well supported in her role, which includes the leadership of RE and collective worship. Both are well led and meet statutory requirements. She works closely with the chair of governors. The impact of their work is seen in the many recent improvements in provision.

St Laurence's develops strong partnerships with parents through 'come and share' sessions and events like the 'Big Breakfasts'. Links with St Laurence Church are a particular strength and strongly support the schools' distinctive Christian character. Services to celebrate major festivals and activities such as 'Messy Church' are well supported. These links make church accessible to all, whilst at the same time developing an understanding of Christian worship and practice.

SIAMS report March 2017 St Laurence's CE Academy, Coventry CV6 7ED