



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

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| Walton Church of England VC Primary School | Meadow Lane, Walton, Street, Somerset. BA16 9LA |
| Current SIAMS inspection grade | Outstanding |
| Diocese/Methodist District | Diocese of Bath and Wells |
| Previous SIAMS inspection grade: | Good |
| Local authority | Somerset LA |
| Name of multi-academy trust/ federation | N/A |
| Date/s of inspection | 21 September 2016 |
| Date of last inspection | 20 September 2011 |
| School's unique reference number | 123776 |
| Headteacher | Rachel Toal |
| Inspector's name and number | Alison Appleyard 877 |

School context

Walton Church of England VC Primary School is a smaller than average sized primary school serving the village of Walton on the northern edge of Street. It has five classes, some of mixed age. Almost all pupils are white British and deprivation is lower than the national average. The number of pupils receiving SEN support is approximately average, though there are no statemented children. Many governors are relatively new to the governing body and their roles, including the chair who was appointed one week before the inspection.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Walton Church of England VC Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The life of the school, all it is and all it does, is underpinned by Christian values, making a significantly positive impact on the life chances of individual children.
- All stakeholders share a passion for and commitment to the school's Christian community which drives excellent provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children.
- The school has developed an extremely strong partnership with the parish church earning it an influential place at the heart of the Christian life of its village community.
- Children engage in high-quality reflection and Christian debate enabling them to grow in confidence and to develop their personal spirituality.

Areas to improve

- Develop the role of governors so that they are able to fully hold leaders to account for the school's effectiveness as a church school.
- Involve children more in the planning, evaluation and delivery of collective worship in order to further develop their confidence as young leaders.

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

The life of the school is underpinned by Christian values which are given a high profile and are deeply embedded. Leaders articulate their belief in the uniqueness of every child as created in the image of God and work with a determination to support each to achieve their full potential and leave school as well-rounded individuals. This means that the Christian character of the school has a significant impact on the daily lives and achievements of all learners. All groups of children attain well here, academically, significantly above the national averages. Targeted continuous professional development enables all staff to support the special needs of their children, who, regardless of ability, are encouraged to develop resilience and self-esteem. As a result, children enjoy school and attendance is very good. "We underpin what we do with our Christian values. We love everyone regardless." Relationships across the school community are very strong enabling children to grow in personal confidence. Staff say that, "There is a lot of laughter here." Adults and children respect each other and gain respect in return. As a result, behaviour is outstanding and parents say that this is reflected in behaviours at home. Children say that they feel safe in school and that incidents of bullying are rare and dealt with appropriately by staff. Children are encouraged to develop socially, morally, spiritually and culturally through a rich and varied curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities in which the school's Christian ethos is overtly demonstrated. Pupils are taken on trips to experience awe and wonder, for example, in Wells Cathedral and at the top of Glastonbury Tor. They are encouraged to develop entrepreneurial skills and raise money to support their own class needs and the needs of others supporting local and national charities. As a result of this rich curriculum, children develop independent learning skills and the ability to consider and reflect upon deeper theological matters such as what heaven is like. Children apply Christian values to the way they live. Older children act as playground buddies to younger children and help them with their meals at lunchtime. They enthusiastically assume responsible positions from a range offered including House Captains Council, Class Teams or the recycling team. RE is central to delivering the ethos and vision of the school. "We offer the Bible as a manual for life." A year two class was asked what they had learnt from special stories. One boy wrote, "When I am in a difficult situation I can rely on God." The Christian character of the school is enhanced in RE, where children are introduced to Christian celebrations. They encounter the notion of the Trinity and experience baptising a doll in year two, "in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit," and stage a mock wedding in year two. Children look forward to their RE lessons in which they enjoy such things as lively debate and dramatic interpretation of Bible stories. The school is rich with religious displays, many Christian, but also showing a sound understanding of and respect for the importance of other faiths and cultures. Children discuss the similarities and differences between Holi and Christmas making links with other community traditions in Manchester and Leicester. They also look at the differences between styles of Christian worship, looking closely at both Baptist and Anglican traditions.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is central to school life. It sets out the Christian values and acts as a compass which children can use to make decisions about the way they live. Worship is well-planned and directed by the headteacher with other members of the school community. Everyone enjoys the way it is engagingly brought to life by visits from the parish Open the Book team and the local vicar. Children are familiar with a range of Anglican liturgy used in collective worship. This is made inclusive of all children by, for example, the impressive use of Somerset Total Communication hand-signing in responses. Children enjoy worship. They participate willingly, sing enthusiastically and are keen to be even more involved in planning. Children respect and value this time of coming together to learn about Jesus and eagerly recount the stories he told and how they apply to their own lives. "Jesus invited Zacchaeus to tea which means that if we say sorry we can be forgiven." Children openly discuss and talk about their faith, or having none. The Christian values heard about in collective worship are impacting on children's lives. Parents and staff speak of how collective worship influences pupil behaviour. Children write impressively about how they consider the consequences of their actions in the light of Bible stories such as the Good Samaritan and the actions of figures such as Mother Teresa. Her belief that we should always greet people with a smile, and pass the smile on resulted in a child putting an arm round the shoulders of his distressed neighbour during collective worship and offering a smile and words of reassurance. Children think deeply about big questions and develop tolerance and respect in preparation for life in a multi-cultural community. British values are closely linked with Christian values in school. For example, the writing of their class charter prompted a girl to say, "Our class charter makes me consider what I do a bit more." Children believe that prayer is important and this is encouraging them to develop their personal spirituality. Graces written by the children are said before lunch, and to encourage

personal reflection and private prayer, a range of places and opportunities has been developed. Each classroom has a sacred space with a Bible, children's prayers and prayer books, a cross and a candle used for personal and class reflection, and a worry box. Some have their own quiet rooms too. There are quiet spaces around the school building and in the beautiful grounds, for example, under willows or in a gazebo, where children go to find peace and pray or reflect. Children also understand the importance of prayer for the wider community. They write prayers for special occasions and everyday use and confidently read them in collective worship or church. Collective worship enables children to become familiar with Bible stories from the old and new testaments, with the life and stories of Jesus and have an understanding of the Holy Trinity.

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

The headteacher demonstrates outstanding leadership by modelling high expectations based on Christian values and inspiring all stakeholders to share a strong commitment to the aim of high pupil outcomes. The governing body is relatively new and though committed to the Christian vision of enabling every child to fulfil their God-given potential, and understanding the high academic performance of the school, it is not yet able to hold the headteacher to account for the school's Christian distinctiveness. As the Christian ethos as the life blood of the school is at the heart of this school's vision, it is necessary that the governors take a lead in ensuring that this remains the case in practice. Without this, leadership cannot be outstanding. However, distinctively Christian values are lived out across the school. Leadership ensures that the structure of the school and the rich curriculum are driven by the school's Christian ethos. Classes have a Christian religious symbol with which to identify themselves. Class 4 has a rainbow and children create their own rainbow promises such as, "I promise to be a good friend." There is a holistic approach to personalised learning demonstrating a strong focus on meeting the needs of all learners. Leaders plan and use data effectively to ensure that pupils achieve and progress. This is complemented by opportunities for learning in the beautiful grounds which enables children to develop their awareness of God's creation. Links with schools in Kenya and France add breadth to the curriculum and trips to the top of Glastonbury Tor give children a physical view of the world around them and a sense of their own small place in it. Both staff and children feel safe and valued. Their voices are listened to and impact upon the direction of the school. Staff say, "We are a close knit team and support each other." "I enjoy coming to work. It's family." Leaders ensure that all staff receive professional development and leadership opportunities. The bond between school and the local church is extremely strong and apparently seamless. The whole school attends church for religious festivals and for Christian workshops. Children love going into the church and know that it is theirs. This has resulted in some children introducing their families to Sunday services. Close working with the church means that there are Christian youth clubs and activities running daily out of school time, all of which are well-attended by current and past pupils. Year six children attend the Diocesan leavers' services at Wells cathedral. Parents believe that the school is, "Developing our children through Christian values, to be good members of society." They agree that communication is very good. They are invited to attend services and functions, and the headteacher is always available. One mother said, "There is clear leadership. We are lucky to have this school." The leadership of both worship and RE are given a high priority and are extremely effective in delivering and ensuring the Christian ethos across the school. The provision of RE and collective worship meets statutory requirements.