

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

South Marston Church of England Primary School

Old Vicarage Lane, South Marston, Swindon, SN3 4SH

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Bristol
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	November 2016
Name of multi-academy trust	Diocese of Bristol Academies Trust
Date of inspection	12 June 2018
Date of last inspection	18 June 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy, Primary 143494
Headteacher	Luke Maddison
Inspector's name and number	Daphne Spitzer NS No 37

School context

The school is set in the village of South Marston, close to Swindon. It has 107 pupils on roll arranged in four mixed-age classes. Pupils come from the village and areas beyond. The majority of children are from White British heritage families. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is below the national average as is the proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium grant. The school manages its own pre-school. In November 2016 the school became an academy and joined the Diocese of Bristol Academies Trust.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of South Marston VC as a Church of England school are good

- Very high quality relationships promoted by the school's Christian character and strong sense of community are having a good impact on pupils' personal and spiritual development.
- Pupils' increased involvement in the life of the school, such as through the school council and worship council, is strengthening its Christian character.
- The wide range of first hand experiences and visits and visitors are developing pupils' understanding of the world beyond school and promoting positive and accepting attitudes towards people of other faiths and cultures.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that pupils understand and can explain the explicit biblical roots of the new set of values and their links to the new vision as well as the difference they make to their lives and the whole life of the school.
- Develop effective systems for monitoring the impact of the school's new vision and values so that leaders are able accurately to identify priorities for improvement and further develop the school's Christian distinctiveness.
- Formally plan opportunities for the development of spirituality in the curriculum and monitor and evaluate their impact.
- Provide an explicit space in the school grounds for quiet reflection in order to increase opportunities provided for pupils' personal spiritual growth.

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

South Marston's warm and welcoming Christian ethos creates a happy, secure and inclusive environment in which pupils are nurtured and grow in confidence and self-belief. Learning is focused on the needs of each individual child in line with the Christian belief that each one is precious and loved by God. This is reflected in the school's caring and considerate approach to pupils' attendance, working alongside parents in a supportive way. Standards and progress are at least in line with the national average. Pupils understand that wisdom, closely linked to the school's vision, promotes their learning as well as helps them make wise choices in their behaviour, such as seen in the parable of the wise and foolish builders.

The school council recently played an important role in developing the school's new behaviour policy and a whole school charter. As a result, their rights and responsibilities as individuals are underpinned by the four key words of their Christian vision, 'wisdom, hope, community and dignity'. They believe that their behaviour should be closely linked to Christ's teaching to be kind and helpful to one another. The school's weekly award of the 'kindness cup' is an example of this.

Staff have spent time successfully developing a consistent understanding and a shared approach to developing spirituality. Although opportunities are not formally identified in the curriculum, nevertheless they are having a beneficial impact. Pupils are encouraged to stop and reflect during the day, opportunities which benefit their learning as well as their personal development and well-being. They are confident to express their thoughts and views and know that these are valued by staff and one another. For instance, pupils' fund raising led by the school council, on their 'Blue for a loo' toilet twinning day for two communities overseas had a strong impact. It is an example of how the school's vision very effectively promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A visit to Bristol Cathedral for a Candlemas event promoted pupils' spirituality very effectively by enhancing their understanding of Jesus as the light of the world. Pupils said that a visit to a Sikh temple in Swindon enabled them to experience hospitality from another community which was similar but different to theirs at school. As a result, their understanding of the meaning of living in a Christian community was deepened as well as the need to respect others who have a different faith. Pupils understand that Christ's teachings as well as those of other faiths promote the need to live together in harmony. In this way, the school is actively encouraging positive attitudes of acceptance, tolerance and respect towards others, values that underpin British society, alongside its Christian values. Relationships are good at all levels of the school community. This is evident particularly during Friday family achievement worship when all members are strongly supportive of all pupils, affirming that each one is special and loved by God and the whole school.

Pupils recognise the importance of religious education (RE) in the life of the school and within their own lives. They say they particularly enjoy learning about the beliefs of others whether those within their own class or in the world beyond school. They understand that Christianity is a world-wide faith. Religious education challenges pupils' thinking and helps them develop their own opinions. Younger pupils discussing big questions such as 'What really matters in life?' volunteered insightful responses such as, 'Family can't be replaced but toys can.' These are good examples of the effective way that RE promotes spiritual development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is an important time at South Marston. It contributes very effectively to the strong sense of community which is a key feature of the school's new vision. Stories from the Bible such as Noah and the Ark are used very effectively to link with the school's value of hope. Pupils are inspired to take action on behalf of others to bring hope to them, such as through the toilet twinning project. Staff and pupils enjoy worship and participate enthusiastically. They clearly identify its special role in promoting the school's Christian character. This is evident in the way that Christ's teachings are used to illustrate Christian values such as the current theme of peace. Biblical teachings such as, 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God,' are understood clearly as promoting the need for a Christian school community to live in harmony together. The Christian value of peace is recognised as embedded in the Anglican greeting, 'Peace be with you,' used at the start of worship.

A time of guided reflection is effective in affirming the Christian message at the heart of worship. A time of prayer in which all pupils are given the opportunity to contribute is very effective in developing spirituality. There are some opportunities for reflection during the day, often on the themed Christian value. However, although pupils say they are able to find quiet places to sit and think by themselves, no designated spiritual space is provided outside. Singing, often with actions, is given a high profile and enjoyed by all present. A recent visit of 'I sing Pop' celebrated in a neighbouring church by the whole school community, had a strong impact in promoting spiritual development. The vicar and recently-appointed curate contribute effectively to worship. This is evident in the impact made by the vicar's recent Pentecost service in school when she demonstrated the strong effect of wind as experienced by the apostles. The Christian symbol of the dove representing peace is also linked very effectively

with the current theme for worship.

Pupils are engaged, attentive and participate well. The worship council from Year 6 play an important role. They organise, prepare and contribute to worship each day as well as plan and lead regularly across a range of settings. Worship begins with a pupil-led greeting which refers to the lighting of three candles representing the Trinity. As a result, pupils are developing some understanding of this aspect of Anglican worship. Older pupils have an increased understanding from their learning in RE. Family members and carers are included in the weekly achievement collective worship which enhances and widens the togetherness of the community. The leadership and management of worship by the headteacher are good. His plans are detailed and provide support for staff who also lead worship. The foundation governor, other leaders and pupils all contribute effectively to the evaluation of worship. Despite the high status given to this aspect of the day, the school refers to this time as assembly instead of collective worship which limits its ability to promote the school's Christian character.

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

The headteacher has demonstrated strong leadership in developing the school's distinctive Christian character since the previous inspection. He has very effectively led the governors and staff in adopting the words, 'We believe in living life in all its fullness,' as the new vision for South Marston. This vision is based on the Church of England's vision for education. It is based on a biblical quote from St John's gospel and is underpinned by the additional words, 'wisdom, dignity, hope and community,' also part of the Church of England's vision. These last four words are clearly understood by the whole school community as their school's vision and their new values. As part of the worship plan, the school has been using a three year programme of eighteen Christian values. It is now also making the transition to include the four new values as part of this programme. At this stage, not all the new values are understood by some pupils as rooted explicitly in biblical teaching whilst some values from the worship programme are. To date, the governors have not monitored and evaluated the impact of the school's new vision and values.

The school's self-evaluation process has been much improved since the previous inspection. All members of the school community are effectively included. Over the last few years, the foundation governor, has played a major role by observing collective worship and RE lessons. As a result of the school's self-evaluation process, areas for development have been accurately identified. For instance, following recent monitoring of the introduction of the new 'Understanding Christianity' materials, governors identified the need to purchase Bibles and this has led to beneficial outcomes for pupils.

The partnership with the diocese has strengthened since the school joined the Diocese of Bristol Academies Trust. Staff and leaders, such as the headteacher as RE subject leader, have benefitted from relevant training. Staff, in particular, felt valued from recent professional development provided by the trust, focussing on their mental health and well-being. However, governors have not attended training on their roles in promoting the school's Christian character. Staff are a strong collaborative team who work together very effectively sharing leadership roles. Parents value the way they are invited to be involved and included in the life of the school. The partnership with parents, the church and local community is strong. The headteacher has recently developed a good partnership with another linked neighbouring church which has resulted in beneficial outcomes. This is evident in the way the church hosted the 'I sing Pop' concert. As a result of the headteacher's talk about the school there, church members of that congregation have expressed an interest in joining the governing body. This is enhancing the way the wider community is contributing to school life. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

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