



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Swithun's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Grove Street
Retford
Nottinghamshire
DN22 6LD

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Southwell and Nottingham

Local authority: Nottinghamshire

Date of inspection: 3 March 2016

Date of last inspection: March 2011

School's unique reference number: 122789

Headteacher: Christina Mallender

Inspector's name and number: Lizzie McWhirter 244

School context

St Swithun's Primary School serves the centre of Retford. The majority of its 122 pupils are from a White British background and are taught in four mixed age classes. The number of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is higher than average. There are a small number of pupils for whom English is not their first language. There are good links with St Swithun's and St Saviour's Churches. The current headteacher will be taking up a new post at the end of the academic year.

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

- This is a nurturing and inclusive Christian family community which is accepting of everyone and supports its children and their families.
- Strong leadership and good governance resulting from the mutual and substantial partnership between church and school.
- Children show positive attitudes and their learning in worship and religious education [RE] which sustains them in daily life.

Areas to improve

- Deepen pupils' understanding of Christianity as a worldwide faith and enable them to meet people of other faiths to enrich their learning and support their spiritual and cultural development.
- Enable pupils to develop their roles and responsibilities in leading worship in this church school, increasing their involvement and ownership.
- Extend the monitoring of RE so its profile as an important aspect of Christian distinctiveness is raised and on a par with other core subjects.

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

St Swithun's is a welcoming, inclusive and nurturing Christian family where the wellbeing of the whole community is of utmost importance. This is because the school's Christian values are the cornerstone of all school life, which drives positive progress. In addition, such values permeate all school life, making a good contribution to the Christian character of the school and to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, relationships between all members of the school community are good. Vulnerable pupils are well supported with counselling and play therapy. This school has a very clear policy for behaviour and discipline, which stems from the Christian value of forgiveness. Consequently, should pupils appear in the red books for behaviour, they spend reflection time writing letters. Pupils are given positions of responsibility in school and children of all abilities are praised for their individual achievements. There is not just a focus on academic achievement, but the whole child is valued. As a result, any exclusions are met with compassion and attendance is supported and enabled by the school to show a positive and improving picture. Dedicated staff look at progress data very carefully as many pupils come to school with low starting points. Baseline assessments confirm this. As a result, the school provides extra staff in Foundation Stage and uses pupil premium funding to support speech and language. Moreover, the outgoing headteacher has secured a budget to successfully support intervention. In addition, parents welcome opportunities to engage in sessions to inform them of their child's progress and how they can be helped. Consequently, pupils for whom English is not their first language have made great strides in their progress. Good examples include talking and joining in with prayers. Pupils say that 'someone new is given a welcoming smile'. However, pupils say they would like to visit more places of worship and meet visitors from different faiths in order to deepen their learning and enrich their understanding of diverse communities and cultures. Pupils go on to say they would like to know more about Christianity as a worldwide faith.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship at St Swithun's is integral to daily life, making a good contribution to the spiritual development of the gathered community. This is because acts of worship involve and engage everyone and are linked to Bible stories and the school's Christian values. It embraces the Christian faith and reflects on values which everyone can relate to in their lives, such as friendship, forgiveness and hope. A hallmark of worship at this school is the importance of bringing the class crosses into worship. This important symbolism reminds pupils daily that 'Jesus is the king who died on the cross'. Pupils make the sign of the cross as they say a trinitarian blessing. They are growing in their understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They speak of 'Jesus promised he would come back to earth and the Holy Spirit is all around us to keep us positive and safe'. One of the strengths of worship at St Swithun's is the importance attached to the different child-friendly liturgies written by the collective worship and RE leader and used by pupils and adults in worship to celebrate the different seasons of the church year. Pupils say they like the liturgy and they like being involved in worship. On Fridays all Year 6 pupils and all the team leaders have special roles in leading worship. Next steps, already identified, include pupils taking on more responsibility and ownership for leading worship more frequently. Pupils and staff evaluate worship, informing future development and in addition pupils contribute their thoughts on the prayer wall. Good examples include

thoughtfulness, thankfulness and showing courage on the football field. In addition, pupils use poppies to reflect on 'the people who died in the three Armed Services'. Pupils experience worship led by many people, including church members and clergy from other churches in the town. They say they like it when their vicar leads worship 'as we get to hear the stories about Jesus and he explains the stories to us in more detail'. They also say they like church worship as 'the stained glass windows show how Jesus was born and how he died. They make me think about Jesus and God and it's a nice place to pray and worship God'. They attend church services at St Swithun's or St Saviour's for key festivals, such as Christingle and Easter. Year 6 pupils also experience being part of the wider diocesan family when they attend the Leavers' service at Southwell Minster. Parents say they too enjoy church services, citing especially the Leavers' Service.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

St Swithun's pupils can relate the Christian narrative well, explaining key events in their own words. This is especially true of the Christmas and Easter story. However, whilst pupils say, 'RE is about history and what Jesus taught us', they are less secure in their understanding of Ascension and Pentecost. Whilst RE teaching has a strong focus on Christianity, as is expected in a church school, the children are receiving appropriate teaching about the other world faiths, such as Judaism, Hinduism and Islam. Teaching and learning in RE is consistently good and in line with other core subjects, contributing to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Year 5 and 6 pupils reflect on how religion affects your life and how giving to charity 'transforms lives'. Year 2 pupils can identify a miracle from a parable, reflecting on how Jesus can make you clean. Thus, RE makes a good contribution to the whole curriculum. RE is well led and managed by the RE and collective worship leader. Assessment is in place, with two formal assessments a year and tracking in line with other core subjects. However, the school recognises the need to embed the monitoring of RE in order to inform progress and consequently raise standards. Pupils say they enjoy asking important questions. They speak of the value of meeting people of faith, saying 'we like seeing them and talking to them and asking them questions about their religion'. They also value visiting places other than their own two churches and Southwell Minster, saying, 'RE trips are very rare'. In addition, they know how to improve in their work, using 'sticky notes which we open up to see if our questions are answered'. Pupils work in RE at tables named after the three members of The Holy Trinity, saying 'I'm a Holy Spirit' or 'I'm a Son'. They note that the high ability table is The Holy Spirit and they understand better than the other children'.

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

Christian values are at the root of all decision making at St Swithun's, where a strong sense of family is fostered. Pastoral care is a high priority, with foundation governors ensuring the response to the challenge of community life is met with Christian compassion and direction. The Christian vision of the school's leaders drive the school development. The school's vision is modelled by the whole staff. This makes clear to all the importance of the school's chosen Christian values. Good examples include the issue of attendance which is a constant challenge. The Strategic Development Committee hears how staff go the extra mile and go to houses to help families in difficulty and in need of support. All governors are committed to ensuring that every person, whether adult or child, flourishes in this caring Christian environment. Consequently, children feel safe, grow in self-esteem and achieve well. All areas from the previous inspection have been addressed and there are clear priorities for future action and development. This includes supporting training needs for staff, who are growing in leadership skills at all levels of responsibility. St Swithun's has benefitted greatly from diocesan support and training. Governors state 'we are not an island entire of ourselves' and discuss Christian character and values and vision regularly. Governors meet with the collective worship and RE subject leader for several hours once a term. The vicar and headteacher feedback regularly to governors. RE and worship therefore meet statutory requirements. Community links are strong, with 'Messy Church' reported to be a strength as parents and pupils worship prayerfully

together. Children's work on the display board in church celebrates church/school links. The school had its own polling station to vote on plans for the Water Park. St Swithun's School dressed in the style of Saint George for a town celebration in the park.

SIAMS report March 2016 St Swithun's CE VA Primary Retford DN22 6LD