

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Nathaniel's Academy

Westport Road
Burslem
Stoke on Trent
ST6 4JG

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Lichfield
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Date of academy conversion	March 2014
Name of multi-academy trust	St Bart's Multi Academy Trust
Date of inspection	26 January 2017
Date of last inspection	20 June 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary Academy 140562
Principal	Sean Thomson
Inspector's name and number	Marianne Phillips 586

School context

St Nathaniel's Academy belongs to St Bart's Multi Academy Trust. It became an Academy in 2014. This very large primary has 500 pupils on roll, a 60 place nursery and a 32 place '2 year' facility. Nearly half the pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and one third of these have English as an additional language. 51.6% of pupils, twice the national average have access to pupil premium funding (PPF) and those numbers of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) are also above the national average. The school is oversubscribed and there is a waiting list of parents signing up for places for their children. The current principal has been in post since May 2013.

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

- The embedded Christian values and strong relationships, based upon the teachings of Jesus that unite and inspire all.
- The pupils' response to the Christian rules and guidance reflected through the 'Good to be Green' Code.
- The inclusive sense of family where pupils and staff openly care for each other and show respect for their differing views and beliefs.
- The very strong leadership which provides a clear focus on the school's journey towards becoming an outstanding church school.

Areas to improve

- Formalise the existing systems for monitoring the quality of worship and religious education (RE) involving governors, parents and pupils through a focus on 'pupil voice' to ensure quality and to meet individual needs.
- Establish a team of 'Worship Leaders' that will drive the school's Christian distinctiveness and support the spiritual development of stakeholders.

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

Pupils, regardless of background, faith or ability thrive in this church school because of the excellent nurture provided through Christian care. As a result, it effectively fulfils its aim to be “an achieving school and a caring community”. This is underpinned by the motto to show “Courtesy, Consideration and Respect in all aspects of school life”. Parents appreciate the inclusive approaches which successfully unite the richly diverse school family. The vision “to aspire, to aim and to endeavour” to achieve the best is ‘infectious’ and embedded in the day to day life of the school and driven effectively by the principal and staff. Parents questioned also appreciate the improvements that have been achieved over the past 3 years since the principal was appointed. Pupils are being taught to respect and enjoy learning. They feel safe and the large majority of pupils want to attend school. There is a small group of persistent absentees and latecomers who are negatively affecting the attendance figures, but the school has worked hard with this group to improve attendance. Christian values, lived out daily, create a sense of harmony and common purpose. RE and worship are enjoyed by the majority of pupils and parents of all faiths are happy that their children learn about world religions to give them a global perspective and to help them make their own choices about faith and belief. Questionnaires evidence this. There are strong links with St Paul’s and Swan Bank churches and the pupils regularly attend church services half-termly to celebrate Harvest, Christmas and other celebrations in the church calendar. The curriculum is rich in providing many learning experiences through the range of clubs offered, before, during and after school and through visits and visitors. One of these is the ‘Messy Club’, which is over-subscribed. The club runs weekly and is organised by the minister of St Paul’s, the church intern and the RE leader. The session observed encouraged the pupils present to make ‘scrolls’ to record their thoughts from their experiences through the bible stories they had read. The ‘Love and Care of God’ were common themes on all scrolls and one child wrote, “I love Jesus, God loves us every bit and wants us to love each other”. The school has appointed pupil leaders who form the ‘Junior Leadership Team’. The members of this ‘team’ are very proud of the work they do. They are clear about their responsibilities and share that, “our main focus at present is to improve reading in the school”. They are certain that “this school is a much better school now, we help and respect each other and the ‘Golden Rules’ work and keep us safe”. The ‘Green Frogs’ on all classroom doors are evidence of the ‘Good to be Green’ choices being made consistently by the children. The choices encourage kindness, respect, listening and peacefulness and are based on the teachings of Jesus and biblical truths. Consequently, behaviour is excellent and there is a sense of family and loving care permeating the close relationships between pupils and adults. This is also reflected in the numerous examples of fundraising by the pupils to support others less fortunate than themselves. All pupils are encouraged to pray and enjoy writing prayers to share in class and in worship. The evidence of this can be seen on the ‘worship boards’ in each classroom and on the ‘Prayer Wall’. School leaders are considering ways these prayers can be retained and used to evidence the spiritual journey and growth of their pupils through prayer and reflection. Pupils know they pray to God and feel prayer is important and they are supported by a range of artefacts and resources. Pupils enter the school displaying skills that are well below national expectations. The school’s difficult journey from being in ‘special measures’ has been a successful one and the consistent rise in standards over the past 3 years has placed them in the “top 1% of most improved schools nationally”. On the two days prior to this inspection the school was visited by a team of Ofsted inspectors and they are awaiting the final report documenting their judgements. School leaders have focused support to target individual need, determined through careful monitoring of pupil progress through the tracking systems that have been introduced. Organisation of groups and effective deployment of staff ensure interventions and skilled support are in place. This is funded through pupil premium grants (PPG), and supplemented by the school’s own budget to enable each individual to achieve success. As a result, by the time they leave, the majority of pupils are at least in line and often above national averages. The school has an established network of support through St Bart’s Multi Academy Trust (MAT). The drive to improve has not been in isolation but has been effectively supported through loving pastoral care provided by the church and the MAT. The focus upon Christian values is effectively developing an understanding of Christian and other faiths locally and globally. The stability and care offered by this distinctive church school is providing a platform for pupils to be prepared for their future lives as citizens in a richly diverse world.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

On the day of the inspection, worship, led by the RE leader and the intern from St Paul’s reflected the on-going work of the school to focus on prayer, biblical teaching and the life of Jesus as a guide. All present were invited to welcome the ‘Trinity’ by the lighting of the candles representing the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. A pupil led prayer to open. The vast majority of those present engaged fully with this and in the singing and signing of ‘Our God is a great big God’. This created a sense of caring and enjoyment in being together as a spiritual family worshipping God. Questionnaires and pupils questioned evidence that worship is a key feature of each day. Experiences are varied and enjoyable and led by a range of visiting leaders. There are also regular weekly class worship sessions which encourage pupils to take a lead and participate in the activities planned. School leaders plan to work with pupils to develop them as ‘Worship Leaders’, to train them to engage fully in planning and leading all acts of worship and to involve them in driving the school’s spiritual development and distinctiveness. Prayer and reflection is inclusive as are all aspects of worship and pupils are encouraged to apply their experiences in worship and RE to help them make

the right 'green choices' throughout their day. There are prayers at the beginning, middle and end of each day which provide structure and a spiritual foundation to each day. There are also regular, half termly visits to Swan Bank church, which is the larger of the linked churches locally. In these ways pupils are learning about Anglican tradition and biblical teaching in a different setting. Parents of all faiths are encouraged to attend these services and do so, expressing their enjoyment of the experiences through formal questionnaires. Parents share that they are welcomed and their views are respected. The minister of St Paul's is also vice-chair of governors and is very involved in the school. He regularly meets with the RE leader in his role as link governor, to discuss plans for RE and worship and to share the outcomes of the monitoring that has been undertaken. The school plans to formalise the monitoring procedures in place to focus on 'pupil voice' and further drive forward the quality of worship, RE and overall Christian distinctiveness. This would involve the whole school community. The work of the 'Forest School', school gardens and the prayer garden provide other opportunities for pupils to experience worship. Pupils, through the work of key adults such as the 'Learning Mentor', develop an appreciation of God's world and creation and have been acknowledged for their wonderful allotments and raised beds by the wider community. Photographs on display and pupil comments show how pupils regularly reflect on God's creation through 'awe and wonder'. Other initiatives such as 'Sign2Sing' in worship are very effective in varying worship experiences and engaging pupils and staff spiritually.

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

The partnership between the Executive Leader of the MAT (CEO) and the principal of the school is a close and effective one. Since the appointment of the principal the school has gone from strength to strength. There is a clear vision, based on embedded Christian values and guided by the teachings of Jesus to inform behaviour and underpin relationships. Over the past 3 years there have been significant changes in staff which have raised the quality of teaching. Systems and structures to drive the vision and school improvement have been introduced and are supported by all, building consistency and common purpose. The 'marking policy' is one example of this, where staff use a 'pupil friendly' colour coded system which is understood by pupils and leads to improvement in learning outcomes. There is a clear and effective leadership structure. The RE leader is part of the middle leadership team. Planning for RE is in place and the school uses guidance from the diocese, MAT and resources such as 'Discovery RE'. RE is monitored regularly and outcomes shared with link governors. The RE leader has attended training, as have governors, to inform good and effective practice in RE and a direction for development. Standards in RE are in line with other core subjects and national expectations. School leaders display an outstanding ability to analyse and communicate the drive for improvement. They are fully committed to the core Christian values and further development of the school as a church school. They are knowledgeable about the school's strengths, their pupils and the community they serve. Self-evaluation to identify areas of development is focused and leads to actions and improvement in standards and outcomes for pupils. Governors are well informed and clear about their roles. They work strategically and provide appropriate levels of support and challenge in their relationship with the school. Parents are very positive about the school and the way it has improved over the past 3 years. They are clear that the core Christian values that are taught are effective in guiding their children and providing a safe caring environment in which they can learn. In an inclusive way, "the school is teaching our children to be respectful and to live together in harmony. This will help them in the future". They confirm the high regard in which the school is held within the community and how the care and support offered to the 'whole family' is shaping their lives. Continued professional development (CPD) for staff and governors is a feature of school improvement, effectively supported through the wider MAT network. The developmental points from the previous inspection have been met.