

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Newton Regis Church of England Primary School

Austrey Lane, Newton Regis, Tamworth, B79 0NL	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Birmingham
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	September 2013
Name of multi-academy trust	Heartwood Multi Academy Trust
Date of inspection	15 November 2017
Date of last inspection	28 May 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy 140139
Executive Principal Incumbent	Lee Kilkenny Revd Stephen Banks
Inspector's name and number	Huw D Bishop 344

School context

Newton Regis is a smaller than average rural primary school, with 97 pupils including a nursery. Many pupils come from out of catchment, with a small number from a local site serving a traveller community. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is very low. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds although a very small minority are from ethnic backgrounds with English as their first language. The school became part of the Heartwood Multi Academy Trust in 2013. The headteacher has been in post since 2015 and leads Newton Regis and another school in the trust.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Newton Regis Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- The collegial and supportive leadership of the headteacher and his team, that is committed to the school's Christian distinctiveness, through proclamation of Christian values, as key areas to shape the life chances of pupils, whatever their backgrounds and abilities.
- The quality of relationships between all members of the school family and pupils who are happy, enjoy being in school and who behave well.
- Pupils' enthusiasm to engage with worship which is relevant and meaningful, enabling them to nurture their own spiritual journeys, and grow as confident young people.
- Governors, including the vicar and the wider parish, who are committed to the spiritual development of the school and determined to preserve and extend the school's distinctive Anglican character through the partnership of the multi academy trust.

Areas to improve

- Develop, through the new leadership of religious education (RE) and the Understanding Christianity resource, appropriate links between the subject with other curriculum areas and collective worship, including Anglican aspects, so that RE is reinforced as central to the school's work.
- Ensure there is a formal reporting and monitoring process for directors of the trust to hear about and evaluate Christian distinctiveness in school.

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

All pupils are nurtured through Christian love and care in this school community. As a result, relationships are very strong and there is a real sense of harmony as pupils, teachers and parents work together. The school's commitment to nurturing pupils is rooted in the belief that they should 'live life in all its fullness' and this is the firm foundation from which they work. Kindness, love, hope, respect and forgiveness are the school's core group of values and these are all bound up through worship in school and in church. These values underpin the spiritual growth of the pupils and influence their daily choices and interactions. Pupils are clearly developing an understanding of the importance of these values in shaping their lives. As pupils explained on the day of inspection: 'this is a happy school and we are excited about being here, we learn about God and about other people'. Most pupils spoken to around the school were very positive in endorsing that view. Parents too said that the school 'set up pupils with good life qualities and these are based on sound Christian values'. Displays, signage, and various artefacts around the school and in classrooms give these values prominence. Consequently, the behaviour of the pupils is very good, both in their interaction with each other and also in their approach to learning. Older pupils interact well with younger ones and support them in many ways. Pupils who choose to sit on a 'quiet' bench in the play-ground because they feel lonely or reflective are often joined by others as an act of friendship and care. School information shows that pupils make good progress in school from their various starting points culminating in positive outcomes at Key Stage 2 which are above the national average. The positive approaches used by teachers also ensure pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem from the time they enter the school, bringing classroom learning to life. Teachers know their pupils well and all adults working in school enable individuals and groups to achieve success. Through adapting planning, analysing data and regular discussions, staff identify any child at risk of falling behind quickly and act to make sure that every child has the best chance to succeed. Parents are very positive about the ways the school enables their children to flourish and succeed. They praise the inclusive ethos that is practised and understood by everyone. As a result, attendance is good because pupils want to be at the school. There are strong links with St Mary the Virgin Parish Church, which is very close to the school. Pupils attend special services at the church. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is good and weaves through the curriculum, worship, extensive community involvement and Christian action locally and beyond. The Christian distinctiveness of the school, as part of the multi academy trust and its partnership with the church, is making a difference in pupils' lives. Both school leaders and pupils work together to ensure that their distinctive Christian setting is promoted and protected. Religious education (RE) is an important part of the curriculum and pupils enjoy learning about other faiths as well as Christianity. A new coordinator for RE is giving a renewed focus for this core subject across the school and there are emerging links between RE and worship which are increasingly effective in supporting pupils' spiritual development, but this is not sufficiently embedded. Themes challenge pupils to reflect and apply their learning to develop an understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith, as well as contributing positively to the Christian distinctiveness of the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The school promotes acts of collective worship in a setting which encourages interactive participation rather than passive attendance, thus making it special and distinct. Through the lighting of candles, pupils join with the worship leader as they invoke God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pupils also understand this ritual as symbolic of the Light of Christ coming in to their lives. Worship provides opportunities for pupils' spiritual development as well as informing pupils' behaviour, attitudes and relationships. Pupils participate enthusiastically in song, prayer and reflection showing enjoyment and reverence. Worship also deepens pupils' understanding of the school's core Christian values. The spiritual atmosphere of worship is enhanced by gentle music as pupils enter. This promotes reflection and calmness that something special is about to happen. Worship time is highly valued by all. Pupils are able to explain about the importance of the Trinity and use practical examples to support their developing knowledge of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Collective worship is delivered by a range of leaders from the school and the parish community such as the 'All Souls Team'. These experiences support pupils' developing knowledge of the Bible and how the school's core Christian values relate to bible stories, the teachings of Jesus and the important role that the church plays in the world. Worship is monitored informally and effectively by the headteacher. Christian values, as well as the seasons and festivals of the Christian year are fully explored in worship themes and these have a direct influence on pupils' good behaviour and helps them to lead happy and fulfilling lives in school. There are regular seasonal services at the church throughout the year celebrating various festivals in the Christian calendar. Parents and the wider community are invited and attend regularly. Parents are very positive about the church links. The vicar and other church members regularly lead worship in school and pupils speak very positively about these events too. Worship styles are broad, creative, interactive and fun, meeting pupils' needs and expanding pupils' experiences and knowledge of Jesus and other Bible stories. These services are enjoyed by all and promote the understanding of core Christian beliefs. Pupils are encouraged to collaborate in the writing of prayers. These are used to support worship at different times of the school day. Pupils know, understand and use the Lord's Prayer.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards in RE are generally good and are at least as high as achievement in other core subjects. Pupils' learning is in line with national expectations with some pupils exceeding these targets. Teaching in religious education is good. In an effective lesson about initiation, pupils used religious language well to express their own belief and understanding. RE is planned to include creative, enquiry based approaches to encourage pupils to think and reflect on a range of religions and issues. Questions are asked to challenge deeper thinking in response to biblical and Christian teaching as well as teachings from other faiths. Pupils are encouraged to reflect upon Christian, social and moral values to shape their thinking and engage fully with challenges. A recently appointed coordinator for RE is establishing a new direction for the subject as a core element of the curriculum. A priority for the future development of the subject is to implement a whole school approach to assessment, using learning outcomes and evidence based elements as a focus to assess the progress pupils make. An action plan is now in place, although it is too early to be able to assess its full impact over time. Although the school follows guidance from the Coventry and Warwickshire Agreed Syllabus and programmes of study are now in place from the early years through to Key Stage 2, additional specific material to emphasise the school's distinctive Church of England identity needs to be included to ensure that these programmes meet pupils' needs. Leaders work closely with the diocese to ensure statutory requirements are met and appropriate training is undertaken to deliver the new 'Understanding Christianity' resource. RE is monitored through observation by the headteacher and foundation governors. A range of learning strategies, including technology, display and performance are used to ensure that all pupils are included and all outcomes can be assessed accurately. Assessed pieces of work are moderated through the network created by the multi academy trust. RE links closely with worship, SMSC and pupils' personal development to develop skills in learning from and about religion. Pupils listen to and study stories from the Bible and evaluate their teaching against their own personal backgrounds or opinion. The study of other faiths is complemented by project work undertaken with the 3 Faiths Forum and a recently established link with another school in Birmingham. This experience enables pupils to explore faith issues that are important in shaping their future lives. Through SMSC, pupils reflect on Christian values that are closely linked with Bible quotations and Christian teaching as well as key elements of other faiths such as Judaism and Islam. These values are also widened to promote an understanding of British values to support pupils' development as growing young people whether they are followers of a religion or none.

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

The headteacher's vision and commitment as spiritual leader is commended by governors and parents. His enthusiasm and willingness to strengthen and extend established links between church and school is having a positive impact on the community. His focus on the core Christian values to underpin the school's Christian character is also making a difference in shaping pupils' lives. A parent commented on the difference attendance at the school has made to her child after a long period of unhappiness elsewhere. This was because Christian values are practised without reservation. Leaders also model a statement on spirituality which is at the heart of the school's work and closely linked to the school's vision and values. There is a shared purpose for school improvement which means that pupils benefit from the widest set of learning experiences. This creates a sense of family which is made explicit to all who visit the school. All members of the school community evidence the importance of the Christian values. Parents feel that they have a voice and feel the school's open-door policy works well, encouraging success for their children. This really endorses the impact Christian values are having on young lives in this school. Foundation governors are regular visitors to the school. They are knowledgeable, skilful and articulate about their role and meet regularly with the headteacher to fulfil their responsibilities as critical friends. The church is very proactive in the community. An established 'Soul Café' is used as a mechanism to reach out to young people with their families, which sometimes leads to increased attendance at worship events. The voice of the parent has also been sought by the school. Local governors have recently established a small group to consider features relating to the school's Christian distinctiveness. They also meet with pupils to discuss their learning and have shared their findings with the other governors. However, there is no formal and recorded reporting process for this key aspect yet, with the directors of the multi academy trust. School leaders are, however, keen to address this quickly. Governors are aware of the strengths of the school and attend training to develop their skills and expertise. The professional development of staff and governors is building capacity for future improvement. 'New to a faith school' and 'Understanding Christianity' courses are examples of training offered from the diocese which have been valued by leaders. RE is effectively led. However, more work is also needed to establish RE firmly as a core subject which binds it with all areas of the curriculum, along with collective worship, to promote the school's Christian distinctiveness as a Church of England school. The developmental points from the previous inspection have been met in part, but some aspects are on-going.

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