

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Knutton St Mary's Church of England Academy

Church Lane, Knutton, Newcastle under Lyme, Staffordshire. ST5 6EB

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Lichfield
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	1 July 2016
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	St Bartholomew's Academy Trust
Date of inspection	9 March 2017
Date of last inspection	23 February 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	142078
Executive Principal	Anna Weaver
Inspector's name and number	Marianne Phillips 586

School context

Knutton St Mary's Academy is a smaller than average school with 252 pupils on roll. 95% are from White British backgrounds. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals(FSM) is high, 51%, putting them in the most deprived category nationally. 45% are supported by the government 'pupil premium' funding (PPF). Pupils judged to have special educational needs (SEN) is above average. The Principal was seconded to school in September 2014 when the school was in very challenging circumstances. Her appointment was made permanent in October 2015. The school converted to Academy status in July 2016 and is part of the St Bart's Multi Academy Trust.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Knutton St Mary's Academy as a Church of England school are good

- The explicit Christian values of the school are understood by all stakeholders and they are instrumental in driving the high standards of behaviour and respect for others.
- The spiritual leadership and vision of the new principal encourages all members of the school to 'live out' the motto and core values, uniting them all as a school family.
- The commitment of the staff and governors which is focused on developing the school as a distinctive church school.
- The quality of nurturing care that the school provides is effectively supporting pupils, parents, staff and the community.

Areas to improve

- Organise regular meetings with groups of pupils to gather their views about all aspects of school life, especially those which drive Christian distinctiveness.
- Develop regular class worship sessions as part of the weekly worship timetable for staff and pupils, especially those chosen to be part of the worship council to develop their skills as worship leaders.
- Build on the link roles of the new governing body to enable more of them to be involved in driving the school's Christian distinctiveness.

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

Children thrive in this school because they are nurtured, cared for and encouraged to believe they are 'special to God'. The school's motto, 'together we succeed and shine...we shine like lights in the sky', is understood by all. This and the core Christian values of 'Community, Respect and Perseverance provide the stability and foundation for strong caring relationships underpinning daily life. The needs of the individual regardless of background or ability, are at the heart of everything that is done. Parents acknowledge the difference the new principal is making. Her expectations are high and explicitly shared. Her commitment to the school and the pupils is helping to raise standards and drive the distinctiveness of this church school. Behaviour is now consistently good. The majority want to learn and attend regularly. Attendance is improving and their target of 95.5% is becoming achievable through hard work and rewards such as the 'Knutton Star'. A part-time counsellor and full-time home-school link worker have also been appointed this academic year. They engage with a significant number of families and pupils who present a range of social and emotional needs. In these and many other ways the barriers to learning are being overcome and pupils are experiencing success. They feel safe and supported in an environment where the core values create a sense of harmony and common purpose. They are keen to earn 'stars and rewards' through living out the values they are being taught. They fully engage with the 'Good to be Green' challenges which are encouraging good choices and individual responsibility. Members of the school council stress the importance of 'being responsible'. They are champions of the 'Good to be Green' code and feel behaviour has improved. They feel their role is to discuss issues that arise in school that affect them and their peers. They want to make a difference through the way they support their school. They feel the school values help them to do this. They and the pupils they represent pray and think prayer is important. 'We can talk to God to ask Him to make the world a better place.' Their prayers are shared at specific times throughout the school day. They are displayed in the classroom reflection areas which are rich in artefacts and symbols to engage and inspire. 'Name the Flame', the 'values jar', the 'reflection den' and other strategies are successful in encouraging them to be prayerful supporting their spiritual journey. School leaders are considering ways of retaining pupil prayers and reflections as evidence of their spiritual growth and development. Religious Education (RE) and worship are enjoyed by the pupils. The school is supporting their understanding about world religions through a creative curriculum approach, visits and visitors. This is helping pupils to appreciate the global perspective of religion and to make their own choices about faith and belief. Documentation evidences this. The diocese has also provided training and support in the 'Understanding Christianity' approach which the school is adopting appropriately. The school's journey, over the past 3 years has been challenging. Pupils enter the school displaying skills that are well below national expectations. The focus for support and intervention has been targeted at individual need. Every class has a teaching assistant during the morning to support teaching and learning. Resources and training also target the teaching of reading and phonics to build skills and accelerate progress and success. Initiatives such as 'Singapore Maths' and 'Read Write Inc' along with other approaches are carefully monitored. The findings lead to further actions to drive improvement. The dedication and perseverance of the current leadership team to this is achieving success. As a result, pupil progress in the school is in line and sometimes above others nationally. Some support is funded through pupil premium grants (PPG), and supplemented by the school's own budget. The school has an established network of support through St Bart's Multi Academy Trust (MAT). Partnerships created through the links have effectively supported the drive to improve and to prepare pupils for their future lives.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is a key feature of each day. Nearly all pupils questioned are positive about worship and their special services in church, which celebrate the Christian calendar. They enjoy engaging with Anglican tradition and grappling with concepts such as the Trinity. They are daily reminded of this by the lighting of the Trinity candles at the start of worship, welcoming the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They participate in Christenings, weddings and believe 'Jesus is God's Son and He sacrificed Himself for us'. The act of worship evidenced their growing respect for worship. Their enthusiasm in singing 'This little light of mine' overflowed as they spontaneously sang leaving the hall and returning to their classrooms. Worship successfully reinforced the Christian values of truth, love, kindness and respect through a focus on the Ten Commandments. Discussions illustrate their clear understanding of 'right and wrong' and how they use this to guide their individual choices. A game of 'Truth or Bluff' and real life scenarios from school kept everyone present engaged and keen to contribute to the experience. The worship champion encouraged all to persevere in trying to follow their Christian values throughout the rest of the day. Staff provided good role models through their responses and participation. Prayer is central to all worship. It is often led by the pupils and is taught through the Lord's Prayer and other examples from biblical teaching. Evaluations and documentation record the varied experiences worship provides and pupils' responses to these. 'Pupil voice' is an evaluation tool which is used occasionally to gather pupils' views on worship. Class worship also takes place during the term. Both activities have contributed to the development of worship and are ways in which pupils can lead and

influence the worship experiences. Leaders have plans to use these more regularly to ensure worship supports pupils' spiritual growth and needs. The worship champion currently working through the plan to develop pupils' skills and responses in worship to select a worship council later in the year. The role of the council will be to plan, lead and evaluate worship, helping to driving the school's spiritual development and distinctiveness. There are strong links with St Mary's church and the minister regularly leads worship in the church and school. She regularly meets with the RE leader to discuss planning for RE and worship. They share the findings from the monitoring that is done to ensure high standards in RE and worship are sustained. Unfortunately, her growing ill-health has led to her decision to retire in April. Additional links have been developed with Elim church in Silverdale and leaders from there now lead school worship fortnightly. The parents are encouraged to attend church services at St Mary's and the numbers of families attending Sunday worship at the church has also risen. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their experiences in 'Forest School'. The raised beds in the school gardens are another example of how the pupils are encouraged to be part of God's creation, sustaining life and growth. Other initiatives such as 'BoysNoys' are effective in engaging pupils and inspiring them to grow creatively and spiritually.

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

The partnership between the principal and her leadership team is close and effective. There is a real sense of 'team' and shared purpose which is effectively driving school improvement. Parents endorse the 'strength of the new leadership' and the difference this is making to their children and the way the school functions. The wider community also appreciates the improvement in standards of behaviour and the respect pupils are displaying. There is a clear vision, underpinned by the core Christian values and school motto which guides daily life. Systems and structures are building consistency and a 'whole school' approach. The 'Good to be Green', marking policy, changes in staffing and investment in targeted resourcing have improved learning outcomes. Training and support from the St Bart's Trust and the Diocese have improved skill level and expertise and built confidence. This has raised the quality of teaching and provision. The new leadership team knows the strengths of the school. Their monitoring has highlighted areas for development which are systematically being addressed. This will take time but the clear and effective leadership structure is building capacity to sustain future improvement. The school has secured funding from the Trust to further strengthen the leadership team to support the work they do in the next academic year. The RE leader is part of the leadership team. Planning for RE is in place and has followed the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus. They have responded to guidance from the Diocese to follow 'Imaginer' approaches in worship. The RE leader has recently attended training in 'Understanding Christianity' approaches which are being trialled to support RE and worship. There are strong links between RE and worship and monitoring is regular. Findings confirm that standards are in line with other core subjects and meet national expectations. The governing body is newly formed. The staff governor is effectively engaged in school self-evaluation as part of the senior leadership team. The governors are a relatively small group. Some of the members from the pre-academy body are retained. Plans are in place to ensure they build on the effective work undertaken by the governors in the past monitoring and driving the Christian distinctiveness of the school. Discussions with representatives from the new governing body confirm they are committed and keen to fulfil their responsibilities. They are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and appreciate the work that is being done by the principal and her team. They understand the urgency to support and challenge them in the continued drive to become an outstanding church school. Continued professional development (CPD) for staff and governors is a feature of school improvement, effectively supported through the wider MAT network. The school has acted on the developmental point from the previous inspection but it remains a priority for the future.

SIAMS report March 2017 Knutton St Mary's CE Academy, Newcastle under Lyme ST3 6BE