



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### Swainswick Church of England Primary School

Innox Lane, Upper Swainswick, Bath.

**BAI 8DB**

**Previous SIAMS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Good**

**Diocese: Bath & Wells**

Local authority: Bath & North East Somerset

Dates of inspection: 18th November, 2015

Date of last inspection: 2010

School's unique reference number: 109206

Interim Headteacher: Joe Beament

Inspector's name and number: Rev John Angle 119

#### School context

Swainswick Church of England Primary School is a smaller than average primary school with 71 pupils on roll. Children are taught in three mixed aged classes. The school serves the small village of Swainswick and nearby hamlets, as well as Lower Swainswick and Larkhall on the north of the city of Bath. The school is situated on a rather cramped sloping site but with grounds that have been developed to provide an attractive and useful learning and play environment. The current interim Headteacher has been in post for two weeks, during the long-term absence of the substantive Head. Nearly all pupils are of white British background. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is higher than the national average.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Swainswick Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

- Behaviour and relationships are outstanding
- The caring family ethos is a strength of the school
- There are excellent opportunities for children's spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development
- A strong Christian foundation underpins school life and learning
- There is a mutually beneficial and energising relationship with the local church community

#### Areas to improve

- Processes for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school's Christian distinctiveness need to be developed in a more robust and systematic way
- Incorporate plans for the continued improvement of the school's Christian character into the School Development Plan
- Coordinate the weekly content and themes of collective worship to take into account the participation of visitors, whole school and class room collective worship and also visits to the local church

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

The school is a caring and friendly community based on clear Christian principles where everyone feels valued and special. Positive, loving and respectful relationships impact strongly on the personal development and achievements of pupils, who help and encourage each other and work collaboratively in order to achieve their best; for example year six children act as 'buddies' to reception children. The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Children love their school, feel safe and happy and grow in confidence. As one boy put it, "There's nothing I want to change, it's all really good!" There has been a steady improvement in pupils' achievement and progress in the last two years with levels of attainment being broadly in line with, or above both national standards. However statistical data varies widely from year to year due to fluctuating numbers of small cohorts and the numbers of pupils needing specialist support. Children develop excellent attitudes to learning within a nurturing environment where every child is considered as being of unique value and loved by God. An example is the Gem Project, a supportive learning process where children earn 'gems' to indicate aspects of progress in a variety of social, personal and academic areas of school life. The school's Christian character is enshrined within its vision statement, 'The individual is at the heart of everything we do'. School attendance is good. All members of the extended school community support the school's Christian values which are embedded in the curriculum, in school policies and in day to day school life. Biblical stories are used effectively to illustrate and explain these values. The living-out of the school's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) policy has a strong impact on children's personal development. As a result, children show some mature and often profound spiritual insights through their writing, poetry, prayers and conversation. They also express their concern for others in charitable activities led by the school council. Children have a strong sense of respect for others and a warm spirit of empathy, compassion and consideration. Diversity and difference are respected and appreciated. Children support St Michael's School in Uganda and have recently given gifts to help earthquake victims in Nepal and at Harvest time supported a local caring charity, the Genesis Trust. Outdoor learning and Forest School activities, with their concern for living in and caring for the environment make a strong contribution to children's personal development and well-being. Teaching and learning in Religious Education (RE) is good, helping children to understand Christian faith and practice, and the diversity of different faiths and cultures in Britain and around the world. It also challenges children's attitudes to life and helps them develop their own understanding of faith. Lessons observed on special places and the story of Jesus in a boat in a storm enabled children to think about their special places of quiet and reflection and also on how to deal with their feelings of fear or worry when they are in difficult situations.

## **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Collective worship makes a very important and significant contribution to the Christian character of the school community and to the development of the school as a distinctively Christian community. It brings everyone together as a friendly and united family. Children find collective worship engaging, challenging and interesting. Parents comment that stories in collective worship are often talked about at home, leading one child to ask last year "I want a Children's Bible for Christmas!" Within this special place of meeting and times of celebration biblical material is used to help develop the values inherent in the schools Christian foundation and encourage the excellent behaviour, attitudes and relationships seen throughout the school. Children develop an understanding of different Christian traditions and an appreciation of the church's year and Christian festivals. The use of candles, responses, the Lord's Prayer and the use of the Bible encourages an understanding of Anglican liturgy. Effective questioning by worship leaders is leading some older children to a tentative understanding of theological concepts such as the nature and activity of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and even the gender of God! Children talk comfortably and with confidence and interest about the Christian faith. They are involved in preparation for worship and sometimes write and pray their own

prayers. Children make significant contributions to special services, especially at major Christian festivals, and attend the year six leavers service in Wells Cathedral. Acts of collective worship in church also aid children's understanding of the Christian faith and their spiritual development. Children would benefit from more frequent visits to the local church for worship. The local vicar visits the school regularly and takes collective worship once a week. Her contribution is warmly welcomed and enjoyed and is very effective in bringing together the school and the local community in this very small village. Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship does take place but needs to be more systematic, bringing together both the children's responses to collective worship and governor observations. Greater coordination of the various expressions of collective worship; in the school hall, class rooms and local church needs to take place. This will help to ensure continued improvement in children's experience of collective worship.

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

School leaders and governors promote a vision for the school based on distinctively Christian values. In their words, "Christian values are at the heart of all that we do ". This is expressed in various school policies such as the policies for SMSC, RE and Collective Worship, and in the school prospectus. Leaders gives effective and strong support to enable all pupils, especially those with special needs, to overcome educational, social and economic disadvantage as an expression of the school's Christian foundation to value and care for all. This is also reflected in the school motto, 'A school where people matter most' and in 'The Swainswick Way'. Children talk about this as the way they should behave, a way of togetherness, respect, sharing and caring. Leaders and governors also have access to the Swainswick School Charity which gives support to families in cases of individual financial need. Leaders continue to review the core values underpinning the school's Christian ethos and work hard to encourage a sincere respect for religious and moral values and other cultures, by identifying these in the school curriculum and in extra-curricular activities. More effective evaluation procedures related to the school's Christian character are being developed but as yet these are not evident or incorporated into the School Development Plan. There are strong relationships with parents and carers through the Friends of Swainswick School, the weekly Swainswick Cafe and the monthly Swainswick Pub in the local church. These activities strongly support the school's extended family ethos. Members of the local church community are keen supporters of the school and the links with the Anglican church and its leadership are very strong and very effective. The tiny Anglican church is an integral part of the spiritual and communal life of the school, which has a significant effect on the children's understanding and appreciation of Christianity. RE is given good support by leadership, is well resourced and has a high profile in the school. A good variety of teaching and learning styles are used effectively by teachers. The RE policy has detailed aims and a very clear statement of the skills and knowledge to be encouraged in children. As a result RE contributes well to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children. Further structured monitoring and evaluation needs to take place to ensure that the standards in RE are maintained and developed. School leaders have acknowledged their need to make further progress to strengthen the school's Christian distinctiveness and have the capacity to do so. To this end they are welcoming the support given by the Diocesan Education Department.

SIAMS Report. November 2015. Swainswick Church of England Primary School. BA18DB