

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

The Richard Crosse Church of England Aided Primary School

Crawley Lane, Kings Bromley, Burton-on-Trent, DE13 7JE	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Lichfield
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	August 2015
Name of multi-academy trust	The Small Schools Multi Academy Trust
Date of inspection	24 November 2016
Date of last inspection	24 November 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy (Aided) 142096
Executive Headteacher	Paul Lovern
Inspector's name and number	Allyson Taylor 768

School context

The Richard Crosse Church of England Primary School has 128 children on roll, including 9 in its nursery. In August 2015, the school converted to an academy and established the Small Schools Multi-Academy Trust (SSMAT). This includes the two church schools, Richard Crosse and St. Mary's, Colton and Howard in Elford, a community school. An executive headteacher leads all three primary schools. Almost all children are of white British background. The proportion of children with additional needs, who are disadvantaged and those who come from different faiths and cultures is well below national figures. A new motto: 'Believe and Achieve' was written after consultation and applies to all schools in the SSMAT.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness Richard Crosse as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Richard Crosse is a school living out its Christian character and Christian values so that it is a special place of 'Love, Respect and Friendship.'
- This is a school family built on strong foundations which allow adults and children in the school community to grow and flourish as precious to each other and to God.
- Leadership, at all levels of the SSMAT, is deeply committed to sustaining high quality, Christian based education in the local area.
- The Christian distinctiveness is so established there is a sense of it being in the 'DNA' of the school and so as natural as breathing.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that teaching and learning in religious education (RE) goes deeper to give learners a more secure grasp of Christian concepts and those of other faiths.
- Include a wider range of ages in leading collective worship to enhance spiritual development across all classes.
- Review the school website and key documents to more fully reflect the excellent practice as a church school.

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

The school motto, 'Believe and Achieve,' encapsulates the vision for all ages. Learners believe in themselves, each other and their teachers, so they strive to be the best that they can be. The core values of love, respect and friendship are palpable and lived out in all aspects of the life of the school. As a result, positive relationships flourish and learners feel safe and loved. They generally achieve very high results in national tests and have done so for many years. It is clear that the strong Christian character leads to outstanding motivation and attitudes to learning. The Christian values are widely understood to underpin the successes of the school. While the chosen values are deeply embedded, some children found it difficult to relate the values to specific examples from the Bible. Excellent attendance shows how learners enjoy school and are eager to learn. Even more telling, is the acceptance and care shown between all ages and abilities. Genuine love and friendship is shown to those who are more vulnerable. Help for those who may struggle with their work is firmly based on inclusive principles and equality of opportunity. Sensitive support is given to enable less able children to join in the same lessons as their peers, for example reading the same class novel. This shows the degree of respect for all children. Children explain how the values help them: 'God is with you everywhere and keeps you safe.' Adults instinctively serve as first class role models for the children in their care. Humour and goodwill prevail and all staff work together to support each other as well as learners. Pupil voice at Richard Crosse is actively heard and this contributes to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children's suggestions and priorities are implemented, for example, introducing pupil nominated awards for healthy lunchboxes. Pupil leadership demonstrates the impact of the value of respect. For example, the pupil librarians encourage younger children to read more widely and reward this with certificates. The school council helped the PTA fundraise to provide every child with a school kit bag for sports uniform. As such, it is clear that children seek to serve each other as well as support charitable giving. Personal development and wellbeing reflect the core values and the wider Christian values explored through worship. Learners state how the current value of thankfulness helps them appreciate each other's talents. The RE curriculum is planned to enable children to grow in their understanding and respect for those of different faiths and cultures. Contact with the local Buddhist temple and visits to a range of places of worship support learners' awareness of their place in our multi-cultural society. RE, therefore, makes a significant contribution to both the religious character of the school and gives children in a mono-cultural community a window onto other cultures and faiths.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship binds the school community together. It is a key part of every day and reinforces the three core values and the Christian value for each month. Planning for worship is of exceptional quality. It links the monthly value to Bible texts and to current events. 'Thankfulness,' for example, is shown by thanking God for his love and in the love shown through support for Children in Need. Jesus is a regular feature of worship and is seen as a constant friend. Adults as well as children welcome the time to be together and to share in their common life. 'Active worship' when awards are celebrated is the highlight of the worship week. Parents appreciate attending this and sharing in the sense of belonging to a community with one heart. Music on entry to the hall, worship songs and prayers are coordinated and led by older pupils. As such, learners lead aspects of worship every day and do so with reverence and pride. They are beginning to mentor their younger friends to assume these posts of responsibility. Younger children are ready for the challenge and the worship coordinator is eager to pursue this. Learners use an impressive range of Anglican greetings, prayers and blessings. They think about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit when a candle is lit. Prayer comes naturally. Even the youngest children learn the Lord's Prayer, albeit with less understanding than their older schoolmates. Worship spaces in classroom and the entrance helps children know that that worship is not just for when they are in church or the hall. These spaces have increased the opportunities for learners to reflect and share their thoughts. 'Worry boxes' reassure them that 'God knows you are worrying' and so they gain a sense of comfort. Learners benefit from the long-standing links with All Saints Church. Many children comment on this as special to them as a church school. They speak with great fondness of Rev Ty who, they say, is part of their school family. The main festivals and events in the Christian calendar are celebrated in church and learners take an active part in preparing and leading these. This, combined with a school Eucharist, shows the commitment to developing the spiritual life of all ages. The school is excited at the possibility of arranging worship outdoors, and with other schools in the trust, so giving children a wider range of opportunities for spiritual development. As with so much at Richard Crosse, there is a sense of momentum. The enthusiastic worship leader constantly reflects on how to improve worship. Her actions have ensured that worship experiences are rich, meaningful and deeply Christian in practice.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Standards of teaching and learning in RE are high. Children have a wide knowledge of Christianity and a secure grasp of the main parts of the Christian narrative. Knowledge about Christmas and Easter is generally secure, although some confusion over the role of angels and some misconceptions about Jesus was apparent with younger children. Understanding of the main concepts of other faiths is slightly less secure. As most of the curriculum time is devoted to the study of Christianity, the coverage of other faiths is more superficial. Children look at several different faiths over time and this has led to confusion between their knowledge of beliefs and customs. However, the school already recognises this and plans to rebalance the curriculum. It is impressive that the Church of England Statement of Entitlement for RE has guided development. It is clear that RE is given high status and seen as a core subject. Scrutiny of work, observations of lessons and discussion over the quality of learning are regular parts of the cycle of monitoring in school. This monitoring involves all three schools and so moderating standards is thorough. Leaders are well-informed of the progress of action plans for RE. Children recognise the subject's importance in helping them to: 'make good choices in our lives'. As a result, RE enables all ages to learn about religions and to learn from them. The school is already considering how to ensure nursery age children receive RE in the mixed-age Reception class. Staff and leaders, therefore, are united in their aim to make RE a subject which enriches the lives of even the youngest members of the community. Learners are enthusiastic about RE and state that activities including art, role play and retelling stories make lessons fun. The RE subject lead is exceptionally dedicated and knowledgeable. Her support for colleagues is valued and the improvements to assessment and tracking progress ensure that standards in RE are at least as high as in other subjects. Focussing on vocabulary for a unit of work gives children the confidence to explore their thinking using theological language. Some staff's subject knowledge is less secure and so the coordinator provides support and challenge to keep standards high. As she is also the worship coordinator, she is doing an outstanding job which is fully appreciated by colleagues and senior leaders.

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

The executive headteacher sets the aspirational tone of this thriving church school within its academy trust. He talks about a sense of harmony where his children and staff feel happy, safe and secure in God's love. Leaders at all levels (trust/local advisory group) are unswerving in their commitment to sustaining excellent education for all children. This is evident from the high standards achieved in national and internal assessments. Directors say that they see Richard Crosse school 'laying the foundations for life.' Leaders undertake a skills audit which ensures those with the right skills and understanding of Christian distinctiveness are appointed in governance roles. Recruitment of staff is also linked to the vision and values of the school as a church school. Self-evaluation of the school is accurate and this informs development plans. Leaders know where the school needs to improve and are forward thinking in deploying staff across the three schools. This demonstrates their commitment to developing future leaders of church schools. The school website does not reflect the strong Christian character of the school. It requires completion to ensure it more fully portrays the depth and strength of provision through policies and other key documents. Some policies reflect the Christian values and this is an area which leaders know needs further work. In a sense, so much of the Christian character is implicit, it is lived out rather than more publically considered and aired. Leaders' support for the RE coordinator is excellent. Her work is the main driver in improvements since the last inspection. For example, RE is marked based on the specific learning in RE rather than spelling or punctuation errors and this focus has raised standards. The school is fortunate in securing such talented staff who genuinely feel they are supported to fulfil their roles. So effective is the leadership of the school as a church school, the SSMAT is now well-placed to grow and extend its partnerships with other schools. Partnerships with the local church are firmly established. This mutually beneficial relationship means that children feel at home in church and demonstrate great affection for Rev Ty. Parents are regular visitors to school; several are volunteers and those interviewed during the inspection spoke warmly of the family feel and good grounding in faith which children are offered. Parents also noted that they can see benefits for their children from the school being part of the trust. They say that staff are 'wonderful and show consideration for each child.' Links with the diocese have proved useful and it is commendable that plans are already in place to access the 'Understanding Christianity' training. Statutory arrangements for RE and collective worship are fully met. Richard Crosse is a school where children believe and so achieve. This is the result of dedicated leadership which upholds the historic founder's original aims. Rev Crosse would be proud!