



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St. Giles CE Voluntary Aided Primary School

Starkholmes Road
Matlock
Derbyshire
DE4 3DD

Diocese: Derby

Local authority: Derbyshire

Dates of inspection: November 20th 2014

Date of last inspection: December 4th 2008

School's unique reference number: 112928

Headteacher: Mrs Suzanne Forster (acting)

Inspector's name and number: Alison Woodhouse 777

School context

St. Giles is a smaller than average Primary school, currently with 74 pupils on roll. The substantive Headteacher has been absent for nine months after a period of turbulence in the previous eight months. There is an acting Headteacher in post and an Interim Executive Board (IEB) has been in place since September 2014. The school building provides spacious facilities with well-developed outdoor areas. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average and the number of pupils identified with special educational needs is above average. Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. Giles as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- The interim leadership, of the IEB and acting Headteacher recognise and support the school's Christian character. The school has a very good capacity for improvement which is being developed as a result of a realistic appraisal of what needs to be done.
- Themes in collective worship support the school's core Christian values and it is an inclusive, interactive experience which draws upon good and improving links with the local community.
- Religious Education (RE) has a high profile in the school and pupils' show positive attitudes towards this subject.
- The school has refreshed its links with St. Giles church, developing mutually beneficial relationships.

Areas to improve

- Revisit the school's Christian Character and what it means to be a Church school with the school community.
- Provide regular opportunities for the pupils to be involved in the planning, delivery and evaluation of collective worship.

- Introduce assessment of RE in line with the new syllabus.
- Secure and support strong and stable leadership in both staff and governance so that a clear vision of what it means to be a Church school is developed for the future.

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

The recently appointed acting Headteacher has responded swiftly to address the challenges that the school currently faces, whilst not forgetting to attend to the expectations of the school as a Church school. Relationships between learners and adults working in the school are good. This is a result of the commitment of the acting Headteacher working consistently with staff, governors and the wider community towards a positive ethos. This has impacted on the academic provision and current information on achievement shows that the school is improving significantly in meeting the needs of all learners. The acting Headteacher, staff and governors have enabled a welcoming learning environment rooted in Christian values. This is evident in the friendly and inclusive ethos and the interaction between all who make up the school community. Parents now feel very welcomed in the school and appreciate the presence of the acting Headteacher each morning at the school gate. Parents comment positively on the recent changes, one comment being “the improvement is enormous and we appreciate that we are listened to.” Another parent commented “I chose the school because of it being a Church school and the class sizes; there is just the right balance with the RE input now.” In recent months there have been regular and varied opportunities for the children to work with St. Giles church. This had been a combination of traditional Anglican festivals and learning opportunities such as the whole school attending the Harvest festival in the church with Father Mark. The impact of this is a widening of pupils’ knowledge and experiences and positive links with the church community. Christian values contribute to the personal development and wellbeing of all learners, and these are shared with the pupils throughout the curriculum. However, as the school is at a point of revisiting its Christian character and values, there is limited impact on the spiritual development of all learners. Due to recent changes, many strategic plans are in their infancy, meaning the impact is yet to be realised.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

The community feel in worship is impressive as it is set up for pupils and staff to sit in family circles and is conducted in a well-organised and peaceful environment. Leaders provide an inclusive atmosphere with all staff fully participating. There is a strong interactive element in which pupils are expected to make informal contributions to the day’s theme. Pupils comment that they enjoy worship with one pupil commenting that ‘it makes you feel calm and focussed.’ Anglican themes and Christian values are well planned for, including teaching based on the Bible with time for reflection and prayer. Renewed links with the St Giles church have enabled the children to learn about Anglican traditions in a meaningful context and they enjoy their regular visits to St Giles. Mutually beneficial relationships are developing between church and school and Father Mark commented positively on the ‘noticeable difference’ in terms of strategic planning and the engagement with his expertise. Worship is properly resourced and well planned for, although currently the evaluation of the impact of worship on the pupils is not in place. The leader for collective worship has worked hard to ensure Christian values are appropriately reflected in central areas thereby connecting collective worship with the rest of school life. Although in its early stages, the impact on the current value ‘courage,’ is evident across the school. Pupils could easily discuss this value and their thoughts are given a high profile in each classroom as part of a ‘values’ display.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

Religious Education has a high profile in the school curriculum and pupils can recall previous lessons where they felt they had learnt new things. Older pupils described lessons based around Bible stories and some interesting discussions had taken place in class when they described their poems on 'what colour is faith?' In one lesson observed the structure clearly allowed for the pupils to develop their enquiry and reflection skills. Pupils have some knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other faiths and the RE leader has planned activities to develop this during the current term. For example, some classes have already been to St. Giles' church to experience a 'made up' baptism and wedding. Other children are looking forward to visiting non-Christian faith buildings in two weeks' time. In the delivery of RE it is clear that the needs of some learners are catered for but there is some variation across the whole school. This is because there is a lack of consistency in the teaching and assessment of RE and this has been identified as an area for development by the acting Headteacher and RE leader. The leader for RE is aware of current developments in RE, introducing a new syllabus, and has begun to monitor and develop this subject across school. She has started to develop her role by attending recent Diocesan training. The new RE curriculum together with the daily act of worship ensure pupils are beginning to understand the roots of Christian values within the Christian faith. The RE curriculum offers some opportunities to enhance the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners, but this link is still in its early stages. The RE leader is well supported by the Headteacher and governors to introduce new initiatives such as the assessment and tracking of RE levels and the introduction of the new agreed syllabus.

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

The newly appointed acting Headteacher has a clear Christian vision for the school and is working with the wider community to sensitively renew the school's identity. She is committed to being both a practical and spiritual leader of the school community and shares open dialogue with all staff who are clear about the direction of the school. She enjoys the willing support of a caring staff who have welcomed a new era of leadership stability at the school. In terms of governance the school has seen some key changes in recent months and the school currently has an Interim Executive Board (IEB) which has been in place since September 2014. Despite recently frequent changes in governance, evaluation in terms of the schools' church school status demonstrate a shared vision for the future. Strategies for the monitoring and evaluation of key areas such as RE and collective worship are identified, however it is too early to measure any impact from this. In addition as governance in its present form is new there has not been the opportunity to formally evaluate the impact the ethos of the school has on the learners. The school recognises that this is something they need to review. Parents take advantage of the open invitation extended to make comments and ask questions about any aspect of school life. They enjoy the 'open door' policy of the school and speak enthusiastically about the ways in which children are cared for and supported by all staff. One parent said 'the difference now is in the welcoming nature of the school and it is clear the pupils care for each other.' The local church is now able to make a contribution to school life, through its involvement in planning and leading worship, and supporting school in other areas such as reading. This is developing since the last inspection, meaning the school is now well placed to strengthen positive and supportive links with the church.

SIAMS report [November 2014] St. Giles CE (VA) Primary school, Starkholmes Road, Matlock, Derbyshire. DE4 3DD