



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Matthew's Church of England Academy, Rough Close	
Address	Lightwood Road, Rough Close, Stoke-on-Trent, ST3 7NE
School vision	
<p>We aim to be a family community rooted in equality where everyone feels safe, happy and valued as a cherished member of our Christian academy and create resilience, hope and aspirations for the future. We will provide a caring environment where children and staff are given opportunities to flourish through inspirational learning, love and laughter.</p>	
School strengths	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The vision and associated values give St Matthew's its firm foundation. They are woven into every aspect of school life, driving all decision making and actions. This creates a haven of Christian love where everyone is warmly welcomed. • There is a deep understanding of the Christian values by pupils and adults. As a result, relationships are rooted in friendship, responsibility and forgiveness, forming a culture of acceptance and respect. Consequently, this is a happy and purposeful environment where pupils' behaviour is exemplary. • Collective worship is a joyful occasion that is at the heart of school life. All are welcomed and included. Its impact is far reaching and transformative in the lives of pupils and adults. • The strong partnerships with St Chad's Academies Trust and Lichfield Diocese enhance many aspects of the life of the school. This nurtures a wealth of learning opportunities which enable pupils and adults to flourish. • The Religious Education (RE) curriculum is carefully crafted. Together with inspirational teaching, pupils have a deep understanding and knowledge of faith and worldviews. 	
Areas for development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a shared definition and vocabulary of spirituality to enable all to articulate its impact on their own lives. • Widen the opportunities of both pupils and adults to experience moments of stillness and contemplation. This is to deepen their understanding of their own spiritual development. • Increase the opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the challenges beyond their locality. This is to inspire them to believe that they can be global agents for change. 	



Inspection findings

St Matthew's Church of England Academy is rooted in love and understanding. There is a warmth that permeates throughout the school, offered to all who enter its doors. The Christian vision and associated values help inspire aspiration, compassion and optimism. They are at the heart of all the school does, reflecting its Christian foundation. As a result, the vision and values are lived out daily, having a positive impact on pupils, staff and families.

Leaders, including governors, are driven by the vision to promote aspiration, hope and resilience through decision making and subsequent actions. They establish beneficial partnerships that reinforce these qualities. Work with the Diocese of Lichfield deepens the understanding of the school's Christian foundation. As part of St Chad's Academies Trust, the school is supported and challenged to serve its own, unique community. The vision and values of the school are interwoven with those of the trust. The collaboration of staff throughout the trust encourages them to share ideas and develop strategies for improvement. Therefore, the school is part of a successful educational partnership which promotes cohesion whilst maintaining its own identity. The trust and school are aligned in their desire for staff and pupils to live life in all its fullness. They have invested in many schemes to take care of health and wellbeing. There is also a strong culture of staff looking after each other. As a result, staff feel cared for and valued as part of the school and the trust-wide community.

Led by the desire to provide inspirational learning, staff ensure that the curriculum is crafted to enable pupils to succeed. Staff know their pupils well and understand their needs. Therefore, all are given the opportunity to access learning whatever their challenge. As a result, there is an equality in learning and vulnerable pupils thrive. Staff promote a rich learning experience both in and out of the school day. After school clubs are varied, welcoming and well attended. These give pupils the opportunity to explore their interests and further their talents. Pupils explore their spirituality through subjects such as RE and personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). They learn how to find moments of awe and wonder in their everyday lives and consider what makes them and others happy. Time is given to sit in quiet reflection and this helps to develop a sense of gratitude. At present, there is no agreed definition or vocabulary used to explore spirituality. This means that pupils and adults sometimes find it difficult to articulate their ideas about their own spiritual development.

Collective worship is a joyful time. It is varied in approach with times of reflection, prayer, song and stories. It is led by members of staff as well as the enthusiastic pupil worship team. This means that different ways of worship are explored, giving the opportunity for all to be engaged. A focus on the school's Christian values within worship enables pupils to work and play well together. Pupils are motivated to discuss messages learned in worship with their families. It opens a dialogue about living with faith that both parents and pupils find inspirational. Prayer is part of the everyday life of the school. It is valued as a way of encouraging thankfulness, a time to give their worries to God and an aid to dealing with emotions. Reflection areas have been developed in the classrooms and pupils find these useful to ponder the school's Christian values. However, beyond the classroom there are few opportunities for moments of spontaneous stillness or reflection, which limits spiritual growth.

There is a strong desire to build a harmonious Christian community that is rooted in equality. This means pupils and adults are warmly welcomed into the school family. There is an atmosphere of Christian love and acceptance, where people are respected and valued as being precious in God's eyes. Pupils are encouraged to follow the school's Christian values. These are celebrated in the weekly 'Star of the Week' worship. This positive reinforcement helps to create a calm and purposeful learning environment. The Christian value of kindness is the foundation for the behaviour policy. Staff receive training in emotion coaching and restorative practice to help pupils understand and

manage their feelings. On the very few occasions when pupils argue, they learn to practice forgiveness and reconciliation. They see themselves as role models, believing that by being kind, they can teach others to do the same. This is reinforced by the buddy system where the youngest pupils are looked after by the older ones. This understanding and practice of Christian values means that pupils' behaviour is exemplary and the school is a haven of Christian love.

The Christian vision prompts pupils' action for the local community. Recently the worship team were inspired by the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand. This led to a campaign to help the local foodbank. They created posters and spoke to the school during collective worship. This positive action helps them to see themselves as agents for change in their community. Because of this, they rightly believe that small changes can make a big difference to peoples' lives. The discussion of global issues in collective worship and during lessons, gives pupils a growing understanding of their place in the world. They understand the need for change and have been proactive in taking action to address this. However, they have had limited experience of doing this outside their own community.

The teaching of RE at St Matthew's is good. The curriculum has been thoughtfully designed in partnership with the Lichfield Diocese. Teachers attend training led by both the Diocese and the trust. Because of this, staff are confident and knowledgeable in the teaching of RE. Pupils learn about Christianity and other faiths and worldviews, widening their knowledge of global beliefs. Resources are well chosen to reflect the needs of learners. Effective assessment of knowledge and understanding ensures that prior learning is built upon within each topic. Consequently, pupils have a solid understanding of the subject. Thus they make good progress. Pupils explain with assurance the main features of the faiths and worldviews. They talk knowledgeably about Bible stories and can explain how Christians use these as a guide to living. Within each unit of study, pupils investigate a 'Big Question'. This leads them on an exploration of faith, discovering how it impacts followers' daily routines. Therefore, they understand that living with faith presents many challenges and rewards. Pupils enjoy debating ethical and philosophical issues such as the relationship between science and religion. When researching, they study all sides of an argument. Therefore, they are able to articulate their own and the beliefs of others with confidence.

The inspection findings indicate that St Matthew's Primary Academy is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

Information			
Inspection date	22 April 2024	URN	140299
VC/VA/Academy	Academy	Pupils on roll	79
Diocese	Lichfield		
MAT/Federation	St Chad's Academies Trust		
Executive Principal	Karen Taylor		
Chair	Anthony Orlik		
Inspector	Lesley Montgomery	No.	2243