

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Silas CE Primary School

High Park Street, Toxteth, Liverpool L8 3TR

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Diocese

Liverpool

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Name of multi-academy trust

Rainbow Trust

Date of academy conversion

1st February 2015

Date of inspection

29 June 2017

Date of last inspection

June 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Controlled 104615

Executive Headteacher / Head of School

Jonathan Nichols / Gina Donaldson

Inspector's name and number

Tracy Beatty 890

School context

St Silas Church of England Primary School is a one and a half form entry school situated in an area of significant socio-economic deprivation. There are extremely high levels of mobility. The mortality rate is the highest in the city and more than twice the national average. The number of pupils eligible for Pupil Premium is over three times the national average. The vast majority of pupils in the school are from minority ethnic backgrounds (92%). A very large majority (83%) of pupils do not speak English as their first language. In June 2016, St Silas was awarded National Support School status.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Silas as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The whole school community is totally committed to their mission to strive for excellence in everything, ensuring that every pupil flourishes in a context of Christian love and care.
- The school's Christian character is celebrated and clearly evident in the environment and website.
- The dedicated and inspirational leaders are united and effective. They have built very strong relationships on every level rooted in respect for all.
- Christian values are not only articulated by all members of the community, but also truly influence how they live. This has a strong impact on pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development and behaviour.
- The very effective and approachable pastoral support team ensures families are well supported. This creates true partnership within which the needs of every pupil are met and differences diminished.

Areas to improve

- Provide further opportunities for pupils to plan and evaluate collective worship, so that they are fully involved on a regular basis.
- Further improve monitoring systems of collective worship in order to sustain improvement and capture the impact on the whole school community.

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

This school is a beacon of God's love and hope in the community which enables every *child* to thrive regardless of background. There is a wonderful sense of celebration in this school, where the Church of England's vision for Education by promoting 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10) has been applied to all aspects of school life. Staff members celebrate the achievement of 'each and every child' at every opportunity, such as through the use of the Praise Pod, which sends a message of good news home to parents, and the Well Done Blog. This spills out into the community with whom the school has built extremely strong links. Staff members join with parents for events such as the Food Evening and celebrate significant events such as breaking the fast at the close of Ramadan together in the school hall.

Faith and Christian values are central to everything that takes place at St Silas. Staff members model them continually and encourage the *children* to embed these values, both at school and at home. The school generates an excitement and thirst for learning against a backdrop of deep care for all. Leaders drive forward the vision from a sense of moral purpose, stemming from a belief that every *child* is precious. A Year 2 pupil reinforced this, saying, 'This school never gives up on anyone and they teach us to never give up on each other'. As a school with high mobility, pupils report that St Silas is a school which gives newcomers an extra special welcome. Pupils describe their school as a 'generous' one, committed to charitable giving as an expression of God's love in action. They demonstrate a very good understanding of other faiths, and have a high degree of respect for diversity and difference.

Leaders approach attendance, exclusion and behaviour from a standpoint of forgiveness and respect. The effective behaviour policy creatively ensures all pupils want to behave, providing appealing rewards for those who uphold the school values. The direct link of Christian values and behaviour results in excellent conduct throughout school. When problems occur, pupils are given support and receive 'a fresh start every hour'. Pupils relayed how the leaders always have time for them. A year 6 pupil described how he 'used to be naughty, but I changed because staff listened to me, knew how to calm me down and taught me to control my anger. Whatever it is you struggle with, the teachers help you to overcome it'. Staff go the extra mile to meet the needs of pupils, evident in the special nurture spaces created such as the 'Casa' nurture base and the sensory space called 'The Bubble', and commitment to provide experiences for all pupils from the 'Bucket List' of '50 Things To Do Before You Leave St Silas'. Pupils said the school's Christian values have changed the way they behave at home, causing them to be more 'obedient and thankful'. Pupils talk confidently about having a growth mindset, which the school relates to the Bible verse 'I can do all things through Him who strengthens me'.

The school enjoys close links with St Philemon's Church. The church worker attends school regularly to lead weekly collective worship sessions, take part in RE lessons, lead after school worship groups and deliver parent classes. Pupils are given opportunities to reflect in their chosen way, with a special room for prayer and sessions led by the RE leader on Thursday and Friday lunch times. The school has been awarded the title 'School of Sanctuary' following recent assessment, demonstrating a desire to be a school that is proud to be a place of safety and inclusion for all. Christian values are evidenced through display, worship corners and Bible verses on the walls as well as pervading the curriculum. The pupils are rightly proud of the calm, attractive and high quality environment the school has created.

Pupils are very enthusiastic about their love of religious education (RE), supported by a Year 3 pupil's assertion, 'if you want to learn RE, come here because it's the best!' RE is evidently a strength of the school, strongly contributing to the SMSC development of pupils and the Christian character of the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is a daily time of respectful tranquillity and enthusiastic participation that everyone benefits from. Worship is high quality, high profile and central to school life. It is very well planned with regular biblical input that shapes behaviour. The styles and routines in worship kindle a sense of awe and wonder. A member of staff writes bespoke songs for every Christian value with thought provoking lyrics which further develop spirituality. Pupils thoroughly enjoy singing these and have also assisted in writing a song for the value 'service'. A focus on the

Anglican tradition is less evident because of the unique context of the school, but each act of worship is characterised by the lighting of candles, a prayer and attendance by all staff.

The school has a prayer room in which staff and pupils meet for prayer club twice weekly. Pupils learn about the value of personal prayer in that they are encouraged to pray in their own words and ask for prayer for their own situations. In the act of worship observed, there was active participation from all pupils and behaviour was of the highest standard. Pupils respond positively about worship but do not currently have regular opportunities to plan and evaluate worship. A year 5 pupil said of worship, 'everything we do in school and worship teaches us to make the right choices. We are learning about what Jesus would do'.

Leaders have created a flexible and creative approach to worship to ensure it is fully inclusive and as a result, no pupil is removed. For instance, the services in church were poorly attended by parents so the decision was taken to move worship into the school building. Now many attend on a regular basis. The church worker comes into school every week to lead worship. She is very visible in and around school. Although no formal method of collecting the views of pupils is in place, pupils informally offer opinions and ideas as well as asking for clarification on issues. Leaders place great value on worship but do not currently have a formal system of monitoring and development planning for worship.

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

Leaders have created an oasis of peace for its pupils at St Silas, practising true servant leadership which is in turn modelled at every level. The Headteacher and able senior leadership team (SLT) have painted a clear vision for 'each and every child' (the school motto) to be enabled to reach their true potential and aim high. As a result, progress and attainment are above average at KS2 from low starting points.

The SLT constantly look for opportunities to help staff grow personally and professionally. The development of staff is planned strategically by governors and all are pushed to step out of their comfort zone as future leaders. Staff describe the opportunities afforded to them for continued professional development (CPD) as superb. All staff comment on the tremendous support they receive in terms of CPD. One said 'I would defy anyone to find a school where you are supported as well as you are here'. The SLT excels at giving time to staff so teacher workload is kept at a healthy level and morale high. The teamwork is exceptional, with the attitude of 'together we can achieve'. Unity characterises this school, where everyone is considered a leader with genuine value placed on their contributions. Staff speak of the dedicated support of the SLT for them personally and for the pupils. One staff member said, 'I know of no other school where staff go above and beyond to the extent we do'. This was reinforced by parents, one of whom said staff 'do their utmost, are totally committed and unbelievably compassionate'. This compassion extends to exceptional support for families, such as taking parents to appointments. As a result of the passionate endeavour to support families pastorally, links with the community are particularly strong. Parents are particularly appreciative of members of the team being available at the beginning and end of the school day. Workshops are delivered throughout the year alongside blogs and training videos to help parents support their children effectively.

The Headteacher states that as a Christian school they have the responsibility to help and train others, both staff and other schools, requiring genuine distributed leadership. Succession planning is always at the forefront of governors' minds, ensuring they are providing opportunities to develop and distribute leaders without diluting the vision. This includes high quality diocesan training. Governance at St Silas is very effective, ensuring the school never stands still. The church school self-evaluation is robust and clearly demonstrates a genuine and sustained improvement since the last inspection. To develop a formal, continuing self-evaluation of church school distinctiveness and collective worship was the development point from the last inspection, which has been fully addressed. Leadership of RE is excellent, ensuring standards are sustained at a high level. The children's floor books evidence very good quality lessons and deep learning, linked to the bible and the application of Christian values. RE is led by a specialist teacher showing leaders attribute high value to this subject. Pupils talk about how much their teachers love them and how they know they are loved by God. This is a strong affirmation that leaders and staff here have created a safe haven for the children in their care.