

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### Astley Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Astley, Stourport-on-Severn, Worcestershire. DY13 0RH

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Worcester</b>
Previous SIAs inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Worcestershire
Date of inspection	6 July 2017
Date of last inspection	15 June 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 116864
Headteacher	Simon Stubbs
Inspector's name and number	Stephanie Boulter 785

#### School context

Astley is a small rural primary school with 98 pupils on roll. Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. Numbers have steadily increased since the last inspection, demonstrating local support for the school. Astley has been in a federation partnership with another church school for over five years. The number of children with special needs is 20.8%. whilst pupils who are known to be eligible for pupil premium is lower than the national average at 16%. The vast majority of pupils are of white British heritage.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Astley as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The Christian ethos of the school is deeply embedded and significantly impacts upon the lives and achievement of pupils.
- Pupils clearly articulate the importance of the Christian values in their lives.
- Collective worship is at the heart of the school which continually serves to strengthen its Christian character.
- The teaching of religious education is highly effective, enabling pupils to apply what they learn to their own lives.
- Leadership is a considerable strength that enables the school to prepare well for the future.

#### Areas to improve

- Further develop children's religious literacy and theological thinking in RE so that the contribution this makes to their understanding of the 'Big Story' of the Bible are strengthened.
- Improve the rigour of governor monitoring of Christian distinctiveness, collective worship and religious education (RE), so there is greater understanding of their impact on all aspects of school life.

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

The outstanding Christian character of the school has a high profile and clearly shapes the school's approach to its provision for all children. Both children and adults understand how explicit Christian values make a significant difference to the lives of all members of the school community. Children are very articulate in describing how the school's core values help them to make friendships and build relationships with others. They speak with confidence and insight about courage and forgiveness and how these values help them in their school and at home. Children understand that, as a church school, these values have roots in biblical teaching and give examples of Bible stories that teach them about values. The values are an integral part of the language of the school, in how they are lived out and how children approach their learning and personal development. Children are very clear that although these values have a Christian meaning, they are also universal and apply to everyone regardless of their background and whether they have a faith or not. They speak with passion about God loving everyone equally and taking care of all. The core values make a significant contribution to the exemplary behaviour of the children and the creation of an environment in which children are keen to learn and have positive attitudes towards their work. As a result, they do well in their academic progress, achieving outcomes that for the majority of children allow them to make good and often outstanding progress across the key stages. Children have time to reflect during the school day both in the outside environment and around the school. They develop their spirituality in the classroom by reflecting on questions that encourage them to apply their learning so that it has relevance in their own lives. When children are encouraged to explore and describe their views and opinions on life's 'big questions', they do so with enthusiasm and confidence. Through exploration across the curriculum in art, geography and RE, children develop an impressive understanding of and a respect for diversity. The school's distinctive Christian character contributes to the school's passion for charity work including supporting Water Aid and Fair Trade causes. Children have a high regard for the need to treat everyone equally and a concern for justice around the world. They are developing their appreciation of Christianity and other major religions both as part of modern British society and their place in the world. There is wide evidence of spirituality, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development in the school. For example, appreciation of the school's environment, inspirational singing in collective worship, making good choices and the description of how prayer has helped them through difficult times. Religious education (RE) makes a significant contribution to the children's social and moral development as well as supporting their appreciation of the school's values and how they are lived out. RE has a high profile within the curriculum and is excellently led and managed. Children respond positively in RE and apply their secure knowledge to help them understand what they learn at a deeper level. Children want to come to school so attendance is high.

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

All members of the school community recognise the importance of collective worship in the life of the school. Children articulate that worship creates a sense of calmness within them because they have time to reflect and think about things. Adults also value this time to be still and quiet in the midst of the busyness of the school day. Themes for worship are planned by the headteacher and primarily focus on exploring the school's values within their Christian context. For example, during an act of worship led by the pupil worship group, the CREW, there was a focus on the values of compassion and tolerance, through the parable of the Good Samaritan. The school community reflected on the importance of helping someone in need, with children being able to empathise with people who suffer throughout the world. Worship enables children to discuss how Bible stories relate to the school values and their own relationships. Children understand the importance of prayer in their own spiritual journey describing it as an opportunity to say thank you or sorry to God. Spaces for prayer and reflection are evident in classrooms and outside areas throughout the school, enhancing learners' spiritual awareness. They also recognise their responsibility to pray for the needs of others. In addition, learners are inspired through worship to take responsibility for helping other people in practical ways by supporting a range of charitable organisations. A Year 6 child on recalling the teaching of Jesus that you should, 'Love your neighbour as yourself,' used this as motivation to support the work of charities. This also illustrates the impact of sound biblical teaching within worship that enables children to appreciate the importance of Jesus Christ to the Christian faith. Pupils clearly express an age appropriate understanding of the Trinitarian nature of Christianity. The school's strong links with the parish church and the regular services held there ensure that children have a clear understanding of local Anglican practice at an appropriate level, and the seasons and festivals of the Christian year. Governors informally monitor collective worship, however, school leaders recognise that a formal approach will be more effective in evaluating the impact on the school community. This area of development has been recognised by school leaders. Parents speak about worship providing their children with a sense of self and others. Children are involved in planning and leading worship through volunteering to belong to the CREW. They are able to meet with children from other schools at

the local Worship Forum where they explore how to deliver worship in a variety of contexts. This gives them confidence to deliver worship both in school and in church.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding**

The RE curriculum is effective and well balanced between content that focuses on Christian belief and practice and that of other faiths. This provides significant openings for children to consider the impact of religious teachings on believers and on themselves. The headteacher and RE lead have completed training on 'Understanding Christianity' which introduces key Christian concepts such as incarnation, salvation and God in age-appropriate ways across the curriculum. Whilst not yet embedded, leaders recognise its challenging approach will enhance children's religious literacy and theological thinking in RE. Children are passionate about RE with one child saying, 'RE is great because it helps you think about God and what is right and wrong.' Through thoughtful discussions, effective links between themes in collective worship and other curriculum areas, RE makes a significant contribution to children's SMSC development. Standards of attainment are high for all learners. Children are inspired by outstanding teaching which enables them to develop a thorough knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other world faiths. Assessment systems are robust, inform teachers' planning and are effective in setting next steps in learning for children. Children's thoughtful responses demonstrate thinking and reflection on themes covered are well developed. Children are given a rich curriculum with regular, exciting and thought provoking first-hand experiences. In Early Years children explored the parable of the Lost Coin. They articulated confidently that the story shows how Jesus looks out for each one of us. Detailed planning ensures that children cover a wide range of religious beliefs during their time in the school. Learners demonstrate their impressive understanding of the knowledge and skills learnt in RE. This was evident in the reflective responses and evaluations the oldest children made about their responsibility to care for their own environment and their world. The high profile of RE across the school ensures that it provides valuable learning experiences for all children as a core part of the curriculum. The subject leader, who is also head of school, conducts rigorous and extensive monitoring and evaluation of RE. Her passionate subject leadership is highly effective and the impact of her work is evident in the challenge and support she provides which results in RE of exceptional quality.

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

The executive headteacher has a clear, inclusive Christian vision for the school in his focus for developing the whole child. His insightful self-evaluation leads to an excellent knowledge of the school as a church school. The governing body shares this vision and provides effective and committed support. They do recognise the necessity to develop more formal systems of monitoring in order to evidence the impact of Christian distinctiveness on learners. Leaders and staff bring considerable energy and commitment to ensuring that each child has the maximum chances to fulfil their individual potential. Christian vision and values are embedded through collective worship, RE, the curriculum, weekly newsletters and the school website. Around the school there are stunning examples of collaborative art works that inspire children to stop and reflect. Staff are given time for peaceful reflection and the leadership enables them to feel safe in the knowledge they are serving God in a caring and understanding place. Partnerships with parents, the local church and villagers make a substantial contribution to the Christian character of school life. Relationships with parents are strong and support the school's Christian ethos because they recognise that their children are happy and live out the values in school and at home. This shows the impact of the values beyond the school day. Parents comment that they are listened to, with a genuine open door policy upheld by school leaders and how the school is a supportive, caring Christian family. One parent explained how her child was 'happy to come to school for the first time in his life', due to the work the school does to live out its Christian character and to reach out to all families. Partnerships with the church are strong. The mutual and substantial benefit of this relationship is seen in the amount of time parishioners give to supporting the school and the impact festivals like 'Experiencing Easter' in the church have on children and the church community. Leaders ensure that the school motto: 'Love one another' threads throughout the school. All staff live out a vision which is highly effective in promoting the personal development of learners. Professional development is well focused on enhancing the Christian character of the school, including a regular focus on RE. This means that staff are well supported for working within the church school context. The school draws appropriately on the expertise of the diocese in sustaining and developing succession planning and its Christian foundation, through regular attendance at relevant courses for leaders, staff and governors. The school meets statutory requirements for collective worship and RE.

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