

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

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| <b>Oulton Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School</b> | Rock Crescent<br>Oulton<br>Stone<br>ST15 8UH |
| <b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>                             | <b>Good</b>                                  |
| <b>Diocese/Methodist District</b>                                 | <b>Lichfield</b>                             |
| Previous SIAMS inspection grade:                                  | Good   |
| Local authority/date of academy conversion                        | April 2016                                   |
| Name of multi-academy trust/ federation                           | Key Educational Trust                        |
| Date/s of inspection  | 13 October 2016                              |
| Date of last inspection   | Not previously inspected as an academy       |
| School's unique reference number                                  | 142439                                       |
| Headteacher/ Executive Principal/ Head of School                  | Chris Wright/Melanie Melling                 |
| Inspector's name and number                                       | Lizzie McWhirter 244                         |

### School context

In September 2014 there was a change in leadership to Oulton First School with the appointment of an Executive Headteacher and a senior teacher who from September 2016 has become Head of School. In April 2016 Oulton First School became an Academy in partnership with Christ Church First School and Christ Church Academy in Stone. Currently, there are 83 pupils on roll who are mostly from a White British background. The proportion of pupils with special needs/disabilities and those known to be eligible for free school meals are both below average. The school has very strong links with the parish church of St John's and the local community.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Oulton as a Church of England school are good

- This is a welcoming, family Christian community, where hand in hand, everyone works together as a team, within a spirit of trust, thankfulness, forgiveness and friendship.
- Strong leadership and good governance rooted in a Christian framework results in excellent relationships at all levels.
- The positive learning experiences given to pupils through collective worship, the curriculum and extra-curricular activities enables them to grow in confidence, achieve well and prepares them for the transition to their next stage of learning.

### Areas to improve

- Ensure systems are in place for the governors to robustly and regularly monitor the contribution of religious education [RE] as an important aspect of the school's distinctive Christian character.
- Enable these young pupils to lead worship more frequently to encourage them as independent worshippers and nurture their own faith journeys as they grow in understanding about how worship works through the church year.
- Enrich the programme of visits and visitors to support pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

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

Oulton is a happy and special place to be. This is because the school's Christian character has a high profile, positively influencing behaviour and relationships. The Christian values of thankfulness, trust, forgiveness and friendship underpin the school's mission of, 'hand in hand, learning together because every child matters to us'. These values were chosen by the school council and are lived out every day in the way the community relates to one another. Consequently, staff say they 'feel we are a caring school, with children at the heart. We support children academically, emotionally and spiritually through the important years. These young children are enthusiastic learners and are given a 'truly marvellous foundation for life'. This is because the school nurtures and educates the children, giving them knowledge and support to reach their full potential and a very good understanding of the wider world. As a result, there have been no exclusions and attendance is very good, because expectations are reinforced in worship, such as doing the right thing, going the extra mile and reflecting on who is my neighbour. Pupils achieve well and are above the national average academically in all subjects, with the exception of mathematics at Key Stage 1, which is slightly below national. Personalised learning and parental help at home has helped these pupils make good progress. The school attributes the high results in other areas of learning because of the supportive and encouraging environment for pupils. Each new day is a new start for these young pupils who are loved unconditionally in a spirit of forgiveness. They know that each person has different gifts and talents and they are valued for 'having a little bit of God in them'. Pupils here are thankful for their school, value the friendship extended to all, trust their teachers and have a sense of self-worth as they grow to become more independent learners.

RE makes a good contribution to the school's Christian character and to pupils' spiritual and personal development. They say they enjoy RE and learning about God, with one pupil saying RE was his favourite project. They can relate the Christmas and Easter story well. However, they are less secure in their knowledge of Ascension-tide and Pentecost. Pupils are aware of the community beyond Oulton and Stone. They often reflect on their place in the world, with charity fundraising helping their global awareness of diverse communities and cultures. This is nurtured by links with Kenya and a recent focus on the Rio Olympics as well as the plight of the Syrian refugees. They are excited about the growth of the sensory garden and have a strong commitment to eco-gardening. They are thankful to God for his world. They enjoy visits to the Derby Faith Centre and to St John's Church as part of their learning in RE. A good example was the recent visit by Reception pupils when they were able to explore the church and ask, and find answers to, their questions put to the church warden and chair of governors. Older pupils also say they would like more visits and visitors to enrich their RE. The school has correctly identified this as an area for development to support pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

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

Worship at Oulton First School enables the whole school community to learn about Christianity and reflect on their own values and beliefs. There are strong links with St John's Church, with the vicar leading weekly worship in school. In addition, the Open the Book team enriches worship, bringing the Bible narrative alive. School and church pray and sing together. Pupils say their favourite part of worship is 'singing songs and praying to God'. One pupil said praying to God was 'the most important part' of their life. The children prayed for athletes during the Olympics as part of their outlook on the worldwide church and enjoyed a visit from a Paralympian to collective worship. The parish church is helping these young children, and indeed the adults in this community, grow in their understanding of The Holy Trinity. This is enabled through focussing on the three persons of The Trinity as they arise in Bible stories. In addition, the church helps the children through examples of praying to the Father, through the Son with the help of The Holy Spirit. Pupils explain the Trinity in their own words, saying, 'God is watching us. Jesus died on the cross for us. The Holy Spirit is always with us'. Pupils enjoy a range of worship leaders, including the pupils themselves who often lead spontaneous prayers. However, they say they would like to lead worship more frequently. This is an area the school has recognised as an important area for development to nurture the pupils on their own faith journeys as they grow in understanding about how worship works through the church year. Pupils read passages and important verses aloud from the Bible, which helps them think about their Christian values and daily life. For example, 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart'. Pupils also use the interactive class worship tables, saying, 'when we are sad and want to speak to God we hold the cross and say a prayer'. In addition, the school propose to extend prayer experiences, as pupils explain, 'dropping a marble into a bowl of water helps to take a bad thought away'. Pupils say they can use the sensory garden 'like a graveyard where you can bury your bad thoughts or sins'. Staff and pupils alike use the class prayer boxes. Pupil voice is valued and

gathered in many ways, including worship evaluations on post it notes, providing feedback from every class. Staff are now more confident leading worship as they have been given tools and ideas to help them. Parents say they value worship, especially 'church services, such as Harvest, the choir are always there which 'is a really big part of school worship and the vicar engages the children so well'.

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

Strong leadership and good governance results in the school's distinctive Christian character providing a Christian framework where relationships thrive at all levels. The vicar is chair of the academy trust and foundation governors actively promote the Christian character of this school. They closely monitor academic and personal progress. They are committed to the wellbeing of pupils and adults, which includes supporting staff professional development. They feel this is much stronger with the new leadership structure. The RE subject leader values the support of the governors and the diocesan cluster meetings. She has a separate RE action plan to help implement the new syllabus as well as identify the best ways to gather evidence of RE learning. Governors have addressed all the areas from the last inspection and have a positive vision to develop the trust which is only in its infancy. This includes ensuring the school's Christian ethos is even more strongly embedded. However, they also acknowledge the importance of ensuring their systematic monitoring and evaluation includes the regular and robust monitoring of RE as an important aspect of the school's Christian distinctiveness. Both worship and RE support pupils' spiritual development, are enhanced by the partnership between church and school and meet statutory requirements. Parents say that the two f's and two t's make it easy for the children to remember the four chosen values. They also praise the teachers in this school who make them feel welcome too as partners involved in their children's learning. They value this family school where their children grow in confidence, especially through musical and sporting activities. They feel their children are well prepared for the transition to the next stage of their learning. Many staff have a long association with the school and value this supportive and caring environment, with its camaraderie, school ethos and values. As a result, staff are thankful and committed, with one member of staff citing, 'Oulton School inspired me to become a teacher'. Community links are good, with the school choir singing at local venues and the whole school participating in Stone's Advent Window project.

SIAMS report October 2016 Oulton Church of England VC First School, Oulton ST15 8UH