

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

### Earl Sterndale VC Primary school

Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 0BS

**Current SIAMS inspection grade**

**Good**

**Diocese**

**Derby**

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

Derbyshire

Name of multi-academy trust

NA

Date/s of inspection

26 January 2017

Date of last inspection

24 February 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

112821

Headteacher

Daniel Holden

Inspector's name and number

Alison Woodhouse 777

#### School context

Earl Sterndale Primary School is a very small school with 29 pupils on roll of which almost all are of white British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average as is the number of pupils with special educational needs. There are currently two classes in school, an infant and a junior. The school building provides spacious facilities after a new extension in 2016. The outdoor areas are currently still being developed. St. Michael and All Angels church is adjacent to the school playground.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Earl Sterndale VC Primary as a Church of England school are good

- A strong Christian vision is evident in the nurture and care for everyone within the school community.
- Collective worship is a core part of the school's daily life, contributing significantly to pupils' spiritual development.
- Religious Education (RE) makes a good contribution to children's understanding of the Christian faith.

#### Areas to improve

- Create more opportunities for pupils to work with members of St. Michael and All Angels church and then reflect this within the school website and documentation.
- Develop reflection spaces within the natural environment of the school grounds.
- Extend learners' study of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith.

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

This is a village school where pupils are valued as individuals and benefit from this warm family atmosphere where Christian values are embedded in the ethos of the school. The school vision states 'To promote a small school, family ethos, grounded in Christian values.' This vision is lived out as evident in relationships of the highest quality. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong and know, from an early age, to be respectful, generous and honest. They also learn quickly that in this school everyone is of value, and all contributions are treated with acceptance. This is evident as relationships throughout the school are excellent and pupils and adults rightly assert that 'we are like a family...we all know and care for one another'. Academic progress is good and the small number of year six children achieve very well, showing that the school is highly inclusive and actively supports all pupils including those with additional needs. Behaviour, relationships and attendance are good as a result of the high importance placed on Christian values. Parents commented that 'we chose this school for its warmth and reception.' The school places importance on developing pupils' spirituality. Events linking school and church are a regular feature of the school calendar and parents say that 'school brings life to the church.' Anglican festivals link church and school and are well attended by the school and local community. It is evident that pupils reflect on their learning in religious education (RE) lessons, as one pupil said 'our collective worship informs our RE lesson and vice versa.' Here RE plays its part in presenting other cultures and beliefs to the pupils and widening their horizons of belief and lifestyle. The subject gives learners a sense of their place in the world. It explores Christianity and other faiths with a focus on learning from the examples of religion. Pupils have limited opportunities to link with schools in other countries to further develop their cultural understanding. Wherever possible, diversity is experienced in the local community, celebrating Chinese New Year being an example. Learners have less understanding that Christianity is itself a multi-cultural world faith. RE supports critical thinking and broader English skills. Governors and staff have been central in developing areas for prayer and reflection meaning there are opportunities for pupils to be reflective inside the school building. However, this has not been developed to the same extent in the outside environment.

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

Collective worship has developed considerably since the last inspection, with Junior children leading worship regularly and evaluating it daily. A lighted candle, together with a Bible and cross act as the focal point and transforms the classroom into a special place for the purpose. Collective worship is popular with all ages in the school community and fully attended by staff who commented on the 'inspirational, creative and thoughtful nature' of collective worship. Staff attributed significant developments in collective worship to opportunities supported by members of the church. The programme for worship gives prominence to the Bible and teachings of Jesus and all teachers lead acts of worship meaning the school has prayer and worship at the heart of school life. Pupils regularly contribute to prayer boxes which form part of collective worship as they are read out by the headteacher and they also enjoy saying Grace each lunchtime. When reflecting on prayer one pupil commented that 'it clears your mind.' Prayer is a key and integral feature of the worship life of the school. Pupils have written their own prayers which they lead in worship and traditional responses are used. Time is allocated for prayer three times a day in addition to the developing prayer spaces. However, opportunities and spaces for individual reflection, at other times in the school day, are insufficiently developed. Older pupils lead worship and are able to comment on incarnation and the Holy Trinity with confidence. Visitors from other denominations, such as a Methodist minister, provide a range of worship which is varied in style and reflects a range of Christian traditions. The school involves parents in termly services in the local church and parents speak positively about the Anglican traditions led by pupils in church. Pupils are clear that Earl Sterndale is a church school and that church services in particular celebrate the life of Jesus and have meaning for today. They understand the importance of the church's year of festivals and special occasions. Pupils appreciate the fact that different people lead their worship and this strengthens the sense of community that exists in the school. Equally they are able to illustrate how they live out the values with examples of how they are keen to care for others and take responsibility for their community by being a 'buddy' to younger pupils. Parents readily endorse the impact of collective worship as pupils often refer to questions of faith that are posed in school from the link between collective worship and RE. The planning and delivery of worship is a challenge given the small size of the school staff and recent changes in available staff from the church to support this.

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

The hardworking and dedicated headteacher is leading the school very effectively as a church school. Governors are actively involved in the work of the school and provide support and challenge. They have a shared vision and passion for the work of the school and actively promote the school's Christian values. The headteacher provides

outstanding care for all members of the school community and this is seen as a great strength of the school for parents and governors. All leaders rightly attribute the strengths of the school to the family ethos and the impact this has on the development of the pupils in the widest sense. The chair and foundation governors assist the headteacher in school self-evaluation and their knowledge and support for the school makes a real difference and is reflected in mutually beneficial partnerships with the school and local community. They have addressed the focus for development in the previous report by reviewing how the school's Christian foundation is reflected. Whilst the Christian character of the school is strong and its impact regularly reviewed, it is not coherently expressed in school documentation or on the website to pinpoint exactly the Christian vision that drives the school forward. Governors are highly involved in monitoring collective worship and standards across the school informally and, as a result, they have a good understanding of the work of the school. The headteacher and governors ensure that statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are met. The RE curriculum together with the daily act of worship ensures pupils have opportunities to understand the roots of Christian values within the Christian faith. As the leader of RE, the headteacher is undergoing training on 'Understanding Christianity,' which is beginning to have an impact on deepening learners' understanding. 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. Governors are very supportive of the school in every sense. Their training in the evaluation of the Christian distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school has the potential to move this effective school to the next level. Earl Sterndale is a successful, cohesive and inclusive part of the community.

SIAMS report: January 2017, Earl Sterndale, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 0BS