

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

<b>St Mary's Bluecoat Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School</b>	
Lodge Lane, The Grove, Bridgnorth WV15 5EQ	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Hereford</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Local authority	Shropshire
Name of federation	The Trinity Federation
Date of inspection	16 November 2017
Date of last inspection	22 November 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided Primary 123536
Executive Headteacher	Claire Gaskin
Inspector's name and number	Bridget Knight 876

### School context

St Mary's Bluecoat Church of England (VA) Primary School is a slightly smaller than average primary school. The school has a new, purpose-built Early Years Foundation Stage unit. There is a rising roll, currently standing at 169 pupils. The school is part of the Trinity Federation which was established in September 2014. The executive headteacher leads all three schools, with the lead teacher managing day to day matters. Staffing is now stable. St Mary's Bluecoat serves an area of some deprivation. The majority of learners are of white British background. The school's recent Ofsted inspection confirmed that the school is good overall.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary's Bluecoat Primary as a Church of England school are good

- The school's committed leadership team, fuelled by deeply held Christian values, has built strong foundations for success.
- This principled approach has fostered a community of trust and hope, enabling the school to flourish as a distinctively Christian school.
- The school's Christian values shine through, illuminating the lifework of the school.
- The executive headteacher's dedication to inclusivity, nurture and care is making a positive difference to the daily lives of the school's pupils and their families.

### Areas to improve

- Develop a shared definition and understanding of spirituality that will deepen pupils' thinking and further bind together the school community.
- Empower pupils to take greater ownership of their own learning by developing their involvement in peer and self-assessment in religious education (RE).
- Enhance pupil involvement in collective worship through a pupil council responsible for leading, managing and delivering worship on a regular basis.

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

This is a school where all of God's children are valued. The development of the whole child is central to this school's Christian mission. Parents say the school teaches the children to be kind. As a result, pupils' behaviour is good. Attendance has improved and exclusions are rare. Support for learners with behavioural, emotional and or educational needs is seen as of paramount importance, with specialist staff and targeted interventions all being harnessed in support of the individual. The genuine care and support offered by the school is appreciated greatly by its families. As one parent expressed it, 'I can't get over how well my child is looked after'. The school has succeeded in creating a climate of trust and, as a result, numbers have risen dramatically and its reputation in the local community is positive. The school's Christian character therefore makes an important contribution to pupils' development and this focus for development from the previous inspection has been successfully addressed. A creative and meaningful curriculum is the cornerstone of the school's provision. It inspires pupils to achieve. Accordingly, pupils show good attitudes to and engagement with learning. Progress from their starting points, is strong for most groups of pupils. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered by the chosen Christian values of compassion, friendship, trust, peace, respect and truthfulness. These values were chosen collectively by the whole school community. They are emphasised at every opportunity but especially through the 'values pompoms'. The pupils delight in being invited to place a pompom in the values tub, through either an adult or a peer nomination. This activity ensures that the connection between the values and how pupils live their daily lives is strong. Learning in RE also makes a positive contribution to pupils' understanding of their own Christian values. For example, when studying the five pillars of Islam, pupils were invited to make associations between these and their school values. All the classes have a prayer corner and pupils are encouraged to write for the class prayer book. There is not a clear definition or shared understanding of spirituality and this is an area for development. Pupils have some understanding of Christianity as a multicultural world faith, and of the diversity and difference within other faith communities.

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

Collective worship has helped to enhance St Mary's Bluecoat's reputation as a church school. The recent whole-school visit to the local church in the town centre symbolised the school's declaration of its church status. The visit was applauded by the community. The exceedingly high numbers of families in attendance at recent eucharists are also a testament to how much parents enjoy this aspect of the school's work. The school enjoys good support from its local diocese, and the incumbent and team make a positive contribution to worship. Festivals in the church's year are celebrated. Pupils have some understanding of different Christian traditions in worship, although cannot always articulate these fully. Behaviour and attitudes in collective worship are good. Pupils speak warmly of their worship times, and they especially enjoy Open the Book. Younger pupils talked with great enthusiasm about the Bible stories they had helped to act out. They eagerly await their next opportunity! The pupils' appreciation of the role and importance of Jesus in Christianity is less well-developed. Recently, older pupils organised and led a highly successful harvest worship, and the recent pupil audit shows that they are keen to have further opportunities for involvement. Collective worship enhances pupils' understanding and appreciation of the school's Christian values. Older pupils make the connection between their learning on these occasions and their own personal development. Hymns are used to enrich understanding and appreciation of the Christian religion, and pupils say they particularly enjoy this aspect of worship. The school has purposefully developed openings for spiritual reflection, ensuring it is an inherent part of every worship gathering as well as in the classroom. Pupils speak movingly of how much this means to them, talking of how it helps them to feel calm, happy, relaxed and safe. One child expressed it thus: 'When you hear God is there for you, it takes your mind off all the bad things you hear about.' Pupils can discuss with clarity their understanding of the concept of the Trinity. They describe the way that 'God is three in one', explaining that 'it makes sense because we all have different roles and yet we are still us.' The clergy are involved in the planning of worship. The collective worship leader takes a diligent approach to the development of this aspect of the school's work, gathering and acting on pupil and staff views to enhance the experience of pupils. Governors are involved in monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision. They appreciate the fact that their views are both sought and welcomed.

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

RE provision across the school benefits from the passionate leadership of its coordinator. The subject leader carries out monitoring and evaluation of the subject to refine and deepen the school's provision. She has harnessed the enthusiasm of the whole staff who are committed to providing a rich and meaningful experience in this subject. As a result, progress and standards in RE are good, and make a good contribution to narrowing attainment gaps for vulnerable pupils. RE also makes a good contribution to the Christian values of the school. The school makes these connections explicit and, accordingly, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is enhanced. Its impact is reflected in pupils' ability to empathise with others. This is exemplified in writing that older pupils undertook in role as a soldier in World War Two. The school's recent engagement in high quality professional development in RE has been the springboard for reviewing teaching and learning. Pupils are given a range of creative opportunities, including drama and art, to express their learning. This means that pupils' knowledge and understanding is secure and they are able to talk meaningfully about the concepts studied. One parent commented, 'I can tell when my child has had RE because he chooses that Bible story for bedtime reading.' There are opportunities for pupils to experience awe and wonder. This was beautifully exemplified in a lesson about the Trinity where pupils were intrigued to explore the double helix at first hand. Pupils with additional needs are supported but expectations of all pupils in this subject are suitably challenging. The quality and presentation of written work demonstrates the pride that pupils take in this subject. The school's focus on their Christian values helps pupils to find connections between Christianity and other faiths. They say they enjoy finding out about other religions because, 'It helps you understand what other people respect'. Their engagement with a Sikh visitor to the school illustrated their genuine reverence and interest. Through the current curriculum, pupils are now acquiring a range of skills, including enquiry, analysis and interpretation. The school is developing its approach to marking across RE to ensure that pupils are able to evaluate and reflect more deeply on their understanding. It has developed an effective system for assessment and monitoring of pupil achievement and so this focus for development from the previous inspection has been appropriately addressed.

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

At St Mary's Bluecoat school, the shared devotion to its Christian mission is not just articulated but enacted. Its leadership is steeped in Christian values, bringing moral courage and conviction to both its strategic development and support for pupils and their families. The stringent approach to self-evaluation is centred around securing improvements in wellbeing and attainment for all pupils. The school's Christian vision sings out in the school's commitment to inclusion, to diminishing the difference for disadvantaged children and to raising aspirations for all pupils. School leaders give priority to creating a nurturing ethos and positive relationships amongst staff and pupils alike. Parents greatly appreciate the way their children quickly develop self-confidence. The child-centred approach to learning and teaching ensures that their needs come first. The curriculum promotes positive attitudes to learning and self-esteem, nurturing both personal development and academic achievement. Members of the school community describe the 'sea-change' in the school's ethos whereby everyone now feels welcomed, valued and included. Members of the clergy feel they can make a positive contribution and that their input is appreciated. One parent summed up the views of many: 'This school is a support to everyone.' Careful consideration is given to staff appointments. The result is a secure, stable and aspirational staff team. A focus for development from the previous inspection, to develop leadership stability and capacity, has therefore been truly addressed. The school benefits from its federation through shared leadership and the access to good quality and supportive professional development. The school meets the statutory requirements for religious education and collective worship. Both are cherished as integral aspects of the school's character. A culture of high aspirations has been successfully established and inculcated. Staff fully appreciate how much they are supported and valued by the school's leadership. All the staff agreed with the sentiment expressed by one, 'I couldn't be prouder to work here.' Their commitment shines through so that parents see 'they are doing a job they love'. The make-up of the board of governors reflects a commitment to partnership working with the parish. Together, they play a key role in affirming the Christian distinctiveness of the school, holding fast to Christian principles in their decision making and approach. The governing body provides shrewd challenge and support, underpinning the ethical leadership that defines this ambitious organisation. The school community appreciates and applauds the many attributes of this church school. Parents are in no doubt that this is due to the vision of the executive headteacher: 'Mrs Gaskin has been amazing, and every one of her promises has been fulfilled'.