

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

### St Luke's Church of England Primary School

Saunders Ness Road, Isle of Dogs, London, E14 3EB

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| <b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>      | <b>Outstanding</b>       |
| <b>Diocese</b>                             | <b>London</b>            |
| Previous SIAMS inspection grade            | Outstanding              |
| Local authority                            | Tower Hamlets            |
| Date/s of inspection                       | 1 December 2017          |
| Date of last inspection                    | September 2012           |
| Type of school and unique reference number | Voluntary Aided 100954   |
| Headteacher                                | Rebecca Abrahams         |
| Inspector's name and number                | John Pearson-Hicks NS760 |

#### School context

St Luke's has expanded significantly since the last inspection and there are now 399 pupils on roll. The school is situated on the Isle of Dogs and works closely with both Christ Church and St Luke's Church. Since the last inspection the school has had a change in the senior leadership. The school serves an area which is diverse in terms of nationalities, traditions and denominations which reflects the changing nature of the Isle of Dogs in recent years. 60% of the school population are practising members of Christian churches. 40% of pupils are eligible for extra funding due to social or economic disadvantage and around 39% of children have a first language other than English.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Luke's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Outstanding communication and commitment from all leaders ensure the Christian vision and values are embedded and have a profound impact on the work of the school.
- Worship, in its various forms, is central to the life of the school and makes strong connections between the school's Christian values, the Bible and personal impact.
- The prayer life of the school has a significant impact on the daily lives of children, their families and the staff.
- Pupils are enthused about Religious education (RE) and achieve high standards, supported by a well implemented syllabus and assessment system which has ensured children learn from and about religion in meaningful ways.
- The visible commitment of the headteacher in leading a Church school is shared by all leaders and governors. As a result the whole school community is highly motivated and fully supports the ethos of the school.

#### Areas to improve

- Ensure a robust consistency in the assessment of RE through moderation across the school and between other schools using the same syllabus.

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

The distinctive Christian character of this school is explicitly lived out through its new mission statement, 'Hearts overflowing with truth and love' which is clearly rooted in scripture and has enabled this school to go from strength to strength. Significant structural change in the life of the school, including the growth in pupil numbers, has been effectively managed to ensure children are at the centre of all strategic developments. The 'formidable' drive of the headteacher and chair of governors, alongside other senior leaders, staff and governors has had a positive impact on the children's personal, social, moral and spiritual development. The impact of ten core Christian values is clearly visible around the school. The school's RE ambassadors, and others, effectively explain their role in promoting school's motto and articulate why the school's values are important. The school has developed its RE provision

through the effective implementation of the syllabus to deepen the children's understanding of Christianity, other world faiths, and how people hold different views about those of faith or no faith at all. The development of RE since the last inspection has made a significant contribution to the Christian character of the school. Many children enter the school with skill levels below that of their expected age. They make good progress as they move through the school, regardless of their ability or background. By the end of Key Stage 2 levels of attainment are in line with or above the national average. Children articulate clearly about why they feel safe and are well supported by staff. They say 'staff treat us as if we are their kids', the impact being that staff, parents and children feel that they are 'loved' and that great care is taken in supporting them, especially the most vulnerable. The impact of the school's values, 'safety, responsibility, kindness, respect, enthusiasm, partnership, fairness, honesty, excellence and courage', in a Christian context, permeates the life of the school so that children are knowledgeable and want to achieve their very best. Children show great enthusiasm about their learning and give many examples of why they love learning and enjoy coming to school. The peaceful atmosphere in the school, alongside a purposeful focus on meeting the needs of all learners, means that children are well behaved and parents feel exceptionally well supported. The children have a very clear understanding of the school's Christian values and articulate the positive impact the headteacher, staff and vicar have on the school. Together, this effectively promotes an understanding and respect of the diverse communities of 'the island' and this is evident in the quality of relationships enjoyed by the school community. The children's attendance is improving because the headteacher and other staff take a proactive approach in supporting children and families to be in school regularly. Children say they are proud of their school because staff 'ask us what we think' to help the school 'be even better'. The school, its two churches, and clergy, ensure that children and families of all faiths, and none are valued. This is echoed by parents who are overwhelmingly positive about the school and describe how relationships between church and school are 'highly valued' and have impacted positively on their children. Parents and governors explain how the school's distinctive Christian character and the teaching of RE impacts on their lives because we are 'loved for who we are and where we are' in this school. The headteacher and her staff 'believe in us' and what we can achieve in partnership. There is a real sense that staff, children, parents and governors are 'on a journey together' which is based on faith.

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

Collective worship makes a significant contribution to the children's understanding of their place in the world and their personal sense of spirituality. Children say collective worship helps them 'think about the school's values and how to use them all every day'. The headteacher, other senior leaders and the clergy team work closely together to ensure worship reflects the Christian values of the school and the termly themes they use. Children give many examples of how school worship is applied to what they do in school and at home. RE ambassadors speak about how the school's values and worship 'helps us think about our journey in the world' and 'how we can make a difference'. Procedures for evaluation, alongside effective working partnerships, have enabled worship to be a focal point in developing the children's sense of involvement. Children are regularly involved in the planning and leading of worship (Mass) on Mondays with the clergy. Both staff and children see this as a 'very special time' where they are 'gathered together' to start the week. As a result the children feel involved and open in sharing their faith, which reflects the school's vision, for example, some children explained how worship can 'make us feel as if we are overflowing with love' and that we can 'go out into the world' knowing we are 'loved and supported'. They are actively involved in different ways in worship that children recognise as a strength and source of encouragement, especially when they are evaluating worship. Children have a good understanding of the links between God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, appropriate to their age, and ask challenging questions of one another. Children appreciate the involvement in the school that is given by the clergy and explain how they 'teach about Jesus and shows us things we never knew'. This is one of many reasons children give as to why they are passionate about worship and think it is important. Parents say that relationships between school and its two churches have strengthened since the last inspection and that the clergy and headteacher together have had a significant impact on deepening children's sense of place in the world. Children talk readily about prayer and worship and the impact it has on them as individuals and in respecting and understanding the views of others. A daily act of worship is a key focal point of the school day where stories from the Bible, Christian values and themes are explored in depth. Children are very clear that 'singing is part of our worship' and they talk about 'being moved' by worship in school. Children, staff and governors are actively involved in evaluating worship and their feedback is acknowledged and responded to by the school leaders. As a result, for example, children now participate in giving the daily blessing and singing happens more frequently. Children sense that those leading worship 'believe what they are saying and are doing it too'. Consequently, pupils have a sense that worship is 'valuable and useful'. Children are keen to explain their experiences in worship at school and in church, the impact it has, and the view that they would like even more.

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

Children are 'bubbling with enthusiasm' in RE because it is highly valued and meaningful within the life of this school. It is clearly evident in the outstanding quality of work in the children's books and the way in which children talk

about RE and its impact. Since the last inspection a new syllabus and assessments have been implemented and embedded. Children and staff really value the opportunities RE brings in terms of 'big questions' and how to 'wrestle with different views'. The RE leader effectively reviews, refines and develops the systems to ensure children get the most out of their learning. This enables children to be clear about what they are learning about, and learning from, in RE lessons. They are clear about how they can apply their learning in RE to their own circumstances and how they form their own views in light of these experiences. Staff deliver creative lessons with challenging 'big questions'. The school systematically plots the progress of pupils and ensure RE books are effectively marked. This enables a deeper understanding of the subject. Children are highly motivated and say RE lessons are fun, enjoyable and interesting and that it 'expands their view of the world' and 'we can show how the values of the school can be used'. This helps children to apply their knowledge and understanding and contributes to their overall success and enjoyment in RE. Since the last inspection the academic standards have risen and RE makes a significant contribution to this development. There is great consistency in the approach to teaching RE across the school, which is being led effectively by the RE leader and supported by the headteacher and governors. Consequently there is a common understanding throughout the school about expectations. Staff bring RE alive in lessons, for example one teacher was using open-ended questions and 'hot-seating' the Christmas Story, so that the children could, in their view, 'get deeper into RE to that we can understand the relationship between it and ourselves'. In another class the children were actively involved in describing and prioritising the symbolic meaning of different parts of a Christingle. The impact of consistently outstanding teaching throughout the school is that children are aspirational in their approach to the subject and can apply their knowledge. Creative teaching in RE enhances the children's enjoyment of the subject. Parents believe this makes a 'massive' contribution and is an attitude that is 'reflected in church and school' so that the children understand that RE is meaningful. Staff use questioning effectively to deepen children's understanding of the Christian faith and deal sensitively with differing opinions. Since the last inspection the RE leaders have worked systematically to develop teaching and learning through monitoring, evaluating and in supporting staff in delivering RE. The syllabus, together with a focus on developing the skills of teachers and raising the profile of teaching Christianity, has led to a highly effective RE curriculum. As a result staff are confident in their teaching of RE, willing to take risks, and not always having the answer, which children cite as an example of 'us all learning together'. This has led to clear differentiation in lessons so that all children can challenge themselves. The governing body receives regular feedback from the leadership team and there is a clear process for evaluation and development of the subject. Consequently governors are knowledgeable about the curriculum and the high standards achieved in RE, which in turn inform their self-evaluation. Whilst the school has adopted a clear approach to assessment it now needs to ensure that it is robust and consistent from year to year.

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

The headteacher, alongside other school leaders and governors articulate and communicate the school's Christian vision and values exceptionally well. Since the last inspection the school has formulated a new mission statement and clarified the explicit Christian values of the school. The whole community, effectively led by the headteacher and vicar, are clear that they live and work by the school's Christian vision, 'Hearts overflowing with truth and love' which children and parents are committed to. The school has effectively utilised its partnership with the diocese to assist rapid development over the past two years. Children and staff talk confidently about how they are treated equally and that God is 'at work' in us in school and at home. Parents and children talk of the excellent pastoral support given, which in turn has a significant impact on children's personal, spiritual and academic development. They relate their experience of Jesus and God through the school's vision and values. Consequently all children enjoy, achieve and aspire to apply the ten Christian values of this church school. Leaders ensure there is a rich and diverse curriculum that celebrates the backgrounds of all, and makes learning stimulating. The high profile of RE and collective worship in the school has ensured it meets statutory requirements and that high standards of achievement in RE and other subjects is consistent across the school. Systematic review and evaluation by all leaders, despite the change in school leadership and significant increase in pupil numbers, has ensured the school continues on its journey as a distinctively Christian school. This is reflected well in the school's website which gives clear examples of pupils, parents, staff and governors being actively involved in the life of the school. Purposeful induction for new staff, including new leaders, as well as working with an external consultant, has ensured all those working in this church school know what being a church school is. Staff, children and parents feel that 'being part of the family' is embedded and the values underpin the work of the school. All leaders are actively involved in the school's regular self-evaluation and they accurately evaluate their work. This reinforces and celebrates what has been achieved as well as identifies future points for development, succession planning needs and what it means to be a 'church school serving the island'. The children are very clear that the school has a Christian foundation and relate this clearly to the school's mission statement. One child said, 'I feel like I am bursting with truth and love', which sums up the school very well indeed. Parents, staff and children all talk fondly about the clergy involved in the life of the school, who have contributed extensively to the Christian character of this school community.