

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Lowe's Wong Anglican Methodist Voluntary Controlled Junior School	
Queen Street, Southwell, Nottinghamshire, NG25 0AA	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese / Methodist District	Southwell and Nottingham /Nottingham & Derby
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Date of inspection	2 March 2017
Date of last inspection	March 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	VC Junior 122769
Headteacher	Mike Follen
Inspector's name and number	Kerry Palmer (60)

School context

Lowe's Wong is a larger than the average junior school serving the Minster town of Southwell. Almost all of the children come from two outstanding, local infant schools. The majority are of White British heritage. There is little evidence of social deprivation. The proportion of children with SEND or considered to be disadvantaged are both below national averages. There are close ties with the local Methodist Church, Southwell Minster and Holy Trinity Church, all within walking distance. There is a stable staff led by a headteacher who has been in post since 2010. Lowe's Wong is part of the Minster School Teaching Alliance.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Lowe's Wong Anglican Methodist Voluntary Controlled Junior School as a church school are outstanding

- The professional and highly motivated headteacher promotes a broad and rigorous education, achieving outstanding progress for every child, driven by clearly stated Christian values such as respect and resilience.
- A well informed and engaged governing body celebrates the school's church links successfully promoting its Christian ethos.
- Staff, parents, governors and children recognise and value the school's Christian distinctiveness so that Gospel values are evident in all aspects of school life.

Areas to improve

- Develop strategies to explicitly highlight the centrality of the teaching and example of Jesus Christ so that the whole school community appreciates what makes a church school Christian.
- Introduce more occasions for children to plan and lead worship on a regular basis to promote ownership and enrich engagement.

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

It is clearly evident to all that Christian values underpin every aspect of the excellent education provided by this school. Children arrive with a sound educational foundation, but tremendous value is added over the four years of junior school life. Not only is academic progress such that end of key stage outcomes far outstretch national expectations but learning of greater depth is evident in many children's work. Children display confidence, enthusiasm and maturity; they are exceptionally positive about learning. This is achieved by the development of

Christian values such as resilience and perseverance, and is consistently reflected in performance data. Every child is recognised as a unique and special gift from God. Focused support for the small number of children with specific needs ensures good progress. The father of a child who finds learning difficult spoke of the positive support offered to the whole family. The school's good practice is recognised by the local authority's virtual school. Challenge and rigour stimulates the many more able children. The education of the whole child and nurture of wide ranging gifts and talents is actively pursued. Music is a particular strength with many children having instrumental tuition. There is a rich and diverse curriculum. All classes enjoy a weekly carousel of music, drama and Spanish, taught by specialist teachers. Academic achievement arises from a foundation of strong social, moral, spiritual and cultural [SMSC] education. Children say they feel safe. The DARE drug awareness project and NSPCC input on issues such as social media, are indicative of the school's concern for pupil wellbeing. Consequently, attendance is consistently high, relationships are very positive and behaviour is excellent. Use of 'Newsround' throughout the school promotes discussion of topical issues. This stimulates cultural and social awareness. Children have many opportunities to experience aspects of God's creation with awe and wonder. For example, a parent said, 'Even the Year 3's go on a residential visit to Derbyshire, my daughter loved it!'. Christian values are displayed in documentation and throughout the school, but their gospel foundation is not always explicitly evident or understood. Children are not clear that, whilst values recognised as Christian are promoted by many, for Christians this means following the teaching and example of Jesus Christ. Excellent religious education (RE) follows a bespoke adaptation of the agreed syllabus. The latest initiative, delegated to two Christian staff, known as RE champions, sees the introduction of the 'Understanding Christianity' project. It is already influencing some teaching as it is cascaded throughout the school. A Year 3 class followed role play of the story of Zacchaeus with an exploration of feelings. Wondering about the friendship of Jesus, a child wrote, 'Jesus finds you even if you hide'. This contributes significantly to the school's Christian character and children's SMSC development. For instance, a child leaving for school reportedly said, 'Love you mummy, but not more than God!'. Although predominantly Christian, the RE syllabus contains appropriate teaching about other faiths. There is a focus on respect and understanding of diverse communities, such as similarities and differences between Christianity and other faiths. In RE children learn about Islamic relief as well as Christian Aid. Reflecting on feelings related to a visit to the Holocaust Centre, one Year 6 boy spoke in the abstract of 'hope slipping away'. This resulted from deep thinking prompted by excellent teaching. Compassion and empathy for the less fortunate is promoted through a range of charitable activities. For example, the pupil council organise a two year cycle of charitable priorities based on pupil consultation, the sale of red noses and fundraising for a school in Zimbabwe.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Creative approaches, incorporating school values are coordinated by the headteacher who leads a relevant and effective programme. Whilst generally referred to as assembly, children recognise that worship focuses on God. School Christian values, such as respect and honesty, are familiar to all and are becoming explicitly linked to Bible stories in children's minds. However, there is insufficient regular use of welcoming and departing prayers and responses to embed the Christian context in all worship. Children often take advantage of times to pray and ponder 'Big Questions'. There is regular feedback from children and staff which informs positive development. Children know The Lord's Prayer and why it is special. The many occasions for children to reflect and pray contribute significantly to their spiritual development. The distinctive nature of Jesus is understood. 'He's the most important person in the Bible because He is the Son of God', responded one child. Some spoke of sacrifice when discussing Good Friday. The Trinity is demonstrated by the three candles displayed at worship, but children's perception of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is limited. Music and lively worship songs engage children. 'He was singing Amazing Grace in the bath and we don't go to church!', a parent reported. Reflective areas around the school engage many with themes arising from worship. As Lent begins, children's thoughts and prayers are displayed. 'We remember the forty days Jesus prepared as we get ready for Easter', one commented. Children play a major part in leading festival services such as Harvest, Christmas and Easter, and occasional class worship. However, the school recognises that there is too little opportunity for children to plan and lead worship on a regular basis. Worship in Southwell Minster and input from clergy gives children a developing appreciation of Anglican tradition. The school's Christmas celebration fills the Minster for three presentations with families and friends. This is complimented by other visiting leaders and worship in the Methodist and other local churches, enriching children's worship experience. The Christmas Tree Festival at the Methodist Church is a regular feature. Children follow a trail through the main story events culminating with the offering of their gifts at the stable. Links with the Methodist Church are regular and strong but denominational comparisons are not apparent. The array of musical talent in the school is celebrated at Holy Trinity Church. Collective worship has a clear Christian focus, as expected in a church school, but as a parent of another faith commented, 'I am happy that the values are inclusive'.

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

The dedication, professionalism and Christian commitment of the headteacher has sustained significant development of the school's Christian distinctiveness since the last inspection. He has nurtured a strong and effective staff team who are committed to promoting the school's values and ethos. There is little staff turnover. This is because, professional development for all staff and the opportunity to take additional responsibility ensures all staff feel valued. This contributes to sustained growth. Good use is made of diocesan support including headteacher briefings and leadership networks. Recent staff training successfully focussed on raising the profile of RE and reflection in classrooms. Staff and governors are united in the pursuit of excellence and academic and personal achievement. There are well focused and relevant development plans resulting from an on-going cycle of evaluation. Governors provide rigorous challenge and are fully supportive of the school's joint church foundation. A three year monitoring plan includes Christian distinctiveness. A history of regular governor monitoring of Christian distinctiveness is being re-established following the appointment of new foundation governors. Parents are full of praise for the ethos of the school, such as 'foundation values for life' and 'a moral code'. They value the accessibility of staff and regular communication by text and email used by 98% of families. The parents' forum and PTA build further links. A parent whose children transferred from another school spoke of the welcome by children and staff which made them feel at home very quickly. An on-line survey shows that 99% of parents would recommend the school. Partnership with Holy Trinity Church and other local churches is well developed. The school has recently assisted in the development of a child-friendly mobile phone application for Southwell Minster, which signposts activities such as Messy Church to families. Volunteers from the Methodist Church run a popular lunchtime Christian Club at school. The school generously fulfils statutory requirements for collective worship and RE. The potential for further positive growth and deepening partnership with the Minster School Teaching Alliance, is excellent.

SIAMS report March 2017 Lowe's Wong Anglican Methodist (VC) Junior School, Southwell NG25 0AA