



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

<b>Lowdham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School</b>	Main Street, Lowdham, Nottinghamshire NG14 7BE
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese/Methodist District</b>	<b>Southwell and Nottingham</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Outstanding
Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Name of multi-academy trust/ federation	n/a
Date of inspection	19 October 2016
Date of last inspection	13 December 2011
School's unique reference number	112806
Headteacher	Heather Rattenberry
Inspector's name and number	Kerry Palmer (60)

### School context

This smaller than average school serves the village of Lowdham and surrounding area. Almost all the children are of White British heritage. Most come from relatively affluent homes. The number considered disadvantaged or with special needs or disabilities is significantly below national averages. The modern, spacious building is surrounded by generous outdoor spaces which have been well developed to provide a range of activities. St Mary's Church, currently without a priest, is the other side of a busy dual carriageway. The school has gained a range of nationally recognised awards. The headteacher, a National Leader of Education, has been in post for nine years.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Lowdham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- A highly effective headteacher who lives out her personal Christian conviction results in a school with Christ at its heart.
- Professional and enthusiastic senior leaders and staff who identify with the Christian culture embedded in the school results in a desire to do the best for every individual child.
- High quality collective worship and religious education (RE) which is recognised as central to church school life.
- Parents, parish and community who are supportive of the school's Christian ethos so that all work together in one accord.

### Areas to improve

- Review key documentation to explicitly highlight the centrality of Gospel teaching and example of Jesus Christ so that readers appreciate what makes a church school Christian.

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

Lowdham is a primary school that lives and breathes its Christian ethos. The application of Christian values, modelled by all staff working in a cooperative and committed professional team, impact powerfully on the children's lives. They work hard, are supportive of each other and say they feel safe and happy. Conscious effort is made to ensure a broad and rich curriculum, rooted in Christian values. This engages and enthuses children of all abilities and learning styles. It promotes self-esteem and confidence. Christian trust, justice, reconciliation and

service are promoted through behaviour policy and relationships, effectively developing strong moral and social values. Data shows that all children make very good progress, including the small number recognised as disadvantaged, whose needs are well supported. Relationships and behaviour for learning are excellent. Positive cultural development is successfully promoted and diversity respected through links with schools in Natal, France and Ghana. This also deepens children's appreciation of the world-wide church. Diocesan links with Natal have included visits by the headteacher establishing close ties with a Christian school. Art and craft, emails, prayers and songs have been exchanged. Visitors from Ghana told the children about their life, resulting in empathic support for a baby unit. Despite its explicitly Christian approach, the school is sensitive and respectful of people of all faiths and none. A Muslim father took the trouble to ensure that his view that, '...this is an excellent school, for any child, from any background', in a long message full of praise, was known.

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

Christian worship is at the heart of Lowdham Primary School. It is recognised as central to school life, promoting Christian action in the lives of the whole school community. A teacher said, 'working here has helped me reconnect with my faith'. A series of harvest celebrations inspired the school council to suggest class harvest hat collections for the Christian Aid project they learnt about. 'Seeds of Hope' moved children to write prayers of praise, thanks and requests. Children say that the example of Jesus and reflection times help them at school and at home. Candles feature in worship and classrooms and children know they represent, 'Jesus whose light leads us'. Creative approaches used with sensitivity and wisdom ensure an age appropriate appreciation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Examples of how people are empowered by the Holy Spirit led children to be challenged as to how God might 'nudge' them! Children routinely act as worship leaders, contributing dance, drama, prayer and buddying the less confident. For example, a dance presented by older boys and girls, clearly moved all present. Spiritual development is successfully promoted; prayer walls, reflective areas and quiet areas offer well used times to ponder. At playtime, children often sit quietly with a pebble then place it on a cairn in the sensory garden. Prayer is central and a natural part of school life. Praising, asking, sorry and thanks to God are an everyday feature of many children's lives. A parent related how a child leaving school one afternoon surprised him by spontaneously sitting down in a corner to pray. Staff, children and governors contribute critically to positive developments. A number of outside leaders enhance the children's experience of a range of worship styles. One commented on the enthusiasm of the 'children engaging with the Christian story'. Logistical limitations make visits to St Mary's Church occasional, but festival services, very well attended by parents and friends, support children's appreciation of Anglican tradition. The former vicar was a regular worship leader and friend of all in school.

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

RE is taught creatively through a range of imaginative strategies that engage children enthusiastically in higher order learning. Drama, art, music, storytelling are regular features of RE lessons. Reception children, who have recently started school, were already concentrating on discussion of celebrations. Beginning with their own birthdays, they recalled similarities and differences with a variety of multi-faith celebrations which will lead up to the celebration of Jesus' birthday at Christmas. Year 2 children put the Good Samaritan into context by acting out examples of, 'how it feels to be cared for', that they might experience in school. Outcomes, over time, indicate that teaching and learning are excellent. Structured monitoring contributes to relevant and precise development priorities and consequent improvement in teaching and learning. Standards, in line with other core subjects, are significantly above expectations. There is a strong focus on deepening knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith. Resources are of the highest quality. Children enjoy the challenge of deep thinking about their personal responses to a range of issues. Year 5 children display insight when discussing commitment in the context of The Last Supper, saying, 'it makes us believe in ourselves as if God is next to us'. The importance of communion for Christians was discussed, 'Jesus is there for us no matter what', one commented. The passionate subject leader takes every opportunity to develop her expertise and cascade throughout the school. She is currently supporting staff in the use of the agreed syllabus and RE assessment strategies she has developed. Understanding Christianity strategies are being introduced to deepen children's thinking further. Application for the RE Quality Mark is indicative of the school's commitment to RE. Recent lesson observations highlighted good practice to share across the school. Children's work is carefully assessed using 'I can' milestones and marking strategies move children forward. Generous time is routinely given to RE teaching which is enriched by special events, such as Christmas story bags, and development of collective worship themes.

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

The dedicated, professional and highly motivated headteacher and leadership team work hard to ensure outstanding education in a school which holds Christian values at its core. This vision is clearly evident to everyone who enters the school, but not in all key documentation. All are clear about the positive impact of the school's Christian ethos on children's wellbeing, achievements and relationships amongst all in the school community. All staff and governors contribute actively to the school's pursuit of continuous improvement. All points for improvement in the last inspection report have fully been addressed. Teachers regularly engage in collaborative lesson studies, working together to focus on how to move children forward. Governors actively promote the school's church foundation, one saying, 'It is a joy to see the children being able to experience the truth of Christianity'. They keep a critical eye on developments with presentations from the RE coordinator, monitoring visits and oversight of the school's self-evaluation of its Christian distinctiveness. They are also represented at diocesan training and conferences. Staff are empowered by relevant professional development opportunities to take additional responsibilities and grow as leaders. The quality of school leadership is recognised by the diocese, the Local Authority and beyond. The headteacher and senior staff have helped a number of schools become recognised as 'Good' and regularly lead diocesan church school training. Parents are resolute in their appreciation of the school's church foundation. A parent, not a church goer, recounted her pride in hearing her normally shy daughter say a prayer in school worship. All speak of the value the Christian foundation laid for children's lives. There are well developed links with the parish and community. For example, school displays in church are regularly changed. Children are designing Christmas cards for the church, the eco group plant bulbs and the choir entertains at the local nursing home. Church activities are publicised in school newsletters and website. A church warden commented, 'God runs through school like Blackpool through a stick of rock!'. The school more than meets statutory requirements for collective worship and RE and the Church of England's expectations as given in the Statement of Entitlement.

SIAMS report   October 2016   Lowdham CE (VA) Primary School Nottinghamshire NG14 7BE