

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

### Knowle Church of England Primary Academy

Kixley Lane, Knowle, Solihull, B93 0JE

**Current SIAMS inspection grade**

**Outstanding**

**Diocese**

**Birmingham**

Previous SIAS inspection grade

Outstanding

Date of academy conversion

1 April 2013

Date of inspection

22 November 2017

Date of last inspection

23 May 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

139457

Principal

Jenny Godsall

Inspector's name and number

Allyson Taylor 768

Incumbent

Canon Michael Parker

#### School context

Knowle CE Primary Academy is a larger than average primary school with 509 pupils on roll, including 60 youngsters in the nursery. In 2013, the school converted to become a stand-alone academy. Knowle serves a large village, near Solihull. The majority of pupils are of white British background. The proportion of pupils with additional educational or personal needs is below the national average. The same leadership team has guided the school through and since the academy conversion. The principal is currently providing support to another church school.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Knowle as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The commitment to living out the 'Fruit of the Spirit' is evident; these Christian values define and direct the explicit Christian character of the academy.
- Gifted leadership shepherds and supports a unified staff team with pupil wellbeing at the heart of all the school does.
- Support for those pupils and families who may be vulnerable is exemplary; all members of staff: teaching, administration and support staff, go the extra mile to ensure pupils' needs are met.
- Developing religious education (RE) and collective worship are priorities and accorded the same status as improving academic standards.
- Outreach support for other schools demonstrates that Knowle is an academy with the leadership capacity to share its successes more widely.
- Partnership with the parish church is a shining example of how school and church benefit each other.

#### Areas to improve

- Review the several vision statements and key documentation to more fully reflect the strong Christian character of the school and also engage further with national Church of England guidance.
- Extend pupil involvement in worship so that a wider age range of pupils may independently plan and lead aspects of worship.
- Consider a definition of spirituality that reflects Knowle academy's context and which teachers may use to plan further opportunities for spiritual development in their thematic teaching.

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

Adoption of the 'Fruit of the Spirit' (Galatians: 5, 22-23) as the academy's core Christian values has had a transformational impact on the life of the community. Pupils have a secure framework in which to grow and learn together as a direct result of the focus on 'fruits' like gentleness and forgiveness. Pupils articulate how being faithful to their work helps them to persevere with challenging tasks; one said 'goodness covers all the Fruit of the Spirit.' Another said 'God loves us so we should show love to each other'. All staff use a shared language when talking of their work and the core values; their commitment to the vision of the school is clear. Staff expect high standards of effort from themselves and the pupils in their care. The excellent quality of teaching means that every child matters and succeeds in their individual learning goals. Academic results are consistently high. While Knowle is a large academy, each child is known and there is a palpable family feel. Well-rounded individuals are the result. It is clear that children at Knowle are truly flourishing; they are treated with the utmost respect and know that they are cherished as children of God. Pupils who have additional needs are sensitively supported. Parents reiterate this view and are warmly appreciative of the care so generously given to their children.

Behaviour is generally good and reflects the Christian character of the school. Safeguarding and mental wellbeing are of paramount importance. When problems occur, pupils have confidence that adults will help them to resolve matters swiftly and in the spirit of forgiveness. There is a culture of encouraging pupils to take responsibility for their actions. Consistent reference to the values at lunchtimes has led to more positive playtimes for all ages. Pupils describe how being asked to reflect on the 'Fruit of the Spirit' helps them to live more peacefully with each other. The impact of the Christian character is also evident in the high attendance figures which are above those expected nationally. This confirms that pupils enjoy school.

The learning environment highlights the strength of artwork in school. The many beautiful displays, reflection areas and artefacts make the Christian foundations of the school explicit. It is clear that pupils are encouraged to reflect and express their creativity, in a variety of media, with stunning results. While spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is promoted through RE and the thematic curriculum, there is not yet a clear definition of 'spirituality' which informs teachers' planning.

RE is at an exciting stage of development. Integrating 'Understanding Christianity' within the syllabus is at an early stage. The RE coordinators are passionate about the subject and have a high level of expertise to enhance teaching and learning. As pupils learn about different faiths and cultures in RE, the subject makes a useful contribution to wider SMSC development. For example, pupils delighted in talking of their recent work on Divali. Pupils have more limited understanding that Christianity is itself a global, multi-cultural faith.

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

Collective worship binds the school community together. This is a challenge in a large school where key stages worship separately. However, considerable care is taken to ensure that children of all ages and key stages experience worship which is engaging and relevant to them. Older and younger children spoke of how they enjoy worship time, receiving similar teaching from the children's minister. This helps them understand that 'Jesus is our friend.' Worship time is the main vehicle for learning about the 'Fruit of the Spirit' and the Bible stories which exemplify these. There is a devoted focus on the person of Jesus and the teaching of the Bible. Members of the academy value worship. Acts of worship are generally invitational in nature and so respect the different views of those within the community.

Worship is exceptionally well-planned by the coordinator and children's minister from Knowle church. Their relationship and single-minded purpose has indeed borne fruit. Since the last inspection, the use of Anglican traditions, such as calls, responses, prayers, liturgical colours and themes has grown significantly. Pupils express delight in the daily worship and find it thought-provoking. One child explained: 'I like it that God and Jesus are with us everywhere.' This impact of worship is significant and this is why worship remains outstanding. Directed by the experienced coordinator, the quality of worship has improved so that all pupils have the opportunity for a personal encounter with faith. It is highly commendable that worship is seen as an ongoing process of review and improvement.

Links with the parish church are enriching and productive. They enhance the worship life of the academy. The church-led activities for older and younger children, held at lunchtimes, help pupils feel part of the wider family of the church as well as giving them experience of faith beyond formal worship.

The school celebrates the main Christian festivals in church. As a result, pupils have a secure knowledge of the key events in the Christian calendar. At Christmas and Easter, pupils plan and lead the school/church services with considerable skill and plenty of enthusiasm. The delightful and articulate pupils who serve on the worship council contribute to daily worship. Their active involvement has grown with their confidence. The school is now well-placed to extend pupils' part in planning and leading worship with less adult direction.

Opportunities for formal and informal prayer and reflection punctuate the school day. Pupils are proud of their reflection areas in class and are eager to offer their thoughts to God. Many responses demonstrate pupils thinking deeply about themselves, their community and the wider world. One child stated that 'Angels guide our lives.' Worship also encourages pupils to think of others and to take charitable action in support of those in need.

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

Knowle is fortunate in the caring, experienced and approachable principal. She is ably supported by her senior leadership team, including administrative staff. Pupils, parents and staff speak of her with great affection and respect. The principal has created a culture of mutual support through the shared vision which motivates staff and gives them a voice in decision making. The leadership team lead by example. They set the tone and raise aspirations so that pupils achieve high standards. Teachers are confident to plan a creative, thematic curriculum which engages children in exciting activities; they strive to ensure pupils experience joy in their work and play. Leaders describe the liberating result of academy conversion. They relish the freedom to make decisions which secure outstanding academic and personal outcomes while also affirming church academy status.

Governors and members of the board make strategic decisions which reference the deep Christian roots of the school. Giving prominence to developing RE and worship in improvement plans demonstrates this. As does the decision to support personal, social and emotional wellbeing through the introduction of the 'jigsaw' programme. Governors know the school very well. They use a balance of formal monitoring, with regular reports from staff, and informal involvement in the life of the school to fulfil their role. Statutory requirements for RE and worship are met. Leaders ensure the Christian character of Knowle remains strong and continues to grow. This is clear from their decision to appoint a community governor with additional links to the parish church to work alongside foundation governors from the church. Governors know that coordinators for RE and worship benefit from appropriate support in their key posts and they strive to provide this. High quality support from the diocese has improved RE and worship. Leaders are aware that provision should be made for any pupils withdrawn during key stage or class worship for additional support. Policies and documents reference the 'Fruit of the Spirit' and values. However, reference to national Church of England policy statements and guidance is not made. Several vision statements and aims have evolved over the life of the school. Leaders acknowledge that it is time to consider these and agree on a clearer vision statement which more accurately reflects the academy as it is now.

Partnerships with parents and the parish church are instrumental in the success of the school. Parents state that their children teach them about the values and stories from the Bible. In some cases, the Christian character of the academy was a factor in applying to the school. Several parents spoke openly and with sincere gratitude for the way leaders and staff go the extra mile to ensure children with additional needs are included, feel secure and so flourish. It is clear that involvement with Knowle church is mutually beneficial. For example, there is an increase in families exploring baptism as a result of experiences at school.

Serving on the board of the diocesan educational trust, and providing school to school support to others, are clear evidence that Knowle is an outward looking school. In working with other schools, governors also provide career development for future leaders of church schools.

Knowle academy is uncompromising in its Christian mission to serve its children and families. It is an outstanding example of how a shared vision and associated Christian values, effectively add value to the lives of all in the school community.

SIAMS report November 2017 Knowle CE Primary Academy, Knowle, Solihull, B93 0JE