



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

The District Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School

Patterson Street
Newton le Willows
WA12 9PZ

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Liverpool

Local authority: St. Helen's

Dates of inspection: 7 March 2016

Date of last inspection: October 2010

School's unique reference number: 104792

Headteacher: Diane Bate Julie Clewes (Acting headteacher)

Inspector's name and number: Jean Forward (625)

School context

The District is a larger than average-sized primary school. Most children are of White British heritage. The proportion of children with special educational needs is above the national average as is the proportion of children known to be eligible for the pupil premium. The school has a high rate of pupil mobility.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of The District as a Church of England school is outstanding

- The outstanding Christian leadership of the headteacher and her vision for the development of the school ensure that the school's Christian ethos is at the heart of daily life.
- The school is extremely successful in creating a loving, caring and inclusive environment rooted in Christian values. This has a direct influence on children's well-being and progress.
- Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is excellent and is rooted in the school's Christian ethos and commitment to Christian values. Children become increasingly confident and self-assured in their social skills, understanding of faith and appreciation of the world around them.
- Links with the parish priest of St. John's church are extremely strong. As a result, children have a clear sense of belonging to the wider Christian community.

Areas to improve

- Review the evaluation of collective worship to involve all members of the school community. This will help to further inform planning for the enrichment of children's worship experiences.
- Working with St. John's church, complete the submission for the Church and School Partnership Award 2 in order to strengthen the positive and mutually beneficial links.

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

A strong commitment to its Christian ethos and the development of the whole child underpin the school's work. All members of the community know they are valued and the ethos of trust and respect is clearly evident. Children talk confidently about the importance of the school's Christian values in their daily life. They understand that Jesus shows them how to live through these values. Positive relationships across the community are a key element in the school's success and are rooted in a Christ-centred approach. Children's SMSC development is excellent as a result of the focused Christian ethos and the emphasis on nurturing and meeting the needs of every individual. Consequently, children demonstrate high levels of self-esteem, awareness of others and the need for endurance. They are happy, calm and feel safe. Behaviour is very good and children explain that understanding Christian values helps them to behave with kindness and thoughtfulness towards one another. A child said, 'We have grown up with Christian values' and another 'We know that we must love one another and be kind'. Children enjoy being members of the school council, worship team and eco council. They clearly understand that this is a way of contributing to the school community through Christian love and service. Children say that they are able to share concerns with their teachers and they know that these will be addressed in a sensitive and caring way. Parents comment that their children are happy and settled in school and that they are 'surrounded by the Christian ethos'. The school has a strong commitment to Christian stewardship, supporting a range of charities including Children in Need, NSPCC and a community in Soweto. Children speak of the importance of showing generosity and compassion for those in need and link this to the teaching of Jesus. Attractive artwork, displays and Christian symbols emphasise the school's distinctiveness and support the children's spiritual development extremely well. Reflection areas linked to Christian values are a feature of every classroom. Children explain that these classroom worship spaces help them to pray and think about Jesus. The school provides effective teaching about faiths other than Christianity through religious education (RE). This contributes well to children's cultural knowledge and positive attitudes to society. In 2015, children at the end of Y6 made good or better than expected progress from low starting points. Attendance is closely monitored and there has been a steady improvement. The school's Christian ethos shapes the management of attendance and behaviour for learning in order to secure these positive results.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The act of collective worship is central to the life of the school. The school gathers in a calm and reflective manner. Planning is thorough and incorporates themes based on Christian values, the Bible, major Christian festivals and saints' days. The school places Christ at the centre of all it does and collective worship enables children of all ages to understand how the teaching of Jesus guides Christians in their daily lives. This is evident in the way children are able to explain that what they learn in worship helps them to be Christ-like in their behaviour and in relationships with others. The experienced co-ordinator monitors and evaluates the planning and delivery of worship. A Y6 member of the worship team writes a brief evaluation every day. As a result, worship is constantly being reviewed and invigorated. However, there is no written record of comments from governors or parents. All members of staff contribute to the leading of worship. The children demonstrate a high level of involvement and enjoyment and this is evident in their readiness to take an active role. The whole school listened attentively during an act of worship which focused on the love of God and loving one's neighbour. Children were quick to respond to questions and showed a mature awareness of the needs of others. Anglican responses, traditional prayers and moments for reflection make a positive contribution to the development of children's prayer life. Children's faith and understanding are developed well through worship led by the parish priest from St John's church who is involved in the termly planning process. Children's experience is further enriched by celebrating major festivals in the church. Children plan, write and lead these acts of worship. This supports them in their understanding of the elements which contribute to worship. Children in Key Stage 2 attend a celebration of the Eucharist each term. As a result, some children demonstrate their faith and commitment to the Christian life through confirmation preparation provided by the parish reader. Visits to the church make an excellent contribution to children's spiritual

development, reflection and understanding of worship and key Christian celebrations. They create a unique link with the worshipping life of the parish and Anglican tradition. Worship enables children to deepen their understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is achieved through careful reference to the ways in which God is present in daily life through creation, the love of Jesus and the strengthening power of the Holy Spirit.

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

The headteacher is a dedicated Christian leader who takes every opportunity to promote the school's distinctive Christian character and ethos of care and love. Staff and governors are committed to sustaining an outstanding Christian environment in which all aspects of children's development and well-being are fostered and promoted through biblical teaching and Christian values. In doing so, they recognise the importance of the school's Christian character in creating an ethos which supports effective learning and the promotion of equal opportunities. The appointment of a safeguarding officer and a learning mentor demonstrates the school's commitment to meeting the needs of its most vulnerable families. The headteacher attributes children's successful learning to their ability to draw on an understanding of the Christian way of life and the Christ-centred qualities of the school. The extremely strong senior leadership team is highly effective in identifying clear priorities for the development of the school's ethos through a shared sense of Christian mission with God at the centre. A parent said, 'My children talk about Christian values at home', explaining that children's happiness and success are rooted in the Christian values which are at the heart of the school's daily life. Parents recognise the distinctive Christian qualities of the school and speak highly of the respect with which they and their children are treated. The knowledgeable RE subject leader monitors teaching and learning thoroughly and ensures that action planning is precise and that the subject is well-resourced. Foundation governors have a clear understanding of their role. They are highly committed and support the school in a variety of ways. Actions plans for RE and worship are included in the school's improvement planning and are discussed at full governing body meetings. This supports governors in their understanding of key areas for development and enables them to monitor church school distinctiveness. Excellent provision is made for all staff to participate in continuous professional development. This makes a valuable contribution to highly effective teaching and learning throughout the school. The headteacher also ensures that staff have access to training which supports succession planning for future leadership in church schools. As a result, staff bring knowledge and confidence to discussions and strategies for church school development. The school has a strong link with the diocese through headteacher cluster meetings and opportunities for professional dialogue and training which inform the development of church school distinctiveness. The school also works closely with Hope Academy and its chaplain in order to support children during the transition to secondary education. These partnerships enrich the school's spiritual and faith experiences. Links with St. John's church are very strong. The presentation of the diocese's Church School Partnership Award I gives a clear demonstration of this. Parents comment enthusiastically about the ways in which the school and church work together to provide an outstanding Christian education.

SIAMS report March 2016 The District C of E Primary School, Newton le Willows WA12 9PZ