

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

### Willaston Church of England Primary School

Neston Road, Willaston, Neston. CH64 2TN

**Current SIAMS inspection grade**

**Outstanding**

**Diocese**

**Chester**

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

Cheshire West and Chester

Date/s of inspection

1 March 2017

Date of last inspection

15 March 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Controlled 111245

Headteacher

Julie Chambers

Inspector's name and number

Robert Boulter 721

#### School context

Willaston Church of England primary school is a single form entry primary school. It has 206 pupils. The majority of pupils are White British. 5.9% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is slightly above the national norm. The number of pupils receiving free school meals is lower than the national norm. The school has identified 9% of its pupils as vulnerable. In September 2016, an experienced Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) teacher and an experienced Year 3 teacher were appointed. There is a new chair of governors who is a parent governor.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Willaston CE Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Christian values of caring, namely compassion, forgiveness and encouragement of each individual, arise from a deep awareness that each of us is made in God's image. This leads to an acknowledgement that this belief carries consequences for how we look after ourselves and one another. The impact of this teaching creates an extraordinary breadth of provision, in particular through the arts, to meet the needs of all pupils.
- The impact of collective worship is that pupils develop a sense of responsibility for one another, for the world, and for themselves, as children of God.
- The effectiveness of the leaders is outstanding because they role model Christian character. This means they develop an appreciation for and thankfulness to God for this world, together with a commitment to serve one another as Jesus did. The impact of this is that the school, the church and the community work together to develop Christian values that contribute to the wellbeing of every child.

#### Areas to improve

- Clarify the Christian distinctiveness of the school's vision for education by ensuring that its Biblical basis is clearly expressed in a mission statement or motto.

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

Distinctive Christian values of caring for one another, respecting diversity of upbringing, being compassionate in our behaviour, and forgiving when mistakes are made, are deeply rooted and lived out each day. The care of each individual as a child of God underpins all aspects of school life. The impact of this is the building up of an inclusive, welcoming, friendly and supportive Christian environment. From this strong base of Christian teaching, pupils are eager to come to school. They see this place, one parent said, as 'their extended family and want to be there'. Attendance is 97.3%, a figure maintained and above the national average.

Pupils are independent thinkers, express self-confidence and self-esteem. They express ownership for their learning, articulate knowledge and understanding in the classroom. These attitudes and skills directly derive from the school's high expectations for each pupil's development, academic and personal wellbeing. They are driven by the school's commitment to quality learning in a positive, happy, Christian atmosphere.

This culture of understanding every pupil as a child of God expresses itself through one of the school's strongest motivators, that of identifying need and providing for it. The school is exemplary in self-reflection and evaluation of individual pupils. It responds by striving in its provision to meet the needs of all. The impact of this, for example, is evident in the teachers' marking of pupils' work. 96% of parents and carers wrote in a survey that their child knows what to do to improve. Evidence of attainment for the last three years shows pupils, including vulnerable pupils, make good progress. This is a school that does not stand still in its provision. Responding to specific needs, for example, the need to raise attainment in maths and for boys in reading and writing, is extensive through multiple resources that enable pupils to excel. Opportunities are tailor made to enrich interest, meet need and build success.

Behaviour is exemplary. Politeness, courtesy, care for each other is evident throughout the school. It is a care that extends to the world. Children understand and demonstrate their Christian responsibility for those less fortunate. They initiate fund raising to support charities. The school's attention to spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of learning and experience significantly enriches pupils' development. This is interwoven into all aspects of the curriculum, together with extensive extra curricular opportunities. Each builds well rounded individuals who demonstrate positive attitudes toward diversity and equality. The positive contribution of this approach is that pupils are being given the tools to understand similarities and differences within the diversity of British society. They know and celebrate that everyone is a child of God. Children speak of feeling safe and knowing what to do if they have a problem.

Religious education (RE) plays a key part in the school's promotion of Christian values. Pupils are engaged, enthusiastic, working individually and in groups in these lessons. They are reflective, developing critical thinking skills. For example, reception class pupils make links between an action, its consequences and saying sorry. Year 6 pupils can evaluate key values in Christianity and Islam. Year 5, using an interactive card game, are able to explore the nature of God in the Hindu tradition. Lessons in RE demonstrate that teachers develop religious literacy amongst pupils, encouraging pupils to think for themselves, ask questions.

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

Collective worship, in partnership with RE, is the central driver of Christian values in the school. Its impact reaches pupil's homes. Parents tell of how their children discuss with them Biblical stories, discussing and debating with them the moral of the story. One parent spoke of how his child in reception class challenged him for not praying as 'I am taught in school'. Pupils enjoy participating in worship through answering questions, listening to Biblical stories, role play and the sharing of their prayers. Singing is energetic, enthusiastic. One pupil spoke of how worship 'reminded me that God made the world', and another 'how singing faith songs helps me worship'. Children are attentive, reverent, thoughtful in response to the daily theme, as is evident in their reflections. These are recorded in the worship book which is placed at the entrance to the school.

Worship is well organised, monitored and evaluated. All staff lead worship. Children contribute to the planning of class and whole school worship. For example, Year 5 arrange the Easter experience for the whole school. The Biblical story is divided into parts that are placed around the school. Children learn and reflect through the five senses. It is learning through doing, for example, washing one another's feet. The impact, one adult said, is that it allows children to make links with their own life experience.

Pupils engage in writing prayers and presenting them in worship, both in the classroom and in the hall. The impact of this sharing of prayer is that pupils 'come to understand that they are a part of a larger Christian family' said one foundation governor. This emphasis on being a member of a larger family links with teaching in worship about 'supporting those less fortunate'. Pupils act upon this through discussion in the classroom, through research and choice of charities to support. This demonstrates the moral growth of pupils, thinking of how to provide for the needs of others. Moments of reflection, whether through individuals making use of reflective areas in each

classroom, or as part of whole school worship, are valued by staff and pupils. The benefits of providing this in a Christian setting are acknowledged. It brings of a sense of calm, enabling children to work through anxieties, feeling secure in the knowledge that God loves each of them

Representatives from local churches lead worship, as does the vicar from Christ Church, the parish church. This ecumenical approach is another example of demonstrating to pupils the larger Christian family written of earlier. Anglican worship is experienced by the whole school in its visit once a term to the church, and in particular at Easter, Harvest and Christmas. There is also the leavers' service at which each pupil is presented with a Bible. Pupils can articulate a sound understanding of the Christian year, 'bringing this knowledge into the home', said one parent governor. The church building is also used for teaching pupils, for example demonstrating baptism, as well as for art and history lessons. Members of the church community are involved in this, demonstrating their support for pupils' Christian education. The impact of this multiple use of the church building demonstrates to children Christian teaching of hospitality and courtesy. This links with the school's Christian emphasis in making everyone welcome.

Whole school worship has a real focus on the teaching of Jesus Christ. Pupils learn of his central place in Christian teaching. They are able to recall stories about him and discuss moral principles. For example, a parent speaks of his son's concern for a pupil who is unhappy. He tells his dad that 'I smile at her to help her stop crying'. One parent spoke of how she is delighted that her children can discuss and debate between themselves the meaning of Christian festivals. Members from the parish church come into school and lead worship, as well as leading a Year 3 choir practice at lunchtime. Children in this group are full of smiles as they learn new songs, enjoying this opportunity both to sing and perform in church.

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

The school is outstanding as a church school because its leaders nurture faith in each individual that he or she is a child of God. They recognise this teaching has made significant impact on providing outstanding education for all God's children. A consequence of this teaching is that the school fosters respect for oneself and respect for others. This in turn celebrates diversity and equality of opportunity for all, contributing to the building of a cohesive society. As one parent said, 'they live out each day what they teach'.

The headteacher is inspirational. She lives out the Christian values she wishes her staff to exemplify and promote. These include caring, compassion, forgiveness, empathy and respect, expressed through an inclusive school community that is open and welcoming. These values are expressive of her faith in God. Such an approach supports and prepares middle managers for leadership in church schools.

The relationship between the school, church and village community is highly praised and valued. One parent specifically attributed this to the vision of the headteacher, the vicar and the foundation governors. Members of the community contribute to hearing readers in school. Pupils are made welcome and involve themselves in community events such as the horticultural show. The impact of this is that pupils gain social skills and confidence in public settings outside of the school.

At the heart of the school is a deep stability. The chair of governors attributes this to Christian distinctiveness. In this he includes the principle of togetherness. It is celebrated both in RE and worship. Governors promote this principle in their collegiate work with leaders.

Governors contribute a wide range of expertise that enables them to gain an accurate insight into the school's performance and distinctiveness. As part of this they monitor and evaluate teaching and learning. This exercise equips them to both challenge and set priorities in the school development plan. However, despite their commitment to the Christian distinctiveness of the school, their mission statement is not clearly or explicitly referenced to Biblical teaching as its source. Governors have working days in the school in which they focus on a given area, for example, behaviour and the environment. Exemplary insight is demonstrated by governors in their analysis and evaluation of RE and worship. The school makes good use of the local authority agreed syllabus for RE, 'Encountering and Responding'. RE and worship meet statutory requirements. The school has positive and effective relationships with local church cluster schools and the Diocese of Chester. Foundation governors take full advantage of diocesan training, as do the headteacher and RE co-ordinator.

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