



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Birkenhead Christ Church Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Mount Grove,
Birkenhead,
Wirral,
CH41 2UJ

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Chester

Local authority: Wirral

Date of inspection: 4th December 2014

Date of last inspection: December 2009

School's unique reference number: 105064

Headteacher: Marie Szydłowska

Inspector's name and number: Anne B. Woodcock 445

School context

Christ Church School serves an area of significant socio-economic deprivation in the centre of Birkenhead. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A large number of the 238 pupils attract the Pupil Premium grant and 77% are eligible for free school meals. Many children enter school at levels well-below age related expectations. The school became voluntary aided in September 2014.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Christ Church Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The outstanding nurture and support provided for pupils and their families, which is founded on Christian love and care, has a very significant impact on pupils' attendance, progress and attainment.
- The distinct Christian vision and leadership of the headteacher and senior leaders inspires all who work within the school to strive to provide the very best opportunities for pupils.
- The strong, purposeful and mutually beneficial links with the church make a very significant contribution to the school's Christian character and to the spiritual and personal growth of staff and pupils.
- Excellent relationships between staff, pupils and parents reflect Christian trust and respect and have a very positive influence on pupil progress and attainment.

Areas to improve

- Provide regular opportunities for pupils to plan and lead acts of collective worship to enable them to demonstrate their understanding of the nature of worship.
- Develop the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of RE and collective worship by creating a link governor with that specific task.

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

Christian values inform every aspect of school life and they are clearly demonstrated by all who work in school. Children enjoy school. They feel safe, nurtured and valued within a distinctly Christian environment, saying 'Our school is brilliant because everyone is kind and caring and you get a good education.' Pupils behave extremely well, reflecting their understanding of Christian friendship and forgiveness. They explain that Jesus showed how to treat others in parables, such as The Good Samaritan, and that they try to follow his example. Their attitudes to learning are extremely positive. Although many pupils enter school at levels well-below national average, they make good, sometimes rapid progress. Those with additional needs are exceptionally well-supported and standards of achievement are good, given the low starting points. Children are inspired to achieve the high targets set for them by staff who care deeply about the needs and aspirations of their pupils. Pupils explain, 'Our teachers always listen, they are there for you and make lessons fun.' Standards of presentation are good. Pupils' work in displays and workbooks reflects their pride and progress. Positive feedback from teachers shows children how to improve their work. Pupils work very well together, sharing ideas and opinions in an atmosphere of trust and honesty. Attendance continues to improve because children enjoy school, want to achieve and 'be part of the fun.' The strong focus on pupils' personal development and well-being is clearly expressed in the way in which the Family Liaison Officer is used. She is instrumental in establishing and building parental confidence, providing essential support which results in greater levels of pupil attendance and much improved parental engagement. The school is increasingly reflective. Children value and make good use of the prayer corners in classrooms and around the school. Pupils' spiritual development is ably supported by curricular and extra-curricular activities which excite and inspire children to express their ideas through prayer, poetry, art and drama. Religious education makes a significant contribution to the school's Christian character, as demonstrated by the displays, and to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of, and respect for diversity through the study of major world faiths and cultures and they know that Christians around the world celebrate and worship in different ways.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is a much valued and integral part of the daily life of the school. It is very well-planned being firmly rooted in Bible teaching, Christian values and festivals. Children really enjoy worship because they feel included and involved. The impact can be seen in the extremely positive relationships and empathetic ways in which pupils respond. A year 5 pupil explained, 'The ten commandments give us the rules of life to keep us all safe, and we must try to keep the rules.' They particularly enjoy worship led by the vicar saying, 'We get to act out the Bible stories in fun ways and that helps us to remember the story and the meaning.' Children participate actively in worship through joyful singing, responding to questions and reading from the Bible. They appreciate the chance to talk with a partner during worship because this helps them to formulate their ideas. Children show an understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and older children talk with growing confidence about the Trinity. Collective worship inspires pupils and staff. One pupil explained, 'Over the years I have started to think more about God and what I believe.' Weekly staff prayers, together with daily worship and the recent six-week Pilgrim course run by the vicar, has affirmed and renewed the faith of some members of staff. Prayer and reflection are central features of the worship life of the school. Children know and use traditional prayers at different times of the day. They write and publish their own prayers for use in class and whole school worship. The church provides excellent support for worship. Lay readers and other church members lead worship regularly, and together with visitors from other local faith groups, provide pupils with a broad experience of different styles of Christian worship. The church is used for special services at festival times. Parents and friends are invited to these services and attend in increasing numbers. Easter and Christmas 'Experience' events, organised and run by church members,

are held in church have increased children's understanding of these important Christian festivals. The impact of collective worship is monitored and evaluated robustly by the worship team. For example, feedback from pupils has led to the increased use of 'pair-share' talking in worship. However, although pupils are fully engaged and inspired, they have limited opportunities to demonstrate their understanding by planning and leading worship independently and this is an area for development.

The effectiveness of the religious education (RE) is good

Children value and enjoy RE saying, 'Learning about Christianity and other religions is interesting because you learn to respect other people's beliefs.' Teaching is good. Pupils enjoy their lessons, particularly when art and role play are used. Teachers plan creatively, providing effective levels of support for all learners, so that children make good progress. Standards of attainment are good, given the low starting points. Children produce consistently well-presented work which reflects their understanding, and the standards are in line with those achieved in other core subjects. A good balance is achieved between learning about and learning from religion. Pupils talk confidently about Bible stories and the parables told by Jesus, explaining that Jesus used these to show how people should live. Children are reflective learners and are able to express their ideas and opinions openly and honestly. One key stage 2 pupil explained, 'You get to ask and think about difficult questions. There's no right or wrong, because it is your opinion that is important.' RE makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Through the study of world religions, such as Islam and Judaism, pupils gain an understanding of and respect for other cultures and faiths. In the short time since the school gained voluntary aided status, the newly appointed RE leader has worked tirelessly to establish the diocesan syllabus. Effective use has been made of diocesan support. Teachers are confident in planning and delivering the new syllabus because they feel well-supported. The monitoring and evaluation of RE teaching and learning is good and leads effectively to ongoing improvement. The robust assessment systems track achievement, identify gaps in learning and inform future planning. Children are engaged in self and peer assessment and gain much from the feedback provided by teachers. RE has a very high profile within the school. The team approach to leadership is effective and the subject is well-placed to become exemplary in the future.

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

The very strong focus on agreed Christian values and principles drives all aspects of school life. Staff are extremely well-supported and inspired by the headteacher and senior leaders. Their singular purpose is to create a nurturing, Christian environment in which pupils can flourish and achieve as valued individuals. The recent change in status reflects the school's commitment to maintaining and developing its distinctive Christian character. Governors have a clear understanding of their role. They achieved the change in status effectively, involving all members of the school and church community. Governors have a thorough understanding of all aspects of school effectiveness. Through their analysis of school data and discussions with staff, they monitor the impact of the intervention strategies used to support vulnerable pupils and their families, resulting in a clear understanding of pupil progress. Methods used by governors for the evaluation of the work of the school are efficient and insightful. However, at present there is no named governor to take responsibility for evaluating RE and collective worship and this is an area for development. Governors ensure that RE and collective worship have a high profile which results in good standards of attainment and pupil progress. Issues from the previous inspection have been fully addressed, and the impact of the changes has been evaluated. Joint governor and staff training has a positive impact on the present and future leadership of the school. Highly effective use is made of diocesan support and the school works well with a cluster of other church schools, providing for the further development of RE and collective worship. Subject leaders have gained knowledge and experience through

collaborative projects and the sharing of ideas. Pupils know that their opinions are heard and valued. They are proud of their achievements and of the way in which they raise funds for charities such as MacMillan, and contribute to the school's decision-making processes. Parents are confident that their children are happy and safe within a distinctly Christian environment. They recognise and appreciate the care and support provided by the school saying, 'We get a lot of support from the school. It feels like a family and the teachers go above and beyond for our children.'

SIAMS report December 2014 Birkenhead Christ Church Church of England Primary School,
Birkenhead CC41 2UJ.