



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Thurstaston Dawpool Church of England Voluntary Aided School

School Lane
Thurstaston
Wirral
CH61 0HH

Diocese: Chester

Local authority: Wirral
Dates of inspection: 21st June, 2013
Date of last inspection: October, 2008
School's unique reference number: 105078
Head teacher: Mrs Gill Peters
Inspector's name and number: Georgina Lewis 401

School context

The school context has changed since the previous inspection. Although situated in a relatively advantaged area, the school draws children from a wide range of social backgrounds. In September, 2011 and 2012, Wellcomm language screening tests showed that attainment on entry was lower than age related expectation. The progress made by all pupils is at least in line with national expectation and often greater. There are fewer than the average number of pupils with special educational needs, and only one pupil with a statement of special educational need. The number of pupils who have free school meals is below average. The deputy head teacher is at present on maternity leave and an acting deputy head teacher is in place.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Thurstaston Dawpool Primary school as a Church of England school are Outstanding

The distinctive Christian ethos of this school is clearly evident in the calm caring atmosphere created. Parents, staff and governors work together as a very effective team to develop in pupils a clear understanding of Christian values, high expectations and excellent self esteem.

Established strengths

- The outstanding quality of relationships throughout the whole school community
- The outstanding commitment of the head teacher and the governors to improvement
- The pupils' outstanding behaviour and attitudes to learning

Focus for development

- To improve the consistency of marking within Religious Education (RE)

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

The school's Mission Statement makes it very clear that all staff should 'strive to create an environment where Christian values flourish'. Attendance is in the top 20% when compared with all schools. Pupils are happy and enthusiastic about school, as seen in their excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning. There have been no exclusions in recent years and the high standards of respect for each other is demonstrated in the harmonious relations throughout the school community. Attainment on entry in language acquisition and understanding of 53% of pupils in 2011, and 36% of pupils' in 2012 was lower than age related expectations, with 13% and 6% significantly below. As a result of the support systems in place in the school the attainment of pupils at the end of Y6 is often significantly above the expected two levels of progress in all subjects. This is a clear demonstration of the care and commitment of all in the school community to ensure that pupils' achieve and make good and sometimes outstanding progress. Parents talked about their children having 'blossomed'. They are very well supported and able to assist their children in their learning. A recent course provided for staff and parents was seen as 'life changing ' and 'inspirational' by parents involved. Parents are very positive about the way in which the school's commitment to its Christian foundation manifests itself in the care and education of their children. Work completed in Religious Education (RE) lessons is prominently displayed emphasising its importance across the school. There are displays of a school in Uganda with which the school has close relations. The emphasis on the Christian ethos, study of other faiths and knowledge of two African schools makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Throughout the school there are many inspirational banners, ensuring that pupils have examples of God's work and Jesus' ministry. Pupils have an opportunity to further develop their understanding of Christianity within the Anglican communion through the close links forged with the parish churches and the Rector. The 'Quiet Room' and 'Willow Hides' provide places for reflection and peacefulness, where pupils have the opportunity to think about their own beliefs and develop spiritually. Pupils are well supported by the dedicated example and commitment of staff to help them achieve academically and grow as individuals within a Christian community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The aims in the Collective Worship Policy are clearly stated and support the Christian values and ethos of the school, 'to promote a common ethos, shared values and reinforce positive attitudes'. Prayer is a natural part of everyday school life, pupils are encouraged to write their own prayers which are displayed in class rooms. The prayer walls are a living example of the centrality of prayer within this school community. It is one of the most important features of its distinctiveness. All staff attend collective worship, reinforcing the central role and importance worship plays in the school. Worship is well planned and organised to provide a variety of experiences for pupils to develop their understanding of the Bible, Christian values, and to reinforce the Christian ethos of the school. The Rector and a visiting outreach group also lead worship, extending pupils' understanding and providing further opportunities for them to develop spiritually. Pupils are involved in reading and saying prayers and providing drama. This helps to build their knowledge and understanding of worship and Christianity, and also their self esteem and confidence. The singing in the worship seen was enthusiastic and well sung, showing their enjoyment and engagement. Pupils understand the significance of the lighting of the candle at the beginning of worship and the responses. The main festivals of the Church of England are celebrated, usually in the two churches in the parish, with families and friends present. There is an annual Christingle service, and pupils and staff are involved in 'Education Sunday' services. This brings the whole school community together and has encouraged church attendance with pupils often guiding their parents through the services, an illustration of the impact of worship experienced in school. It also ensures that pupils gain knowledge and understanding of Anglican rites and practices. The contribution made by worship is considerable. Pupils, when talking about Christian symbols said the three branched candle stick represented that there was 'God the father, God the son and God the Holy Spirit'. They also knew about the 'fish' symbol and its early secret associations with Christianity. As pupils develop their understanding of the Christian faith, they are able to

develop their own spirituality within an environment which lives out its Christian values and ethos at all levels. Collective worship is discussed and reviewed regularly, evaluation by leaders, staff and pupils, feeds into the review process. The guidance for staff leading collective worship is detailed ensuring continuity in the patterns of worship and giving a secure base from which to develop their skills. Staff participate in Communion at the beginning of the school year and the governing body meetings begin and end with prayer.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The school's self evaluation emphasises the importance of Religious Education (RE) and how it 'interweaves through every aspect of school life'. The subject leader is committed to ensuring the continuous improvement and provision of RE. Teachers are supported well through training and the resources available. Lessons are regularly observed and pupils' books scrutinised. Pupils explore the beliefs of other faiths and discuss similarities and differences, and develop respect for the way other faiths worship, making a valuable contribution to their cultural development. Pupils' study of Christianity provides a solid foundation on which to build their own faith and beliefs. RE makes an important contribution to both community cohesion and pupils' spiritual, and cultural development, through teaching, and visits to the churches and other faith buildings. Standards in RE are at least in line with other foundation subjects and progress is very good. In the lessons seen there was some exceptional discussion by both Key stage 1 and 2 pupils as they moved into groups, particularly in the year 6 lesson observed. Planning and preparation was very thorough, giving pupils a variety of opportunities to explore the topics of 'trust' and 'moral issues'. Pupils expressed their views openly because there is support and encouragement from teachers. The level of discussion shows clearly that the Attainment target 2, 'learning from RE', is very well established. The tasks set were very challenging and provided some very good examples of how previous learning was being used. The work seen in pupils' books and the many RE displays around the school is a testament to very good and often outstanding teaching. The books seen show careful coverage of the syllabus with pupils developing and extending their knowledge and understanding. Teachers use a variety of methods of teaching and a number of different kinds of media, this contributes to the pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes to RE. The very good recording of pupils' achievement in teachers' assessment and evaluation ensures the needs of a range of abilities is supported effectively. The careful tracking of pupils' progress identifies pupils who are exceptional or needing support. Marking is subject specific and gives pupils feedback on what they have achieved, however, this is not always consistent. As a consequence pupils may not always have a clear understanding of the standard they have achieved, or how they might improve. The school is in the process of introducing a new method of assessment to improve pupils' knowledge of their progress.

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

This is a school where there is a truly shared vision and outstanding commitment by all associated with its leadership and management, which results in outstanding relations throughout the school community. It ensures its Christian distinctiveness is well promoted and developed. The outstanding leadership of the school is a result of strong strategic management, careful, informed planning for future development, and a clear dedication to the school's Christian ethos. The school's Mission Statement underpins all the school's policies and the prospectus, making it transparent that the school has a clear Christian foundation as a Church of England school. There are outstanding links with the local church and also the local community, with pupils involved in a range of activities and celebrations. Pupils move on to twelve secondary schools and effective links are made to ensure that transition for all pupils is smooth. Links with other primary schools give opportunities to share good practice, and involvement with 'school direct' teacher training provides opportunities for staff development. The governing body has a significant influence on the ethos of the school. Each governor is assigned to a class and a curriculum area, including RE, this involvement contributes to their knowledge of the school and helps them to make informed decisions. Foundation governors are actively involved in the school, they have very good knowledge of

the school's strengths and areas where improvement is needed; they help to reinforce the school's Christian ethos and promote its distinctiveness. Visits by the governing body are part of the reporting system and feed into the school's self evaluation. There are very effective planning, monitoring and evaluation procedures which maintain and build on the previous outstanding judgement. The support of parents is overwhelmingly positive, seen in both the evidence of the Parents' survey and discussions on the day of the inspection. Parents comment on the 'family' atmosphere which includes them as well as their children. The pastoral care provided is 'second to none', children are happy and confident and their self esteem is high. The focus for development has been fully met. This is a school which practises its Christian values of care and consideration with real support for all of the school community. It is a school which knows the value of prayer and lives its Christian ethos.

SIAMS report June, 2013 Thurstaston Dawpool CE Primary school, Thurstaston, Wirral
CH66 0HH