



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Woodchurch Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Lane, Woodchurch, Wirral, Merseyside CH49 7LS

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Chester

Local authority: Wirral

Date of inspection: 11 June 2015

Date of last inspection: January 2010

School's unique reference number: 105067

Headteacher: Brian McGregor

Inspector's name and number: Ruth Wall (548)

School context

The school is an average-sized primary school with 198 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is well above the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average. The school serves an area of high social and economic deprivation. There have been significant changes in staffing since the previous inspection. The roles of all senior and middle school leaders have developed considerably.

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

- The highly effective, distinctively Christian leadership of the headteacher and senior leaders whose example and determination drive all aspects of school improvement.
- The school has an outstanding Christian ethos which very effectively nourishes and encourages the high standard of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children.
- Relationships with Holy Cross Church are very strong in promoting a shared Christian vision for spiritual development and learning.
- Daily worship is excellent and vibrant and is central to the life of the school. This quality worship makes a significant impact on pupils' spiritual development.

Areas to improve

- Develop the moderation of levelled work in religious education (RE) in order to improve teachers' understanding of the levels and help them plan work that enables children to make progress.
- Develop the role of the governors in embedding a more structured approach to self-evaluation and monitoring of the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school.

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

'Each day we aim to be the best that we can be in a loving Christian family' is part of the newly revised mission statement. It shapes the thinking of the school and is understood and embraced by the school community. Firmly established Christian values influence all aspects of school life. Rates of attendance are improving as a result of effective strategies that are in place. Behaviour management is consistently linked to the school's core Christian values. Parents affirm that this helps to influence children's attitudes at home. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere throughout the school. Relationships are very strong between all members of the school community. Pupils know that any issues are dealt with promptly and fairly and, as a result, they are confident and feel valued. The outstanding ethos of trust and respect is clearly evident. The school demonstrates that it is both distinctive in its Christian character and inclusive in its approach to diversity. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent as a result of the focused Christian perspective given to planning across the curriculum. Year 6 children take part in a Pilgrimage Day to prepare them for transition to secondary school. They enjoy practical activities at the beach linked to the Lord's Prayer followed by worship time at the convent with the Sisters of Jesus' Way. Children explained that 'actually being there, experiencing it' had helped them on their own faith journey. Colourful displays and Christian signs and symbols inside and outside the school emphasise the school's distinctiveness and support the children's spiritual awareness and development extremely well. RE makes a valuable contribution to the Christian character of the school. The outstanding Christian ethos creates a culture in which all children are able to feel secure and supported and this enables them to learn with confidence. Ofsted data and the school's own analysis show increasing proportions of children exceeding expected levels of skill for their age. All groups of children achieve well and make at least good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. Intervention procedures are supporting children in developing life and learning skills.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship makes an excellent contribution to children's spiritual and moral development. Senior leaders and the rector plan themes together around Christian values, the Bible and major Christian festivals. This term the rector is working with classes on 'The fruits of the spirit' resulting in each class leading worship for the school, parents and governors. Children appreciate the rector's regular input. They say, 'she respects our thinking' and, 'she has faith in us'. Parents say that worship teaches the children the real meaning of Christmas and Easter. A governor commented that the headteacher is an outstanding role model as 'he teaches the children how to worship because he is worshipping too'. He ensures that all worship begins with hearing God's word from the Bible. Children have an excellent understanding of the nature of worship, the Christian faith and Anglican traditions and practice. Their outstanding and enthusiastic singing serves to enhance the worship experience. Children say they enjoy learning about 'God's stories in a fun way' through Open the Book, led by members of Holy Cross Church. In the worship, led by the headteacher, children showed an understanding of the Holy Spirit's power in helping to spread Jesus' love and care to others. There is a strong commitment to Christian service in supporting those in need. Year 3 children, who were receiving the Civic Award, explained how they help others in their lives. Reflection and prayer are important aspects of worship. Formal prayers are said but children also understand the value of saying their own personal prayers. A child said, 'You can pray anytime and you don't have to pray in a particular way'. A collective worship journal helps to capture children's thoughts on worship and this leads to school improvement. For example, children now take a more active role in preparing and reading prayers and the Bible. Children are clearly used to the rituals of worship and understand the spiritual significance of lighting the candles and repeating responses. After prayers they respond to 'Lord in your mercy' with 'Lord hear our prayer'.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Children make good progress, as is evidenced in portfolios, written work and in their oral responses. The subject leader provides outstanding leadership in rigorously monitoring the provision of RE through observation of teaching and learning, book scrutiny and cross-checking of standards. She has worked

closely with RE subject leaders in local schools to share and develop good practice. Diocesan training has been beneficial in developing a curriculum that is relevant and leads to children asking the big questions. The RE action plan correctly identifies that the next step for improvement is for teachers to moderate children's work together, to give them a clearer understanding of all the attainment levels. A system for assessing children's achievements is used effectively to track progress and determine next steps in learning. Marking gives children a good indication of how their work can be improved and they respond appropriately in the reflection time given to do this. Children speak positively about their enjoyment of RE. Well-planned, stimulating experiences make learning meaningful and relevant. A variety of effective teaching and learning strategies are used, including role play, art and craft and multi-media resources. Topics covered within lessons are further enhanced through the input of the rector and curate who regularly contribute to class lessons. An open and affirming teaching style was demonstrated by a Year 6 teacher who was successful in encouraging pupils to express their views and opinions on how Christians apply Jesus' teaching on love and service to others. Skilled questioning based on good subject knowledge gets children thinking hard with time to reflect and explain their answers. Children understand and make links between the beliefs and practices of faiths, other than Christianity. This gives them a deeper understanding of their own and other cultures and prepares them for life in our diverse global society. A parent, who accompanied children on a visit to the mosque in Birkenhead, said she was impressed at the respectful manner of the children and their thoughtful and deep questions.

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

The headteacher has a clear Christian vision for the school. The diocesan church school leadership course has enabled him to reflect deeply and develop as the outstanding leader of this church school. The Vision and Values day at the beginning of term brought staff and governors together to reflect on the school's uniqueness, its Christian development and to produce the new mission statement. Leaders and governors seek the challenge of continually improving the school. For example, the impact of worship is monitored throughout the year. There is a culture of 'if it doesn't work, change it'. Leaders recognise the need for governors to develop their role in contributing to strategic planning through more formal procedures in monitoring and evaluating the school as a church school. The link between the school and the church is outstanding. Increasing numbers of families are attending Holy Cross Church for a Sunday service once a month to worship and enjoy a family event after the service. The rector explains that themes, responses and prayers are developed to mirror those in school worship. This is to ensure that all feel comfortable and 'at home' in the church, which is viewed by parents as being an extension of the school. Leaders and governors recognise the importance of the school's Christian character in creating an ethos which supports effective learning. There is a clear set of priorities in school action planning with a focus on continuing to raise the academic achievement of all learners. The school works hard to involve parents and keep them informed. Parents say they feel welcome in the school and that staff are approachable and supportive. Older children take their responsibilities seriously, including acting as buddies for Reception children. The school meets statutory requirements for RE and collective worship. Both are well-led, with planning and evaluation key to future development. Issues raised at previous inspections have been addressed. Collaboration between headteachers and subject leaders in the local cluster of schools is mutually beneficial in developing best practice. The high level of pastoral care is rooted in Christian love and has had a significant impact on the school community who have united together during recent sad and challenging times.

SIAMS report, June 2015, Woodchurch Church of England Primary School, Merseyside CH49 7LS