

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

### Castle Hill St Philip's Church of England Primary School

Hereford Road, Hindley, Wigan, Lancashire, WN2 4DH

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Liverpool</b>
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Wigan
Date of inspection	1 February 2017
Date of last inspection	June 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 106472
Headteacher	Wendy Hilton
Inspector's name and number	Mike Graham 286

#### School context

Castle Hill is a below average sized primary school, serving an economically and socially deprived urban area. Most pupils are of White British background. The proportion of pupils entitled to the pupil premium, extra funding for the disadvantaged, is well above the national average. The number with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average but rising. A new training classroom has been added since the last inspection. There is no designated priest-in-charge at the local church at present.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Castle Hill St Philip's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The clear Christian vision of the headteacher, based on gospel values, is pursued with conviction and passion. She sets the tone for all of the school's caring work with the pupils. All staff, governors and pupils are inspired to live out the Christian values every day.
- Loving and supportive relationships, rooted in Christian love, flourish between all members of the school. Mutual respect and care ensure that children are secure and happy in their learning, so that they make good to outstanding progress.
- Excellent worship and Religious Education (RE) lead to impressive maturity in the pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) development.
- The caring support given to pupils and staff extends to whole families when appropriate. This includes excellent pastoral support from the chair of governors. Parents and carers feel involved and supported strongly as they endeavour to do their best for their children.

#### Areas to improve

- Pursue the ambitious vision to build a loving, outward-looking Christian community including another church school and All Saints' church. This has the aim of encouraging and uplifting the whole of the area. All in school can thereby experience the empowering effect of sharing God's love with others.
- Ensure that the Christian vision, on which the school's ethos is based, has a specific biblical link so as to make clear to all that it is based on Jesus' life and teachings.

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

Christian values of love, respect, perseverance, forgiveness, responsibility and resilience are the foundations of all the school's work. The loving Christian care lavished on every pupil brings confidence and security. The headteacher is rightly proud of the fact that, in her own words, this has created a Christian ethos that 'permeates all aspects of school life and has an important and affirmative impact on children's personal and spiritual development'. There is no fear of making mistakes, so the pupils are able to give of their best. The academic progress achieved, as recognised by Ofsted last November, is good to outstanding. The school's own record-keeping data confirms this. Work with the vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils is exemplary and is rooted in Christian love. The learning mentor and special needs co-ordinator play key roles in sensitive support and encouragement of pupils and families. This results in outstanding progress for this group of pupils and in improved attendance levels, which are now reaching national expectations.

Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development (SMSC) is very impressive. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and show respect and good manners to all. The peaceful, joyful and calm atmosphere in the dining hall at lunchtimes demonstrates these attributes perfectly. The pupils do not simply know about the Christian values that are exemplified by the staff, they live them. Their behaviour is exceptionally good. The depth of SMSC development also stems from the rich and varied curriculum which is carefully structured so as to have a Christian value as a focus in all planning. Excellent teaching on Christianity and five other world faiths in RE is vital in stimulating the pupils' cultural and spiritual growth. An impressive element is the world faith month which takes place annually.

There are many interactive displays in school, including prayer walls and reflection areas, giving an authentic Christian environment for pupils and adults. These make a significant contribution to their spiritual development.

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

Collective worship at St Philip's is sincere and relevant and makes a significant difference to the lives of everyone in the school family. Varied and inventive leadership by pupils, staff and clergy ensure that worship engages everyone. The lay reader emeritus, who is also chair of governors, provides a strong link to All Saints church and appropriate experiences of Anglican traditions in worship. She brings theological insight to all, including wise and sensitive counselling and confirmation training for pupils and staff.

Bible readings, drama, prayer and excellent singing, often with humour yet always with reverence and respect, are all part of a rich tapestry of spiritual inspiration. Pupils and adults gain great insight into Christian faith and values. A Year 1 pupil in worship responded to teaching on the dangers of hurtful words. She said that it teaches her 'to be responsible for my own words and actions!' The pupils have a good understanding of God as Father and Creator and of Jesus as Son and Saviour. They are less sure about the Holy Spirit but some have a clear grasp of key elements. One Year 6 pupil commented, 'After Jesus went back to heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to keep an eye on everyone'.

Prayer is seen and understood as a natural part of a life of faith. The pupils welcome the fact that their own prayers are frequently used in collective worship. The depth and sincerity of prayer, often offered spontaneously by pupils and staff, is impressive. There is a sense of quiet potency and power on these occasions, helping significantly in the development of spiritual understanding in pupils and adults alike.

Parents and carers join with the school and the church community at key points in the church calendar to worship in church together. The pupils play important roles in leading services at times such as saints' days, Ash Wednesday and Christmas. They also lead in special class-led worship attended by most parents of those involved. Older pupils also attend the midweek communion as classes. These occasions undoubtedly play their part in maintaining and strengthening the bond between the communities. There are various strands to the evaluation of worship with pupils, staff, governors and parents involved. This helps to ensure that development and improvement are kept constantly in mind during planning.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding**

The passionate and inventive co-ordinator for RE ensures that the teaching and learning is constantly reviewed and monitored, so as to give the pupils the best possible experiences. Their progress is never less than good and is often outstanding, as evidenced in their books, folders and discussions. The teamwork and enthusiasm of all the staff for the subject shines out and the pupils' excitement and appetite for learning is clear. One Year 6 pupil spoke of being inspired by John the Baptist's teaching on repentance. 'I should be following the Lord' she said, summing up perfectly the general desire of all members of the school family to learn from Christ's example.

Teaching is mostly outstanding and never less than good. Reception pupils are sensitively led with open yet probing

questioning, thus rapidly growing spiritually. For instance during a session on the good Samaritan, understanding of the message of the story was extended beyond caring for everyone regardless of their background. One pupil said, 'If we do something naughty to someone we can say sorry and they will forgive us'. The impressive impact is reinforced throughout the year groups. Following discussions and work on Jesus' healing of a blind man, a Year 2 pupil decided that 'Jesus wanted to be a role model'. A powerful lesson in Year 6 on the links between the Jewish Passover feast and Jesus' last supper, included sharing pitta bread and 'wine' during discussion. A pupil commented that Christians eat the bread to remember the last supper and 'so a little bit of Jesus will stay inside us forever'. A girl added that as the Jews were led to freedom from Egypt, so Jesus' death gave us 'freedom from our sins!'

Clear links are thus established for the pupils between the school's Christian values and the teachings and life of Jesus. There is however a lack of clarity in documents and on the website, about the biblical source of these values. Frequent and regular observation, training, teamwork, assessment and evaluation of the work in RE ensure that there are always realistic and well focussed plans for further improvement.

The RE subject co-ordinator is skilful, sensitive and full of enthusiasm for her subject. This leads to highly effective teaching throughout the school. The pupils' knowledge of Christianity and the impact this has on the Christian character of the school is highly significant. Their understanding is deepened as they explore Christian themes such as Easter through visits to church for the stations of the cross. They are open and accepting of those from different faiths. One Year 5 pupil said of the visit to a Sikh Gurdwara, 'The food was amazing!' and he noted that they keep their holy book in 'a special place'.

The subject has a very high profile in the curriculum, with excellent extension of the chosen Christian values into other areas as appropriate.

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

The headteacher leads the school with a clear Christian vision. Her summary of this vision is, 'To develop strong links between home, school and our church, underpinned by gospel values, to provide a positive Christian witness in the wider community'. Staff and governors support the headteacher in communicating this vision, leading the way in actions, not just in words. The headteacher's own faith shines through in every aspect of her work, with the focus always on the well-being of the pupils. The leadership team, staff and governors follow and support this lead with immense commitment. The Christian love and support given to every pupil releases their full potential, often from starting points well below national averages. Innovative approaches to learning, such as the Growth Mindset project, are used to maximise pupils' ability to reach their full potential.

The whole community benefits from the fact that the Christian values are not just written about and displayed, but are lived out by staff and pupils day by day. The lay reader emeritus and other foundation governors are closely involved in school, helping with trips and in classes. This reinforces the strong links with the church and governors. They know the pupils well and add to the already loving and caring ethos.

The impact made by the school's Christian vision is secured by detailed, efficient and strategic planning. This is open and honest, with governors ready to challenge when appropriate as well as bringing well-deserved encouragement to the staff team. Issues raised by the previous report have been tackled thoroughly and successfully. Future leadership in church schools is promoted through excellent teamwork, good delegation and high quality in-service training. Statutory requirements for worship and RE are met.

Partnerships and relationships with other local schools, All Saints church, the diocese and the community at large are strong and mutually beneficial. This has been underlined with the success in gaining a Church and School Partnership Award. Giving to local and international charities reinforces the pupils' understanding of Christian compassion through helping others. The pupils take a strong lead in various aspects of school life, such as anti-bullying, ecology and finance through the Year 5 'government departments' or council. Parents and carers are immensely proud of their school and appreciate the openness and warmth of staff. Comments include one from a parent who has recently moved her child after difficulties at another school. She said, 'He's a different child. He's never once complained and is now fully confident.' Others added simply but strongly, 'It's wonderful!' and 'The staff go the extra mile'.

SIAMS report February 2017, Castle Hill St Philip's CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School, Hindley, Wigan, WN2 4DH