



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Chester Bluecoat Church of England Primary School

Walpole Street
Chester
CHI 4HG

Previous SIAMS grade: Not applicable

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Chester

Local authority: Chester West

Dates of inspection: 10 December 2015

Date of last inspection: Not applicable

School's unique reference number: 136806

Headteacher: Vince O'Brien

Inspector's name and number: Jean Forward (625)

School context

Chester Bluecoat is an above average-sized primary school with nursery provision. The school opened in 2011. The proportion of children from minority ethnic groups is slightly lower than average but increasing. The proportion of children with special educational needs is above the national average as is the proportion of children who receive funding through pupil premium.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Chester Bluecoat as a Church of England school good

- The strong Christian leadership of the headteacher and his vision for the development of the school ensure that the school's Christian foundation is always to the fore.
- The school is extremely successful in creating a loving and caring Christian environment which has a direct influence on children's well-being and academic success.
- Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is good and is rooted in the school's Christian ethos and its approach to prayer, reflection and inclusivity.
- The commitment of the governing body to the development of the school's Christian foundation provides effective support for the work of the senior leadership team.

Areas to improve

- Review the planning, monitoring and evaluation of collective worship in all its contexts in order to establish an enriching and relevant experience for all children.
- Introduce greater rigour in the assessment and marking of religious education (RE) in order to establish a consistent approach to attainment and progress across the school.
- Review the school's approach to core Christian values involving all members of the school community in order to strengthen their effect on every aspect of the school's daily life, including planning across the curriculum.

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

A strong commitment to its Christian ethos and the development of the whole child underpin the work of the school. Children talk confidently about the importance of core values in the context of their daily life. However, the children do not readily identify them as Christian values. Positive relationships are a key element in the school's success and these are rooted in a Christ-centred approach. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good as a result of the focused Christian ethos. Consequently, children demonstrate high levels of self-esteem, awareness of others and the need to persevere. All members of the community know that they are valued and the ethos of trust and respect is clearly evident. Children are extremely courteous, friendly and responsible. A child said, 'Everyone is welcome in our school.' Children say that they are able to share concerns with their teachers and they know that these will be addressed in a sensitive way. Parents comment that their children are happy and enthusiastic about learning and school life. They say that their children develop positive attitudes to the world around them and to the diverse nature of the school community. When speaking of the support the school gives to families, a parent said, 'This is a wonderful school. I don't know what I'd do without it.' Parents readily ascribe the support they receive to the strong Christian ethos of the school. The school has a strong commitment to Christian stewardship, supporting a range of charities including Diabetes UK, the local foodbank and Barnardo's. Children speak of the importance of showing generosity and compassion for those in need. Displays and Christian signs and symbols emphasise the school's distinctiveness and support the children's spiritual awareness and development well. Children value the reflection areas in their classrooms and the key stage prayer stations in the corridors. They say that these help them to think and pray. The Muslim children in the school have a prayer room which they designed. As a result, children are able to express things about which they care deeply. The school delivers effective teaching about other faiths through RE. This contributes well to children's cultural development and their positive attitudes to the increasingly diverse nature of the school community and wider society. Recently published data for 2015 shows that attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics were close to or above the national average for children at the end of Y6. Attendance is close to the national average. The school's Christian care for and commitment to every child secure these positive results.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The act of collective worship is central to the life of the school. Planning incorporates themes based on the school's core values, the Bible and major Christian festivals. The school places Christ at the centre of all it does and collective worship enables children of all ages to understand how the teaching of Jesus guides Christians in their daily lives. This is emphasised in the Open the Book worship which provides a lively and interactive approach to Bible stories. Children say that they enjoy what they learn about the Bible during these acts of worship. The children engage well with big questions which explore values and beliefs in class worship. They value times of silence and reflection which are an important part of the school's approach to prayer. Children become familiar with Anglican practices through the use of traditional prayers and responses. Music is chosen carefully in order to create a sense of calm and reflection. As a result, children understand that worship plays an important part in the life of faith which the school fosters. On the day of the inspection, children listened attentively when the headteacher talked about sharing our God-given gifts and talents with others. The school worships in the parish church for major festivals and on four Sundays of the year when the children plan and lead an element of the parish worship. This enables children and their families to feel part of the wider worshipping community. Visits to the church make a positive contribution to children's spiritual development and to their understanding of key Christian celebrations. Planning for worship is based on the values which the school promotes but there is a lack of structure for class worship. As a result, there is inconsistency in terms of content and a lack of cohesion in the overall approach across the school. There is currently no organised evaluation of worship to inform future planning. Children have some understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The school has a commitment to developing all aspects of teaching and learning in RE using the diocesan syllabus. Progress and standards are generally in line with those in other subjects. The school has clear understanding of children's progress from their starting points and this ensures that teaching and learning meet the needs of every child. This is achieved through a range of teaching strategies and good use of appropriate resources. The subject is taught in a creative way with a strong emphasis on developing children's thinking skills and ability to discuss and share ideas. There is a good balance between learning about religions and reflecting on their new experiences and knowledge. Children are enthusiastic and say that they enjoy a variety of written activities, discussion, role-play and art. Good prior knowledge and thinking skills were demonstrated in a Year 3 lesson when children became RE detectives to explore different ways of describing Jesus. Music and artefacts were used to good effect to stimulate discussion and partner work. Children in Year 1 used prior learning when they considered the Christmas story. They responded confidently and enthusiastically when asked to recall events and express their opinions. The sharing and careful consideration of ideas make a good contribution to children's spiritual and moral development. One child commented that 'Everyone enjoys RE'. Children sometimes take on the role of experts when learning involves other world faiths. This enables children to share their different experiences of faith and practice. There is some evidence of marking guiding children to the next steps in their learning. However, there is inconsistency in the way staff approach this. The committed subject leader is aware of the need to introduce a more thorough system for the assessment of children's attainment and progress. After a period of absence, she is now reviewing the school's approach to monitoring and recording.

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

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school based on Christian principles and values. He takes every opportunity to promote the school's distinctive Christian character. Through his leadership, staff and governors are committed to sustaining a Christian environment in which all aspects of children's development and well-being are fostered and promoted through Christian care and love. In doing so, they have recognised the importance of the school's Christian character in creating an ethos which supports effective learning and the promotion of equal opportunities. The strong senior leadership team is effective in identifying clear priorities for the development of the school's Christian ethos. The headteacher attributes children's successful learning to the Christ-centred qualities of the school. The school knows its children and their families extremely well and meets individual needs through a culture of Christian nurturing. Parents recognise the distinctive Christian qualities of the school and speak highly of the respect with which they and their children are treated. Parents say, 'There is a real sense of openness and trust' and 'This is a happy community and the Christian ethos pervades the building.' They also say that children's happiness and success are rooted in the values which are at the heart of the school's daily life. Foundation governors are knowledgeable and have a clear understanding of their role. As a result, they support the school in a variety of ways. Action plans for RE and worship are included in the school's improvement plan. This ensures that aspects of church school distinctiveness continue to contribute to the development of the school's Christian foundation. The importance given to this is demonstrated in the recent appointment of a governor with responsibility for church school distinctiveness. Provision is made for all staff to participate in continuous professional development and this makes a valuable contribution to effective teaching and learning throughout the school. Strong links with the diocese support these opportunities. Links with the Parochial Church Council and congregation of St. Thomas' church are developing and creating an increasing sense of the wider Christian family.