



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Dodleston CofE Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Church Road
Dodleston
Chester
CH4 9NG

Diocese: **Chester**

Previous SIAMS grade: **Outstanding**

Present SIAMS grade: **Outstanding**

Local authority: Cheshire West and Chester Council

Date of inspection: 26 November 2015

Date of last inspection: June 2010

School's unique reference number: 111272

Headteacher: Julie Boyes

Inspector's name and number: Mike Graham 286

School context

The school is of well below average size and is situated in the rural village of Dodleston, close to the church of St Mary's. Approximately half of the children travel to school from surrounding villages or from the south side of Chester. The vast majority are White British. The number of children with special educational needs is below average, as is the proportion known to be eligible for the pupil premium. The headteacher has been in post for two years. The school building does not have a hall, and a classroom is used for assembly and dining arrangements. The school also uses the local village hall and playing field to support sports lessons and outdoor learning.

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

- The headteacher gives outstanding Christian leadership and is supported wholeheartedly by all the staff. As a consequence achievement as well as spiritual development has improved significantly during recent years.
- Christian values are lived out in the excellent relationships in the school family, which results in exemplary behaviour.
- Worship is central to the spiritual life of the school. It is sincere, varied and relevant and has a deep impact on the whole community.

Areas to improve

- Extend the prayer life of the school to include more spontaneous prayer, so that individuals are enabled to deepen this area of their lives.
- Extend the teaching on the Holy Spirit in order to improve children's understanding of this aspect of God in the Christian faith.

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

The school's loving and caring Christian ethos creates a secure and joyful context within which all the children are enabled to give of their best. The Christian values of koinonia (belonging), shalom (peace), compassion, trust, justice and forgiveness are explained and lived out here. The rector commented that 'The Christian ethos is active'. As a result of the security and trust that has been developed, there is no fear of failure, and the enthusiasm with which the children tackle their work and life in school leads to outstanding academic achievement and personal development. The attendance rates are at and often above national targets largely because of the children's enjoyment of and desire to come to school. As the lay reader put it, 'All the children are allowed to be themselves and are nurtured'. Attainment is good, with statistics showing that the children make excellent progress throughout their time in school. The Christian character of the school supports the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all the children extremely well. Every effort is made to bring experiences of other faiths and cultures to the children. In 'harmony week' a wide range of faith groups send representatives to share their experiences and beliefs, encouraging discussion and debate. The children are in no doubt about the value of this, one year 5 boy commenting, 'I didn't know Quakers existed!' Another child said, 'It helps us to understand and get on with them when we meet them'. Excellent teaching in religious education (RE) underscores the Christian values and blends thorough Christian teaching with excellent work on other faiths. The RE programme also plays a vital role in developing the spiritual, cultural and moral lives of the children. All staff see RE as a key subject, and it spreads positive and all-embracing teaching on life and morals into the whole curriculum. Children and adults are polite and respectful, yet full of life and joy in learning and growing together. Relationships amongst all members of the school community demonstrate Christian values superbly. Parents readily attribute this to the close links with St Mary's Church and the Christian values at the heart of the school's life. One father said that they '...are more important than I had imagined!' A Year 6 girl discussed apologising and receiving forgiveness on the rare occasions when friends fall out. She said her response is 'That's all right, and I apologise for my appalling behaviour!'

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship takes pride of place in the life of the school. It is inspiring, sincere and relevant, with variety in content, style and leadership. Everyone in the school community is involved and all readily acknowledge the impact it makes on their lives. During a lunchtime chat a year 2 girl said, 'We have shalom in assemblies!' Worship centred on peace/shalom was full of life, fun, sensitivity, challenge, Bible readings, reflection and prayer. It was relevant and full of joy. The worship is distinctively Christian. Jesus and His teachings are the basis for the values chosen each half term as themes for worship and for the whole of school life. Personal spiritual development is enhanced through a strong focus on prayer. Prayer tree, prayer books and class worship all encourage children to write their own prayers. Reflective, prayerful times are not limited to morning worship, but are sprinkled through the day as appropriate. Children pray during lessons when encouraged to do so, but spontaneous prayer from children is rare. The children have a good depth of understanding of God as Father and Creator, and Jesus as the Son and saviour. However, they are not as clear about the person and role of the Holy Spirit. Worship brings the whole community of Dodleston together at key points in the church calendar. The impact in terms of the building of mutually beneficial relationships between the village, school and church communities is significant. The rector and lay reader play key roles here, leading worship and providing pastoral support when appropriate. They bring theological yet accessible teaching and elements of the Anglican tradition to the children, staff and parents. They are without doubt making vital contributions in building up the faith life of the school. Children, staff and the lay reader also plan, lead and evaluate worship, giving vitality and a constant desire for further improvement and development.

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

The headteacher, leadership team, staff and governors are united in striving to live out the Christian vision for the school. The headteacher's Christian faith shines out in every aspect of her leadership. The chair of governors said that the headteacher is constantly 'showing the Christian faith.' The academic and personal achievements of the children have improved strongly over the last two years. These successes have been achieved through exemplary teamwork, with the whole staff group united with the headteacher and governors to bring Christian values into every aspect of school life. These values have been promoted vigorously, yet with sensitivity. The leadership team has made significant contributions in supporting not just the children but also the wider families. When appropriate there is a readiness to pray with or for those in need. The vision is secured by careful evaluation and very thorough strategic planning. The attention to detail is remarkable, and demonstrates the determined striving for constant improvement. Areas for development from the previous report have been fully addressed. Leaders prepare for future leadership in this and other church schools through excellent in-service training, teamwork, delegation and coaching. RE and worship fully comply with statutory requirements. Partnerships with the local church, diocese and the wider community, including parents, are strong and mutually beneficial. The well-being of every child and every family is paramount. Parents are immensely proud of 'their' school, giving excellent support, including fund-raising. They feel part of the school family, and comments included, 'There are no issues at all...if there were, they'd be dealt with immediately!', 'The staff are so friendly' and 'It's fab!'

SIAMS report November 2015, Dodleston CofE Primary, Chester, CH4 9NG