



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### Hartford Church of England High School

Chester Road  
Northwich  
Cheshire  
CW8 1LH

**Previous SIAMS grade: n/a      Current inspection: Good**  
**Diocese: Chester**

Local authority: Cheshire West and Chester

Dates of inspection: 15-16 October 2015

Date of last inspection: n/a

School's unique reference number: 138148

Headteacher: Michael Holland

Inspector's name and number: Robert Haigh 660

#### School context

The school came into being with voluntary aided status in September 2012. It was previously Hartford High School, a Specialist Languages and Sports College. It is slightly smaller than the average-sized secondary school, although numbers on roll are rising. The large majority of students are White British. The proportions of disabled students, those with special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium are average. Some Key Stage 4 students follow vocational courses at nearby colleges.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Hartford as a Church of England school are good

- The authentic Christian leadership of the headteacher and his senior team, strongly supported by staff, governors and the school chaplain ensures that Christian values have a strong impact on students' achievement and spiritual development.
- Outstanding pastoral care for students is based on the Christian values of love, forgiveness and respect. It promotes students' outstanding behaviour, well-being and their harmonious relationships with staff.
- The strong links with churches and other community partners are mutually beneficial.

#### Areas to improve

- Ensure that Christian values are fully embedded so all students can confidently articulate the distinctively Christian characteristics of those values and their impact.
- Develop the leadership of collective worship by students and its consistency in form periods to enhance its quality and the contribution it makes to spiritual development.
- Engage stakeholders in a review and evaluation of church school development to date to identify, celebrate, strengthen and extend Christian distinctiveness.

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

This re-invigorated school's core Christian values of love and truth are expressed daily. Its inclusivity is shown in the attitudes and actions of adults and students alike. A Year 8 girl said 'We

are a welcoming and loving family' and a Year 11 student referred to the 'growing spirit of Christian community'. A belief in the God-given value of each student is paramount. The pastoral care of students, based on the Christian values of love and respect, is outstanding. Therefore, students are known well, feel safe and have above-average attendance levels. They display positive attitudes to learning in a culture of high expectations and achievement. Living out the Christian values of endurance and forgiveness means that staff support vulnerable students enabling many to remain in school. In recent years fixed-term exclusions have fallen significantly and there have been no permanent exclusions. The ministry of the chaplain is highly regarded as a strength of the school's outstanding pastoral care. Student's behaviour is outstanding. They look after each other well because they understand the values of tolerance and friendship. A Year 9 girl commented 'My instinct is to care and help because Jesus tells us to'. This is typical of most students' comments in linking their conduct with the core values, although not all are able to explain their distinctively Christian basis. The drive to meet the needs of all students and raise their achievement is having clear impact. Data indicates that achievement is good to outstanding throughout the school. GCSE outcomes are well-above average. Students with special educational needs and disabilities achieve well. Investment of pupil premium is closing the attainment gap between eligible pupils and others. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) is promoted very well across the curriculum. In addition, the developing link with a school in Uganda fosters cultural understanding and community projects enhance social development. Students are reminded daily of the school's Christian identity and ethos by the many displays of Bible verses, the school prayer and Christian values within the buildings, as well as the spiritual garden outside. Students organise and lead much charity fund-raising, although not all are able to explain this as an expression of Christian compassion and service. Religious education (RE) contributes to the school's Christian character by helping students to know about Christian belief and practice and respect diversity in contemporary society. Their understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural global faith is not secure. Year 8 students take part enthusiastically in the Archbishop of York Award which widens their perception of Christian service.

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

The worshipping life of the school is growing in strength and importance. Collective worship promotes students' spiritual awareness and moral development by providing opportunities for them to think about and discover Christian belief and express their own faith through action. A Year 7 boy remarked, 'Worship helps us feel closer to God and think about the big questions'. A Year 10 girl stated 'It helps me to learn about Christian teaching and how to be more like Jesus in my daily life'. Worship extends beyond the daily act to voluntary school chapel services and church celebrations for Christian festivals. Greater clarity is being developed at the planning stage to create acts of worship rather than teaching assemblies. Planning and leading worship is mainly an adult responsibility. In the house worship observed students were well behaved, attentive and engaged. Even though they were largely passive, the invitation to reflect on their own motivation helped them to develop spiritually. The worship led by the team of student ambassadors is valued by their peers because it is vibrant and thought-provoking. The ambassadors themselves say their participation enhances their confidence as Christians, their understanding of worship and their leadership skills. They, and other students, would like more interactive worship, greater use of music and singing and increased opportunities to contribute to planning, leadership and evaluation. Christian values, the life and ministry of Jesus, Bible stories and moral issues have a prominent place in worship. As a result some students talk confidently about Christian belief, Bible teachings and faith in action. They possess an awareness of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit through their learning in RE, but are not familiar with the concept in worship. Students value thought of the week in form time because the opportunity to reflect, pray and discuss increases their knowledge of Christian teaching and understanding of moral and social issues. They report, however, that these occasions are variable in quality. Students value the school prayer which they say increases their awareness of God's presence. Some know the Lord's Prayer and Anglican responses. They understand the significance of some Christian festivals. Although evaluation of worship to identify

impact and inform future priorities is at an early stage, it is addressing recognised areas for development. There is growing clarity about the influence of worship on students' spirituality, attitudes and behaviour. The involvement in worship of clergy and other visitors from local churches is appreciated by students because it helps them to think about the relevance of faith in a wider context. The contribution of the chaplain is highly regarded because it strengthens planning, teaching and leadership. The chapel is valued by students not only as a place of worship, but also as a space for fellowship, prayer and reflection. Students say these opportunities help them become more confident in their exploration and expression of faith. They also appreciate the occasions of focus on world faiths because this extends their understanding of other religions and cultures.

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

Religious education (RE), a popular core curriculum subject, has a high profile and a track record of academic success. Achievement is good in both key stages and in line with national standards. The department, which has been awarded the national RE Quality Mark at silver standard, is very well led. The inspirational head of department, also an RE hub leader for local schools, leads the talented, committed and expert team of teachers very effectively. Consistently good and sometimes outstanding teaching enhances students' progress and achievement. Assessment procedures are becoming even more rigorous as attention is being given to the consistency of evaluations at Key Stage 3. All lessons enable students to learn about and from religion. The teaching of Christianity is a priority. As a result, students have a sound knowledge of Christian belief. Their understanding of Christianity as a world-wide faith is less certain because curriculum coverage is not yet fully developed. Other world faiths are studied. A Year 10 boy said 'RS helps me to understand more about God, my own faith and the faiths of others'. The skills of enquiry, interpretation, reflection and evaluation are demonstrated by students in both key stages. Highly effective questioning by teachers makes students think deeply and reflect critically. A Year 11 boy commented 'we are pushed to the limit'. RE's contribution to the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills is strong due to the emphasis in lessons on joint investigation, reporting back and group discussion. Students value the guidance provided in marking which helps them to improve their work. The visits to lessons from leaders of local Christian churches enable students to deepen their understanding of religious and moral issues. RE makes a strong contribution to pupils' SMSC development and their understanding of Christian values. It enables them to reflect on their own spirituality and behaviour, discuss moral dilemmas, consider questions of meaning and explore religious diversity. The depth of these reflections, however, is limited by too few opportunities for students to engage with visitors from a variety of faiths and make trips to places of worship across different religions.

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

The visionary and dedicated Christian leadership of the highly respected headteacher sets a clear direction for the school based on Christian values for the well-being and achievement of all. The team of senior leaders, supported by other staff and with the strong endorsement of governors, is defining and embedding the school's Christian character and identity. This is being achieved with energy, imagination and sensitivity. As a result the school is becoming an increasingly distinctive Christian learning community. The impact of leadership and management is also seen in the improving academic outcomes. RE and collective worship are very well led, have a high profile and statutory requirements regarding their provision are met. The school knows itself well. Its evaluation of performance is robust and accurate and the school development plan is ambitious and effective. It incorporates church school improvement priorities with realistic milestones and effective monitoring, although Christian principles are not referred to in some key policies. Governors are proud of the school and vigilant in providing challenge and support to enhance its

Christian character. They speak confidently about church school issues including the development of future leaders. Enhancing all stakeholders' understanding of the school's vision of Christian distinctiveness is acknowledged as an important next step. The school values diocesan support which is improving the knowledge and expertise of governors, leaders and teachers. Collaboration with the wider community is strong and mutually beneficial. Links with local churches and liaison with partner church primary schools are highly effective. They enhance the school's Christian identity, service and learning, strengthen the church's connection with families and facilitate student transition. Parents' confidence in the school is strong. They say its 'deep concern for individual children' and 'support for their journey in faith' builds students' self-esteem. The school is outward looking and supports a variety of local, national and international projects. This is helping to develop students' Christian service and their awareness and understanding of the wider Christian community beyond home, school and parish.

SIAMS report October 2015 Hartford Church of England High School Northwich CW8 1LH