



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Oswald's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Grove Road
Mollington
Chester
CHI 6LG

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Chester

Local authority: Cheshire West and Chester

Dates of inspection: 14 January 2016

Date of last inspection: December 2010

School's unique reference number: 130929

Headteacher: Dave Wallace

Inspector's name and number: Ruth Wall 548

School context

This is a small school of 136 pupils. Children are drawn from the village of Mollington and the wider geographical area. The percentage of children eligible for free school meals is below the national average, as is the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is well below average. There have been significant changes in governance and senior leadership since the previous inspection. The headteacher has been in post since spring 2014.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Oswald's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The strong Christian leadership of the headteacher and his vision for the development of the school as a church school ensure church school distinctiveness is a priority.
- Children have an excellent understanding of the school's distinctive Christian values. This makes an impact on their relationships, with the result that they grow into compassionate individuals who are quick to take the initiative to help others.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent as a result of the opportunities provided for reflection during collective worship and the wider curriculum.
- The very strong relationship with St Oswald's parish church inspires a shared Christian vision for learning and development.

Areas to improve

- Develop a sustainable long-term plan for Religious Education (RE), including a programme of visits to a variety of places of worship, to ensure the same entitlement for all children.
- Revise the collective worship and behaviour policies so that they accurately reflect the outstanding practice of the school.

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

Christian values are evident in all aspects of school life. The vision statement is displayed distinctively on the website and throughout the school. The motto: love, laugh, learn, is clearly referenced to New Testament teaching, 'Do everything in love'. A weekly award celebrates the way in which individual children demonstrate Christian values in their daily lives. Parents affirm that this helps to influence children's conduct at home. 'The emphasis on Christian values has made a positive impact on our children', is typical of parents' comments. Christian signs and symbols, together with high quality interactive displays, emphasise the school's distinctiveness and support the children's spiritual awareness and development extremely well. Reflection areas are a valued focal point in all classrooms and include children's own prayers and reflections. A Year 6 girl emphasised, 'They are not just to look good you know, we enjoy using them'. Children understand the value of personal prayer which they say 'you can do anytime, anywhere'. Children show concern for world issues and, as an expression of their Christian service, often take the initiative in organising fund-raising events. RE makes a significant contribution to the school's Christian character. Schemes of work enable learners to explore Christianity and other cultures, beliefs and practices very effectively. Children are made aware that Christianity is a worldwide faith through a range of activities and planning has begun for a Worldwide Church Day in the summer term. Data shows that all groups of children are making at least good progress across the school. The school's Christian character contributes strongly to this by providing an ethos, based on respect and trust. As a result, children are enthusiastic learners and feel supported and able to move on when difficulties occur.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is central to the life of the school and makes an excellent contribution to children's spiritual and moral development. Worship is well planned and covers Christian themes with a strong emphasis on Christian values and Christian festivals. All staff attend and enjoy worship. They say that it is uplifting and gives them a positive message to explore further in class. Silence and moments for reflection play an important part in the school's approach to prayer. Anglican responses and traditional prayers also contribute to the development of children's prayer life. There is a structured approach to evaluating the impact of worship. Children's reflections are used to inform development, including more involvement, new songs and use of video clips. The very popular Jesus and Me (JAM) group demonstrates its understanding of worship through involvement in planning and leading. Year 6 children say this has increased their confidence and that younger children understand and learn from them. Children have an excellent knowledge of the life and person of Jesus and a developing understanding of the nature of God. A beautifully crafted display and the lighting of three candles remind children of the significance of God's gift of the Holy Spirit. Children speak with enthusiasm when describing worship led by the vicar and the church schools' worker. They say their different approaches ensure 'there is something for all ages'. A recent questionnaire revealed that children love to sing in worship. This is influenced by expert musicianship from the headteacher and other leaders. The quality of the singing is outstanding and enhances the worship experience. Parents, governors and friends regularly join the school for worship and for special services in St Oswald's church. This creates a valued link with the worshipping life of the church and it enriches the experience of the whole school. Written feedback bears testament to their enjoyment and appreciation, including, 'We see happy children learning in a celebration of achievement, with Christian faith at its heart'.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

RE lies at the heart of the school curriculum. The headteacher gives a very strong lead in managing the subject. A new scheme of work has been introduced resulting from discussions with teachers, input from the diocese and looking at best practice in other schools. Development planning shows the school's commitment to embedding this new scheme and

developing all aspects of teaching and learning in RE. The scheme has an experiential emphasis with a focus on the quality of children's reflections and responses. Assessment procedures are in place and there is a clear understanding of children's progress from their starting points. This ensures that teaching and learning meet the needs of every child. Progress and standards are in line with those in other subjects. Planning is very good and on-going evaluation of impact on learning ensures development of standards. Work books are presented to a high standard and provide evidence of children's involvement in evaluating their own learning. Children respond extremely well to considering the big questions. For example, Year 5 and 6 children confidently and thoughtfully debated, 'Is it ok to lie?' Excellent collaboration was demonstrated as groups then considered the meaning and importance of each of the biblical ten commandments and how they linked to the school's Christian values. A range of teaching strategies is used to very good effect. Year 2 and 3 children rise to the responsibility of taking turns to act as lead learners. This was demonstrated very well as appointed leaders taught their groups the specific prayer actions that Muslims perform each time they pray. Demonstrating how the school has moved on since the last inspection, children benefit from additional opportunities to engage with those of other faiths and cultures. These include visits to a synagogue and a mosque and a speaker on Judaism contributing to RE lessons in school. Children say that learning about other religions helps to give them an understanding of their similarities and differences. The need to establish a rolling programme of visits to places of worship is identified in school improvement planning.

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

The headteacher provides outstanding Christian leadership. He says, 'It is a responsibility and privilege to ensure that the Christian ethos underpins everything we do'. The senior leadership team is highly effective in identifying clear priorities for the development of the school's Christian ethos. This process ensures that church school issues, including worship and RE, are identified and addressed through the school's improvement planning. The school's vision and values have been reviewed in an excellent example of collaboration with the whole school community. Foundation governors are knowledgeable and have a clear understanding of their role. They are successful in supporting and challenging the work of the school and monitor and evaluate the quality of worship and RE. They recognise that key policies need to be revised so that they accurately reflect the outstanding practice of the school. Issues raised at the previous inspection have been addressed. Excellent provision is made for all staff to participate in continuous professional development. This makes a valuable contribution to highly effective teaching and learning throughout the school. The headteacher ensures that staff have access to training which supports succession planning for future leadership in church schools. Leaders and governors attribute children's very successful learning to the ability to draw on their understanding of the Christian way of life and the Christ-centred qualities of the school. Parents appreciate being kept informed and having the opportunity to express their views through a variety of means, including Twitter and Parent Mail. They recognise the distinctive Christian qualities of the school and speak highly of teachers who they say provide outstanding role models for their children. Children are proud of their role in decision making through the school council and know that their views are valued. RE and worship are extremely well led, with planning and evaluation contributing effectively to future development. The vicar of St Oswald's church is very successful in maintaining a strong link with the school and presenting a positive image of the church. His input in worship and RE are particularly valued and appreciated by the whole school family. Training and support from the diocese have played an important part in helping the school to develop its distinctive character and its understanding of what it means to be a church school.

SIAMS report January 2016 St Oswald's CofE Primary School Mollington Chester CHI 6LG

