

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Elworth Church of England Primary School

School Lane, Elworth, Sandbach, Cheshire CW11 3HU	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Chester
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Cheshire East
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	N/A yet (see below)
Date of inspection	9 March 2018
Date of last inspection	June 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 111256
Headteacher	Neil Garratt
Inspector's name and number	Robert Haigh 660

School context

Elworth is a larger than average-sized primary school. The locality it serves is characterised by socio-economic advantage. The majority of pupils are White British and the proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion known to be eligible for pupil premium funding. The headteacher took up his post 2014. The deputy headteacher was appointed in 2017 following a restructure of the senior leadership team. The school is in the process of becoming a member of the Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT).

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

- The visionary and dynamic Christian leadership of the headteacher, strongly supported by dedicated leaders, staff and governors, influences all aspects of school improvement. This has created a vibrant Christian learning community in which God's presence is experienced and all can flourish.
- The school's mission statement and core Christian values lie at the heart of all that happens at Elworth. They sustain relationships at all levels enabling the school community to live and learn well together.
- The exceptional level of attention that the school pays to the welfare of pupils is rooted in its Christian character. Excellent pastoral care and an ethos of Christian nurturing have a positive influence on pupils' wellbeing, morale and attitudes to learning.
- Collective worship is inspiring. It enriches the daily experience of the whole school and nourishes individuals as they grow in their understanding of God, faith and each other.
- Strong links with St Peter's church contribute powerfully to the school's Christian character, to pupils' spiritual growth and to the positive and productive alliance between school, home and parish.

Area to improve

- Articulate more confidently, through self-evaluation, school policies and communication with stakeholders, the many exceptional features of the school's Christian distinctiveness. This will promote a clearer understanding of their effectiveness in preparation for the next stage of the school's development.

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

The school is a vibrant and harmonious community of faith and learning. Everyone is engaged in its mission to 'Love God. Love learning. Love one another'. This and the core Christian values permeate all aspects of school life. Pupils have a mature understanding of them. They apply them to their lives in the way they work and learn collaboratively, in their support, care and respect for each other and in service to the community. A Year 6 pupil declared that, 'We see our mission and values as meanings for life and guidelines for our relationships with God and other people.' Pupils benefit from the ways in which staff speak about and demonstrate the values which are also a topic of conversation at home.

Pupils are known well. They feel safe, loved and welcome in school so attendance is above average and exemplary behaviour is the norm. This is a Christian community living well together. Excellent relationships thrive in the warm family atmosphere. Older pupils act as play leaders to look after younger ones in the playground and around school. This buddy system has a mutual benefit for pupils' confidence and self-esteem. The use of restorative justice on the rare occasions when problems do occur enables pupils to see the consequences of their actions and the importance of apology, forgiveness and fresh starts.

The school's infectious and nurturing Christian ethos is highly conducive to learning and achievement. Staff combine high expectations with meticulous support and individual care, which for vulnerable pupils is transformational. The atmosphere in school is calm, yet pupils buzz with enthusiasm. They are inquisitive and articulate learners. Consequently, an outstanding work ethic exudes from every classroom. Pupils take pride in their work and make strong progress in all key stages. Disadvantaged pupils perform well across the curriculum. Standards of attainment are now above national levels and improving rapidly.

The rich curriculum and exciting range of activities positively contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The Christian values appear in all subject planning. As they are explored with pupils over time in greater depth, they become part of their thinking, language and behaviour. The eye-catching and thought-provoking faith and values displays in public areas foster pupils' spirituality. This also enables them to understand how religious belief and moral teaching affects the spiritual and social aspects of people's lives. Their keen sense of Christian stewardship for the school community and beyond is promoted by the activities of the school council, eco team and gardening club. Pupils raise funds for a wide variety of charities which they regard as showing Christian love in action. They understand that this is following in the footsteps of Jesus. The partnership with a Rwandan school contributes to pupils' understanding of Christianity as an international and culturally diverse faith.

RE is very well taught and contributes strongly to pupils' spiritual development. The enquiry-led approach to the subject takes their theological thinking deeper, prompting them to reflect on its meaning for their lives. Their study of world faiths is enriched by inter-faith days, the use of virtual reality technology and the visits of parents of different faith backgrounds. This promotes pupils' understanding of religious and cultural diversity, tolerance and shared values.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Pupil and staff feedback shows that daily worship is valued and at the centre of the school's spiritual life. It is seen as special. A Year 5 pupil said, 'Worship brings us all into the presence of God.' This unites the school community in praise, prayer, learning and reflection. Pupils speak about how worship influences their thinking, their faith and their actions. They particularly enjoy those occasions when they are involved in leadership. The enthusiastic and insightful pupils who form the worship council frequently design, lead and evaluate worship. Pupils' views are taken seriously and inform future plans. This experience develops their understanding of the purpose and value of worship and how to make it special for everyone.

Worship topics are well planned. Biblical teaching deepens pupils' understanding of the Christian values. Their relevance to everyday life is explored through drama, video and discussion. The church's calendar also figures prominently. Consequently, pupils have a secure knowledge of a wide range of Bible stories, Christian festivals and the teaching of Jesus. Staff revisit the message of worship in circle and reflection time to consolidate pupils' learning. Pupils' understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit means they speak about the Trinity with clarity and ease. The leadership, teaching, support and pastoral ministry of the vicar and children and families worker are enormously appreciated by the school community. Different contexts, leaders and styles ensure pupils see how varied worship can be.

The close relationship with St Peter's ensures that pupils are familiar with church-based worship and a variety of Anglican practices. The church meets in the school occasionally and parishioners, parents and governors attend school worship. Many pupils value the weekly after-school Explore group and flourishing monthly Messy Church as opportunities not only to learn more about the Christian faith but also to share it with others. As a result, pupils feel a sense of belonging within the wider worshipping community. A culture of prayer enriches school life and

enhances the pupils' lives beyond school. Their prayers are sometimes prepared and often spontaneous. This is exemplified by their use of the school's interactive prayer wall. A Year 6 pupil commented that, 'Prayer is as natural to us as breathing. It helps us to get close to God who we know is always with us.' They write and share prayers for worship and use their individual prayer stones as an aid to reflection. The Lord's Prayer and the school creed are said with meaning. The inviting worship areas in classrooms support the daily rhythm of collective prayer. All this deepens pupils' knowledge of the value of prayer in the journey of faith and enhances their spiritual growth.

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

Christian values and beliefs drive leadership and management. The headteacher, his dedicated staff and the vigilant governing body ensure that the school is on an exciting journey of rapid improvement. Their shared vision is that it will be a place where pupils experience life-enhancing learning as children of God. The headteacher's inspirational servant leadership and diligent pastoring of the school community empower the staff team to ensure that the Christian ethos is paramount and influences everything the school does. The excellent leadership and careful management of the teacher leading this area with the headteacher has helped to secure the rapid improvement over a short space of time.

The aspirational development plan reflects careful self-evaluation and analysis. It provides clear direction and includes action plans for church school development. A more confident representation of this exceptional church school in its documentation and communication will enhance its identity and profile. Governors are proud of the school and have become more pro-active strategically. For example, the preparation for academy development within CDAT is at an advanced stage. Governors provide a visible presence which means they know the school well. They also offer generous support and now more resolute challenge which enhances the effectiveness of leadership. Investment in governor induction, staff training in teaching RE and leading worship and the promotion of Christian leadership builds capacity for continuing development. Governors and leaders ensure that worship and RE are carefully monitored, meet statutory requirements, are well resourced and accorded a high profile. The aspects identified as needing attention at the last SIAS inspection have been successfully addressed.

The school enables pupils to demonstrate leadership. This builds their confidence, skills and contribution to its mission. The Christian values inform the care extended to staff who enjoy their work and feel valued as members of a strong and effective team. The school takes an active and varied role in village life which promotes pupils' service and sense of community pride. It also enjoys very productive links with the diocese, local authority and its cluster of schools. This helps to develop the expertise of leaders, staff and governors. The close alliance between school and parish strengthens the spiritual and pastoral bond between the school, families and the church. The school knows its families very well and supports them through a ministry of Christian nurturing especially in times of difficulty. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and affirm the importance it places on pupils' spiritual welfare. They value how the school enables them to support their children's learning at home. Above all, they appreciate the orderly and principled environment it provides and see their children's happiness and progress as rooted in its Christian character.

SIAMS report March 2018, Elworth Church of England Primary School, Elworth, Sandbach CW11 3HU.