

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Whitegate Church of England Primary School

Address	Whitegate, Northwich CW8 2AY		
Date of inspection	16 July 2019	Status of school	Voluntary aided
Diocese	Chester	URN	111338

Overall Judgement	Grade	Good
How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?		
Additional Judgements		
The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good
The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Good

School context

Whitegate is a primary school with 128 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. No pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is in line with the national average. The school received a judgement of Good from Ofsted in July 2018.

The school's Christian vision

With thankful hearts we trust in God as we grow in his love, which shines through us. We aim to live our faith and grow in wisdom.

Key findings

- Through determined and compassionate leadership rooted in her own personal faith, the headteacher has created an inclusive Christian community where all can flourish.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of difference and diversity and all members of the school community value the dignity and respect with which they are treated.
- Pupils show a developing awareness of global issues and social justice.
- Collective worship is valued by all and, enhanced by close links with local churches, plays a significant role in the spiritual development of pupils and adults.
- Although RE successfully enables pupils to relate religious teaching to their own lives, pupils have a limited understanding of major world faiths other than Christianity.

Areas for development

- Enable governors to play a more proactive role in ensuring that all members of the school community are involved in Church school self-evaluation. This will help to secure on-going improvement.
- Develop more opportunities for pupils to learn about different faiths, beliefs and cultures in order for them to be better prepared for life in a multi-cultural society.
- Enable pupils to further develop their understanding of injustice and inequality with a view to inspiring them to be courageous advocates for change.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Inspection findings

The headteacher has successfully established a warm and supportive Christian ethos where all feel cherished. The school's recently agreed Christian vision very effectively reflects its historical foundation and is firmly rooted in biblical teaching. All members of the school community fully commit to the vision and associated values which are increasingly being used to shape school policy and practice. One teacher commented, 'Christian faith is at the heart of everything we do.' Staff are particularly appreciative of the nurture and support offered by the headteacher and the opportunities provided by the school for their own spiritual as well as professional development. As a result, staff feel a sense of belonging and commitment which enables all to flourish.

Governors are committed and positive about links between church and school. However several governors, including the new vicar, are recently appointed and there are currently two vacancies for foundation governors. As a result, they are not currently proactive in the monitoring and evaluation of Whitegate as a Church school. Those governors who have been in post longer have taken advantage of training offered by the local diocese. Links with St. Mary's church are strong as the chair of governors is the church's youth worker and is very active in school. As well as running a Christian club for younger children she leads a Christian values group for older pupils. They speak enthusiastically about an ethos conference they have recently attended. Church and school also work together to organise events such as an annual summer fair. These links help to develop a sense of community for families and churchgoers, most of whom do not come from the village.

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum with many opportunities for extra-curricular activities, trips and visits, all of which the school ensures are fully inclusive. As the school grows, the curriculum is evolving and is currently being enhanced to link it more explicitly to the school's Christian values and vision of developing wisdom. This enables pupils to develop their unique skills and talents and to have aspirations for the future. Pupils enjoy school and are well supported to achieve their best in an atmosphere of Christian love and understanding. Learning is enhanced by the stimulating and intriguing displays throughout school. These also celebrate pupils' good work across the curriculum and foster self-esteem. Good provision is made to support pupils with SEND. As a result, although progress and attainment have been variable in recent years, pupils now make good progress and attainment is improving as more stable staffing is achieved.

The school's context means that most pupils have limited experience of diversity and disadvantage. The No Outsiders programme is used to introduce pupils to equality issues. As a result they show an excellent understanding of and respect for difference and diversity. Instances of bullying or the use of prejudicial language are rare and pupils are very confident that they would be dealt with swiftly and appropriately should they occur. Membership of a local schools network, which includes a Church of England high school, also supports the school's attempts to widen pupils' horizons. Through the network, links have been established with a primary school in Uganda. Pupils are beginning to exchange letters and photographs and to learn about each other's lives. Pupils also support the school by raising funds and sending items such as clothing. Such initiatives have the potential to develop pupils' understanding of global issues and inspire them to courageous advocacy.

The consistent emphasis on the school's Christian vision and values as a basis for behaviour and relationships has resulted in an atmosphere of mutual trust and support. Where possible, disagreements are resolved through restorative approaches. Pupils are reflective when asked about the reasons for their good behaviour and talk about 'trying to do the right thing' and 'following Jesus'. An emotional literacy support assistant has been trained to support pupils with problems but is also available for anyone who needs her. Buddy, the school's nurture dog, is also greatly valued by the pupils and promotes the mental health of the school community, whilst also contributing to the inclusive family atmosphere.

This inclusive Christian ethos is evident during collective worship where pupils respond very positively to the relaxed but reverent tone. They value the opportunity to be together, participate, reflect and celebrate each other's achievements. One pupil commented that his favourite time of the day was 'when we all get together in assembly'. Worship is varied and led by different staff, visitors from local churches and the pupil Christian values group. The use of a simple liturgy introduces pupils to Anglican tradition and practice. The weekly use of Picture News also enables pupils to make links between Christian teaching and current events. All classes regularly plan

and lead acts of worship in St Mary's church to which parents and other members of the community are invited. Celebrating the major Christian festivals in church enhances pupils' understanding of the Christian year. Opportunities for prayer make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Reflection areas in classrooms provide pupils with a chance to pray and reflect during the school day. The prayers pupils write are collected and used in the monthly prayer meeting at St Mary's church. Regular evaluation by pupils of collective worship has led to innovations such as the use of a sound system to ensure all can hear well.

The headteacher, as an experienced RE leader, ensures that the subject plays a key role in pupils' spiritual development, enabling them to develop as curious and reflective learners. The new vicar commented that he had been impressed by the pupils' 'open and receptive natures' and their 'curiosity about matters of faith'. Pupils have opportunities to explore issues and to relate religious teaching to their own lives. The syllabus effectively develops pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity but their knowledge and understanding of other faiths is currently limited. The headteacher has worked with diocesan advisors and other RE leaders to share good practice. She has plans to provide opportunities for new members of her staff to develop as future Church school leaders as they gain in experience. Statutory obligations are met for both collective worship and RE.

Overall leaders have successfully created a school where Christian love does 'shine through' as pupils grow in wisdom.



The effectiveness of RE is Good

Regular monitoring enables the subject leader to have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching and learning in RE. Teachers use a variety of strategies in well-planned lessons that pupils respond to positively. Marking is encouraging in tone and generally effective in enabling pupils to further develop their ideas. Less able pupils are well supported by teaching assistants. Assessment systems are currently being developed to bring RE into line with other subjects.

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Inspector's name and number	Carolyn Whiteway 933