

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St. James' Church of England Primary School

Lyme Street, Haydock, St. Helens, WA11 0NL

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Liverpool
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	St. Helens
Date/s of inspection	15 March 2017
Date of last inspection	February 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 104820
Headteacher	Jan Holmes
Inspector's name and number	Frank Driessen 675

School context

St. James' is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The present headteacher has been in post since September 2015. The RE subject leader was appointed in September 2016. The proportion of SEND pupils is above the national average whilst the proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is even greater. The proportion of pupils for whom English is not their first language is below the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. James' as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The strong and passionate Christian leadership of the head teacher has ensured that distinctively Christian values are deeply embedded in the life and actions of the school. A talented and committed team of staff, governors and the incumbent support the head teacher very effectively.
- A belief in the God-given value of each child inspires excellent pastoral care for them and their families. In response pupils show respect and consideration for others, which results in outstanding relationships and an enthusiasm for learning throughout the school.
- The strong partnership between the school and parish extends the spiritual experience of pupils, strengthens the church's contact with families and provides a positive and dynamic Christian witness at the heart of the local community.

Areas to improve

- Involve parents and pupils in the evaluation of the school's distinctive Christian character in order to secure its continuing improvement as a church school.
- Support pupils in developing the skills to plan acts of collective worship across the academic year with increasing independence in order to boost their confidence and spiritual growth.
- Enrich experiences provided within religious education (RE), by organising, for example, visits, visitors and links with other communities in order to broaden pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith as well as other religious traditions.

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

St James' CE Primary School's mission to 'Learn, laugh and live with the love of God' provides clear insight into its ethos and aims. Its distinctively Christian values are embedded into all aspects of school life and affirm all pupils irrespective of their faith. Caring relationships and excellent behaviour are, therefore, strengths of the school. Pupils know they are safe, valued and special. Attendance has consequently risen and is in line with the national average. Pupils understand the impact of Christian values and the difference they make to the way they behave. One pupil said, 'We become better people because of them'. This has a positive impact on learning and aspirations for all pupils are high. Standards continue to improve. A dedicated family liaison worker and intervention support assistant nurture vulnerable children and families in need. As a consequence, disadvantaged children achieve better at the expected standard in most areas compared to the national average, as do children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Parents see the Christian ethos as a further strength of the school. One parent who has experienced at first hand the Christian care freely given commented, 'The staff's involvement with families goes beyond just supportive'.

The school environment supports and celebrates its Christian identity with crosses, well-used reflection areas and vibrant displays. It sustains the spiritual development of all members of the school community extremely well. The school is very effective at recognising children's achievements. These are celebrated weekly and emphasise rewarding not only effort but also those who demonstrate the schools' Christian values, providing a great boost to children's confidence and self-esteem. The impact of good to outstanding RE makes a valuable contribution to the Christian ethos, as does the collective worship. Pupils demonstrate a real enthusiasm for both. They successfully demonstrate the difference religion makes in their lives. One parent said that her daughter, noting her mother's critical response towards a poorly dressed stranger who'd knocked on their front door, had commented, 'You know, you shouldn't judge people by the clothes they are wearing'. This is a direct consequence of the school helping children to understand and know God by using Christian values to respond to situations.

Pupils are increasingly aware of cultures and communities which are diversely different from their own and have opportunities for developing their understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. The school plans to further enrich experiences provided within religious education by organising visits, visitors and links with other communities. Pupils are encouraged to grow in independence with the use of school council, eco council and worship warriors. An extensive range of local community initiatives includes an innovative year 5 enterprise project which, through the making and sale of bracelets, is raising funds for a local hospice. The pupils fully support a wide range of charities. One child said, 'We can help people survive bad lives and stop their suffering'. These activities demonstrate the daily outworking of Christian values in the lives of the children and are a real credit to them.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

'I am a different person because of Jesus' was the central message of the collective worship provided by the excellent pupils' group of worship warriors. Based around the story of Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus, the worship explored how meeting with Jesus changed lives for the better. It tied the school's very popular 'acts of kindness' Lenten challenge with how the children demonstrated that they were different and better people. This concentration upon the impact of Bible stories and the teaching of Jesus enables pupils to successfully apply Christian values within their own lives. One pupil said, 'Knowing what Jesus did helps us to make the right decisions in our lives'. As a parent noted, 'Our children live out the school's values in what they do for each other every day'.

Pupils are enthusiastic, thoughtful and attentive and comment very favourably on the importance and centrality of worship within school. Acts of worship are very well planned by the head teacher and reflect the teachings of Jesus Christ through Bible stories and scripture. However, pupils do not yet have regular opportunities to become involved within the annual planning of the programme. A range of leaders including the headteacher, staff and the incumbent provide a rich and accessible quality to the school community's worship experience. Pupils participate extensively in other aspects of the worship especially when celebrating the weekly Eucharist and in leading services in the church such as Harvest and Christmas. They have very positive and enthusiastic attitudes towards their involvement and one said 'We get to think about the important things in our lives'. The popular pupils' worship warriors' team leads worship each week and is very effective in promoting collective worship. Pupils have many opportunities to write prayers throughout the school day and are encouraged to do so. They are able to talk about what prayer means to them. One said, 'It's very important to pray so that God understands how we feel'. They have a limited understanding of the Trinity. Pupils have an excellent knowledge and understanding of Anglican worship and tradition not only because of the occasions they attend the church for services that include Easter, Harvest and Christmas but also the very close and excellent involvement of the incumbent. Church services are extremely well attended by parents and enable everyone to celebrate being part of the extended church family.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

'The cross is not the end. It's just the beginning' was the highly reflective response of a year 6 child in a lesson about sacrifice. It securely demonstrates the level at which the best of teaching and learning impacts upon pupils' understanding. Learners exhibit a very open attitude to and enjoyment of RE and are inspired and challenged by the lessons. They say 'It's great', 'it makes us think', and 'we learn lots of things such as other religions and Bible stories'. RE explicitly reinforces the school's core Christian values. Outstanding lessons inspire pupils to engage in deeper learning through enquiry and reflection. Key questions such as 'Where is God?' and 'What is sacrifice?' ensure an effective focus upon increasingly challenging teaching and learning. Their Bible knowledge is exceptional, with parents commenting that their children tell them the Bible stories they've been studying in school and what lessons they've learned from them.

The knowledgeable and passionate nature of the recently appointed subject leader ensures highly effective whole-school monitoring and evaluation of RE. This gives a clear picture of the quality of provision as well as pupils' excellent progress in their learning. Through assessment teachers are aware of the levels at which pupils are working and this informs future planning for all abilities. Frequent training and excellent planning underpin the teaching and learning. As a result of this approach, pupils' achievement in RE is frequently above that of the other core subjects.

A major focus of the school has been for pupils to examine the difference religion and the application of Christian values make in their lives. The success of this initiative is seen in the outstanding contribution the subject makes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. Many pupils are able to articulate its relevance and impact in their lives. This is clearly a major strength of the school and is demonstrated through the relationships between its members, the pupils' charitable involvement and their outreach into the local community. The study of faiths other than Christianity has been identified as a development area although its current effectiveness can be seen in pupils' understanding of its relevance in their lives. A comment from one child. 'Looking at other religions helps us to understand each other,' prompted another to add, 'It makes us realise it's ok to be different'. Governors recognise the importance of RE in developing the distinctive school ethos and ensure that its leadership is given high priority.

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

The school is led by the head teacher with great integrity. Her passion for its church identity drives the clear and explicit Christian vision which all staff and governors promote with enthusiasm and diligence. The excellent relationships throughout the school are a direct consequence of this and demonstrate the key role that Christian values play in the community. Parents recognise the school's strong Christian ethos because of the positive impact it has upon their children's lives. They speak highly of the school and its staff who, as one of them commented, 'go the extra mile for our children'. They praise the headteacher and how 'supportive and compassionate' she is to the children's needs. The school's Christian distinctiveness and promotion of Christian values further underpin the head teacher's drive to eliminate barriers to learning and enable children to aspire to their full potential. Governors place great importance on supporting every pupil to achieve their very best. The recent employment of the intervention support assistant is further evidence of this commitment. Collective worship and RE are led effectively and support pupils' understanding of how Christians live their lives by following the teachings of the Bible. Governors recognise this and ensure that RE and worship underpin all aspects of school life. Future church school leadership is planned and delivered through training and sharing of leadership responsibilities. Both areas of development from the previous inspection have been addressed.

Governors are in a well-informed and knowledgeable position to support senior leadership in the continual development of St James' CE school's distinctive Christian nature. They see themselves as guardians of the school's 'Christian legacy'. Successful examples of this are the redevelopment of the school's mission statement and its Christian values. The views of pupils and parents are well valued but, as yet, they have not been systematically consulted concerning the effectiveness of the school as a church school. Father Rodney has a strongly collaborative and spiritual presence in the school. He delivers collective worship, teaches confirmation classes and provides pastoral support to the school community. Pupils see him as a very important part of the school because 'he helps us to learn about Jesus and God'. He and the foundation governors work exceptionally hard on behalf of the school. This ensures the continued building up of the close relationships and extensive links between the school, church and community, including financial support where necessary. A school page appears in the parish magazine and pupils and the headteacher serve at the weekly Eucharist. Pupils also participate in 'Experience Easter' and the local churches' Christmas Journey. This very strong partnership between the school and parish extends the spiritual experience of pupils and strengthens the church's contact with families. It provides a positive Christian witness at the heart of the local and extended communities and considerably enriches the school's distinctive Christian identity.