

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Spinney Avenue Church of England Primary School

Spinney Avenue, Hough Green, Widnes, WA8 8LD	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Liverpool
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Halton
Date of inspection	15 March 2018
Date of last inspection	February 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary controlled 111293
Interim Headteacher	Laura Rynn
Inspector's name and number	Stephen Burrow 622

School context

Spinney Avenue is an average-sized primary school. The large majority of pupils are White British with the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language being lower than the national average. The number of disadvantaged pupils supported by pupil premium is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than in most other schools. Since the last inspection there have been significant staffing and leadership changes. Governance is currently carried out by an Interim Executive Board (IEB). The school is planning to join a local Academy Trust.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Spinney Avenue as a Church of England school is good

- The strong, purposeful Christian leadership of the interim headteacher, supported by a committed senior leadership team and staff demonstrates a clear Christian vision. This strongly promotes the school's Christian character and mission.
- Collective worship and religious education (RE) contribute well to the promotion of distinctively Christian values and the development of pupils' spirituality.
- The high levels of care, nurture and guidance, where everyone is valued as an individual, demonstrate the distinctive Christian ethos of the school in action.
- The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are firmly based on their understanding of Christian values. This leads to strong relationships supported by well-established links with the vicar and church.

Areas to improve

- Establish ways for pupils, through the worship council, to be more involved in the planning of worship, so that their ideas and thoughts can be shared and discussed in order to enrich their experience of worship.
- Further refine the evaluation of collective worship to include pupils' thoughts of how the impact of worship enhances their spiritual development.
- Provide more opportunities to enhance pupils' spiritual development through the creation of planned prayer spaces, an outdoor quiet area and the wider curriculum.

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

The school's caring Christian ethos enables and encourages the strong partnership that exists between pupils, staff, parents and the church. This is characterised by the pupils' good behaviour. The school mission statement, 'A place of JOY and learning - Jesus, Others, Yourself,' is lived out. High regard is given to the development and potential of the whole child, rooted in the belief that each person is special in God's eyes. Pupils are proud of their school and speak confidently about why it is special to them. They feel safe, happy and valued. Peer Listeners quickly bring playground issues to the attention of staff and as a result, as one member of staff said, 'It makes the playground a happier place.' Pupils are polite, courteous and respectful of adults and each other, mirroring the excellent adult role models provided for them in the school. The school's extensive focus on nurture and care is demonstrated in the outstanding commitment to pastoral support for children and families in need. The Family Support Worker and teaching assistant, who delivers therapeutic interventions and play skills, provide excellent pastoral support to pupils and their families. Attendance is good and pupils have positive attitudes to learning due to clear expectations and caring support. A large wooden cross in the entrance area emphasises the school's Christian character to all visitors. The focus on a different Christian value each half term is effective in ensuring pupils have a sound understanding of them and the part they play in daily life. The RE curriculum, worship and whole school ethos make a positive contribution to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) development. The school is working hard to raise attainment and pupils are becoming more responsible learners who are actively involved in their learning. This is helping to improve progress as pupils grow in confidence. Currently outcomes are below the national average.

Prayer and reflection are important features of school life. One pupil said that prayer is, 'A way to talk to God.' Another added that reflection time allowed them, 'To think about what you are about to do and what you have done.' RE areas in all classrooms provide opportunities for pupils to think. However, the school recognises the need to provide inside and outside quiet prayer and reflection spaces to further promote pupils' spiritual growth.

Pupils' awareness of Christianity as a global faith is strong. The ways they are taught about other world faiths, in relation to Christianity, are very effective in promoting their acceptance of and respect for the views and beliefs of others. They are also involved in fundraising for charitable organisations, such as MacMillan Cancer Care.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Great value is placed upon worship being at the heart of school life where it effectively underpins and extends the school's well-embedded Christian ethos. There are many opportunities to worship as a community, and share the Christian values that are central to the school. Collective worship is based firmly on these values as well as Anglican church festivals, the Bible and the teachings of Jesus. This enhances pupils' SMSC development effectively. Worship themes are carefully planned and delivered. Staff lead worship on a regular basis and there are frequent opportunities to worship in church. The vicar has a high profile in school, giving practical and prayerful support, which is valued and appreciated by the whole school family. She regularly leads worship in school, including termly Eucharist services. Consequently there is a caring bond between church and school. Further examples of this close link include a lantern walk, which was very well attended by children and their families. Also a first communion service, mainly led by the pupils and supported by staff, parents and the Archdeacon of St Helens and Warrington. Pupils are involved in planning and delivering class led worship to which parents are invited. Each class also lead worship in church linked to one of the Christian festivals. This encourages pupils to become more confident in developing their leadership skills. It also heightens their understanding of the significance and value of worship.

Worship places great emphasis on encouraging pupils to explore the Christian faith, along with providing an understanding of the beliefs and practices of other world faiths. As a result, pupils are prepared well for life in British society. Visitors and visits to other places of worship, including a synagogue and a mosque, also support this understanding. The school has worked hard to promote an understanding of the Holy Trinity and pupils have an age-appropriate appreciation of the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Pupils enter worship respectfully to reflective music. They are reminded that God is with them by sharing the Christian greeting as a candle is lit. Prayer is a key feature of all acts of worship and pupils are familiar with a range of traditional prayers. Pupils have opportunities to write their own prayers which are shared in worship. The act of worship observed emphasised that God is always with us. Pupils assisted the vicar with Bible readings and prayers. This provided an excellent opportunity to reflect on events in life when God's presence is valued. The school monitors and evaluates the worship process. However, there is a need to develop more opportunities for pupils to evaluate the impact worship themes have on their spiritual development. The role of the pupil worship council needs to be further developed to enable its members to become more involved in planning acts of worship.

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

The interim headteacher confidently articulates and encourages a vision for the school, firmly based on Christian values. These values are at the centre of everything the school does. The school's vision is to aspire to love as Jesus taught us. To follow his example, striving to serve and value every individual in an atmosphere of encouragement, acceptance and respect. The leadership team, supported enthusiastically by the staff, is committed to achieving this vision through the ongoing focus on Christian values, and the well-being and learning of all pupils in the school. Staff live out this Christian vision, providing a supporting and caring environment, underpinned by a strong Christian ethos. This informs everyone of how lives should be lived both at school and in the wider community. The governance and leadership of the school are supported by the strong links with the vicar. As a result, prayer and pastoral links between church and school are effectively interwoven.

The Governing Body was disbanded and an IEB was established in August 2016. They have a strong commitment to the school's Christian foundation and a very clear understanding of their role. Through the curriculum and progress board they effectively support and challenge the leadership team to drive forward school improvement and raise standards through learning walks, book scrutinies and conversations with pupils and staff. Senior leaders work extremely well with the IEB and receive valuable support from the Diocese of Liverpool. Together they demonstrate a determination to continue to ensure that the future of the school's Christian ethos is distinct, secure and given a high profile.

Staff are encouraged to contribute and develop their leadership skills. Their ideas are listened to and valued. They are kept up to date through training and professional development opportunities and support from other church schools in the Three Saints Academy Trust. Staff are valued and aware of what is expected of them in relation to the Christian ethos of the school. One member of staff said, 'The Christian ethos is tangible.' Pupils take their responsibilities seriously, confident that their voice is heard, especially through the worship and school councils. Each year they decide on which charities to support. Staff have built strong trusting relationships with parents, who are very supportive of the school, saying that their children are happy and nurtured within a distinctly Christian environment. Feedback from parents is positive, they say the school demonstrates respect, compassion, tolerance and patience and that any issues are dealt with quickly and effectively in line with the school's Christian values. A Parent Forum also provides an opportunity to discuss new ideas and general school issues with senior leaders. One parent said on the day of the inspection that, 'The school has a lovely vibe to it. Our children are happy here.'

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