

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Huxley Church of England Primary School

Church Lane, Huxley, Chester, CH3 9BH	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Chester
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Date of inspection	9 th October 2017
Date of last inspection	May 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary controlled 111286
Headteacher	Lorna Pleavin
Inspector's name and number	Stephen Burrow 622

School context

Huxley CofE Primary School is much smaller than the average-sized primary school, although the school has increased in size since the last inspection. Many children come from beyond the school's catchment area and mobility is above the national average. The majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium is above average, as is the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability. Attendance is high. The school is currently going through the process of formal federation with another local Church of England primary school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Huxley CofE as a Church of England school is outstanding

- The outstanding Christian leadership of the headteacher, supported by a committed staff team, provides excellent care, nurture and guidance.
- Collective worship and religious education (RE) contribute well to the promotion of distinctively Christian values and the development of pupils' spirituality.
- Relationships in this happy and harmonious school are exceptional and promote a shared Christian vision for development and learning.
- The strong, mutually supportive links with the vicar and church family, make a significant contribution to the school's Christian character and to the spiritual development of all pupils.
- The committed governing body plays a full and active part in supporting staff to develop the school's Christian life.

Areas to improve

- Develop the use of classroom and outdoor reflection areas, to encourage and facilitate opportunities for pupils to engage in personal reflection and prayer.
- Develop the role of the pupils' ethos group to enable its members to become more involved in enriching the school's Christian ethos, by regularly sharing and discussing their ideas with governors.

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

The school places high emphasis on Christian values, which are deeply embedded in the life of the school. Exceptional relationships, rooted in the teaching of Jesus, demonstrate very positively the distinctively Christian character of Huxley CofE Primary School. Each child is known as a unique individual in the school where care and respect is bestowed on each and every member. Pupils feel safe, happy and valued. They 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. This results in high levels of attendance, excellent behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. Consequently, pupils of all abilities make good progress from their varied starting points. The high profile of RE and collective worship make a significant contribution to the school's Christian character and contribute greatly to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC). The school's Christian values are displayed in the hall, together with a worship board which reinforces 'Focus of The Week'. This is also displayed on all doors around school as a reminder that worship is central to school life.

Prayer and reflection are important features of school life with opportunities for pupils to pray and reflect throughout the day. A group of pupils in discussion about prayer observed, 'Everyone gets a chance to say prayers to God and Jesus.' The vicar has a high profile in school, giving practical and prayerful support, which is valued and appreciated by the whole school family. However, the school recognises the need to provide inside and outside areas where pupils can quietly pray and reflect by themselves.

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 pupils' acceptance of and respect for the views and beliefs of others. Charitable giving, such as a local Foodbank and Children in Need, is clearly seen as part of the school's Christian commitment and contributes well to SMSC development. Parents explained how distinctive Christian values are deeply rooted in the life of the school and spoke of the impact these have on their children. One parent specifically stated the school gives the children 'a good grounding to take them forward'. They especially appreciate the emphasis the school places upon their child as being unique and special.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

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 excellent opportunities to worship as a community, and share the Christian values that are central to the school. One child said, 'Worship is the most important part of the day.' Collective worship is based firmly on Christian values, Anglican church festivals, the Bible and the teachings of Jesus, which enhance pupils' SMSC development very 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 also regularly leads worship in school, strengthening the bond between church and school. Pupils are also involved in delivering worship. During the year, the school shares in church events with parents and members of the local community. All of these experiences effectively underpin and extend the school's deeply embedded Christian ethos.

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. A range of visitors and visits to other places of worship, including a mandir, gurdwara and Jewish museum 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. Pupils are also reminded of the liturgical colours as they change at appropriate times of the year. 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 and these are shared in worship. In the act of worship observed, pupils assisted the leader, through drama, to tell the story of Moses, the ten plagues and the crossing of the Red Sea. This provided excellent opportunities to reflect on 'risk' which was the 'focus of the week'. The school has effective procedures in place to monitor and evaluate the impact of worship. Findings are then used to influence ongoing improvements in order to ensure that the spiritual needs of the whole school community are met. Whilst there is a pupil ethos group, the school acknowledges that its role needs to be developed to enable its members to become more involved in enriching the school's Christian ethos, by regularly sharing and discussing their ideas with governors.

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

The highly effective leadership of the headteacher provides an extremely clear vision for sustaining the powerful Christian ethos that permeates all aspects of school life. This vision is understood and extremely well supported by everyone involved in the life of the school, including governors and parents. It is lived out across the whole school family. The focus of the school is very much on ensuring that each pupil is given the opportunity to flourish and reach their full potential as a child of God. The outstanding leadership of the school is supported by the strong links with the vicar, who is very actively involved in the life of the school. As a result, prayer, pastoral and other links between church and school are effectively interwoven. Strong relationships exist between the headteacher and staff, based on mutual trust and respect. Staff feel that their ideas are listened to and valued. They understand what is expected of them in relation to promoting the Christian ethos of the school. They are encouraged to be reflective and are supported by a well-being coach. One member of staff said, 'We are looked after and care for each other.' Potential future leaders of church schools are prepared well through a strong emphasis on supporting professional development. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are currently enrolled on the current year's Christian Leadership Course.

Governors are justly proud of their school and its rich Christian tradition. They are actively involved in self-evaluation and support and challenge the school leadership team in all areas of school improvement, ensuring that impact of Christian distinctiveness is prioritised in improvement planning. They have a regular involvement in the school's life and work through their visits and the detailed information they receive from the headteacher. As a result, governors know the school well. New governors also attend training on 'being a governor in a church school'.

The school council and ethos group provide opportunities for pupils to offer suggestions to senior leaders and they know that their views are valued. There is a strong parent association which actively supports the work of the school through social and fund raising events. Parents are very proud of the school and the impact that the promotion of Christian values has on the lives of their children. They speak highly of the school's pastoral and all-embracing care, along with its inclusive nature and the friendliness of everyone in school. One parent summed up the views of other parents by saying, 'Sending my son to this school was the one of best things I have ever done.'

SIAMS report October 2017 Huxley CofE Primary School, Church Lane, Road, Huxley, Chester CH3 9BH