

Altrincham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Townfield Road,
Altrincham.
WA14 4DS

Diocese: Chester

Local authority: Trafford
Dates of inspection: 24/1/13
Date of last inspection: 17/07/08
School's unique reference number: 106341
Headteacher: Mr J Inglis
Inspector's name and number: Christine J Buckley 525

School context

Altrincham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School has an admission number of 40 with a large catchment area serving three parishes. The school is in a predominately affluent area and the vast majority of children are white British. The number of children eligible for free school meals or with special needs is well below the national average.

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

The school has a well established Christian vision and has developed a clear Christian character. The welfare and uniqueness of each child is paramount and there is a commitment to the personal, spiritual and academic needs of the children. There is an effective partnership with the local churches which is mutually supportive and beneficial.

Established strengths

- The overt Christian ethos, where every individual is valued, and which is strongly supported by the staff and parents.
- Excellent relationships between staff and pupils.
- Strong links between the school and the three Anglican churches.

Focus for development

- Put in systems and structures for the regular self-evaluation of the school as a church school by all stakeholders.
- Provide opportunities for children to plan and lead collective worship.

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

The school is a happy, friendly school where children feel valued and secure. The school demonstrates that being a church school is very important and there are many examples of this in the school documentation that states 'that there is an overt recognition that God is in our presence and we are in His'. The school environment also proclaims that this is a church school with evidence of Christian symbols and displays. In the entrance hall there is a display where children are invited to hold a cross and 'be still' to reflect. Another display posed the question 'Who is Jesus?', members of the school community were invited to write or draw a response to the question, giving ownership and making it available for others to contemplate. These responses included 'Jesus is wonderful' written by a young child and a deeper response in the words 'Lamb of God'. One child said that the environment helped him to remember Jesus and to think about how he should live his life. There is a very clear and concise mission statement that states that this is a church school and everything within the school is in the context of Christian living. All the children are aware of the Christian nature of the school and state that the Christian values help them to live their lives as followers of Christ. The majority of parents state that 'the Christian ethos' is a strength of the school and that the links with the church support an understanding by the children that this is 'normal life'. Parents noted that Christian teaching is applied to children's lives and is therefore

relevant. Visitors to school include a young Christian music group and children said that this gave them a greater understanding of living out the Christian message and that to be a Christian was 'cool'. Relationships within the school exemplify Christian teaching and as one child said 'our teachers are here to help us'. The school makes provision for the development of all the children and attainment academically is above the national average. There is good provision for the spiritual, social, moral and cultural development across the curriculum. Spiritual and moral development is supported through cross curricular links and Religious Education (RE). There is a 'Reflection club' where children can also explore their faith. The club has proved to be very popular and consequently this year numbers have been limited to year six children. Year five children attend a residential at a Christian activity centre in Wales and during their time at the centre they have some Christian teaching. This residential supports their spiritual development. The staff at the centre comment on the responsiveness and engagement of the children from Altrincham Church of England school. There is evidence of the children living out Christian values in their concern and compassion for others as they have given to others less fortunate than themselves. Through two charities Compassion and Ugandaid, the children are in contact with children overseas and each class writes regularly to and prays for the children that they sponsor. This broadens their understanding of the Christian family world-wide. The children have their elected school council and they often initiate fund raising. Children expressed their desire to continue to support other children less fortunate than themselves in their adult life showing the depth of their Christian convictions.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship has a central role in the life of the school which is attended by staff and children and as one small child said 'we can get close to God in collective worship'. This shows spiritual understanding of the act of collective worship. The children are involved through Bible readings, prayer and singing. All the children find collective worship a good time, comments included, 'I like the time to reflect and think' and another child said that he would like collective worship more than once a day. A group of children said that collective worship helped them to form good habits and helped them to remember to thank God and pray when they are not at school. There is always a moment for reflection and prayers so that children can relate the teaching to their own life and bring their thoughts to God. The major Christian festivals are celebrated in one of the three churches on a rota basis and these are very well supported by parents who also attend collective worship in school on Fridays. The children have a good understanding of the major festivals and their importance. One infant child when visiting a supermarket at Easter time exclaimed 'Don't these people care that Jesus died'. Worship in school is led by the headteacher, deputy headteacher, staff and clergy from the three Anglican churches. There is an understanding of some Anglican liturgy and one of the clergy uses actions to support this, which the children really enjoy. Worship in church and school are mutually supportive. As the school is oversubscribed parents take their children to church before they start at school so that they fulfil the admission criteria but as the children experience collective worship in school and church becomes a friendly place many families continue to attend church which has led to growth in attendance. Parents commented that one of the clergy is particularly well liked by the fathers of the children and this has encouraged whole families to attend church. There is a collective worship policy and guidelines to support those who lead collective worship. The last inspection recommended that the term 'collective worship' replace the term 'assembly' and although most of the community know this term there is a tendency to revert to the use of the term 'assembly'. A record of collective worship is kept and there is evidence of planning. Evaluation of collective worship by all stakeholders is in the early stages of development. Children do not yet have the opportunity to plan and lead collective worship but they are willing and enthusiastic to try. This is an area for development.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

There is a Religious Education (RE) policy and the curriculum follows the Diocesan guidelines and uses a combination of schemes of work that is customised to fit the needs of the school. The subject leader is very keen to continue the improvement of RE in the school and is currently attending training provided by the diocese with regard to assessment and using data to plan for improvement. Some children have used a reflection learning journey for RE and where this has been used it is very effective but the use is not yet consistent. This is

an area that will be developed over the next year as the subject leader carries out some tasks and then provides training for staff. Some work scrutiny takes place to monitor standards in RE but there is little observation of RE lessons. All children receive their entitlement in RE and it is seen as an important subject within the curriculum. Standards in RE are good. The children have a positive attitude to RE and enjoy drama and role play. Children in a year 2 class observed, had good Biblical knowledge about Jesus and were fully engaged with a parable, which was related in different ways. The children really enjoyed using figures to act out the story and understood the spiritual meaning and how it applied to their own lives. Children in year six were learning about Muslim prayer and from this they were looking at their own individual beliefs and comparing and contrasting beliefs. The learning took place in an atmosphere of respect for one another and that each child had a valued opinion. The children showed great understanding and insight. Other lessons in RE provided evidence of many cross curricular links and children expressing their spiritual thoughts through art. This is evidence that RE contributes to all aspects of the curriculum and is part of the broader learning opportunities. Lessons observed provided evidence that the children are able to discuss Christian values and reflect upon their meaning so that they can apply it to their own lives showing that RE contributes to their spiritual and moral development.

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

When the governing body meet together the first thing on the agenda is prayer and they also conclude with prayer acknowledging that God is in their presence and they want His guidance. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and foundation governors promote a distinctive Christian vision and this is outlined at the beginning of each new academic year for all children and parents. The service at the start of the year is a statement about the close links with the church and defines the link in real terms. Governors demonstrate high levels of commitment to the school and the clergy lead collective worship each week and the chair of governors makes very regular visits to the school. The clergy also provide pastoral and spiritual support for staff and in previous years have provided some staff training regarding the church school status. A high number of Christian parents choose the school for their children and this enables the clergy to begin to know many families even before their children begin school. Links with the diocese are strong and the deputy headteacher and subject leader avail themselves of training opportunities provided. Some church school self-evaluation has taken place although not all stakeholders have been actively involved in this process and it is not yet embedded into the annual cycle for governors. Parents are encouraged to help and support the school and organise events for the children. Some parents are invited to a termly meeting of the school to discuss improvement but this has not been specifically related to the church school status. This is an area for development. Children enjoy their responsibility in decision making through school council and their ideas have resulted in improvements, for example during the lunchtime. The school development plan does refer to some action relating specifically to church school improvement and a generous financial budget was set for the improvement of RE and collective worship. The headteacher meets with other headteachers of local church schools to share good practice and he finds this group mutually supportive and challenging.

SIAS report January 2013 Altrincham C E Primary School WA14 4DS