

**Sale St. Mary's Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School**

St. Mary's Road,  
Ashton-on-Mersey,  
Sale,  
Cheshire.  
M33 6SA

**Diocese: Chester**

Local authority: Trafford

Date of inspection: Friday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2012

Date of last inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> September 2007

School's unique reference number: 106344

Headteacher: Mr. Wayne Hitchcock

Inspector's name and number: Mrs. Anne B. Woodcock (445)

**School context**

St. Mary's Church of England Primary School serves a predominantly middle class area of Sale. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage. The headteacher has been in post for two years. Ongoing changes to the fabric and building of the school have provided improved teaching and learning facilities and outdoor areas since the last inspection.

**The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sale St. Mary's Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding.**

Christian values are securely established and understood by all members of the school community. The strong Christian leadership of the headteacher, together with the very effective support of the governing body and dedicated staff, provides an explicitly Christian environment in which pupils' personal and spiritual development is effectively nurtured and grown. The strong links with the church make an excellent contribution to the school's Christian character.

**Established strengths**

- The excellent behaviour and attitude of pupils which is firmly based on their understanding of Christian values.
- The strong Christian leadership and example of the headteacher and senior leaders.
- The supportive and caring relationships based on love, respect and trust, which are clearly evident throughout the school.
- The links with the church and other local faith communities which enhance and support Christian teaching.

**Focus for development**

- Pupils to regularly plan, lead and evaluate acts of worship.

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

Pupils are articulate, confident and highly motivated. They are very proud of their school and all their achievements. Behaviour is excellent, being firmly based on a clear understanding of Christian values. "We try to copy Jesus' example," explained one pupil. "It doesn't matter who or where you are, you should always think of others and treat people fairly." Pupils have a very positive, 'can do' attitude to learning and to life. They are actively involved in their learning, have a very clear idea of what they need to do to improve and work together extremely well. The calm and purposeful atmosphere created in school, which is clearly based on the Christian values of trust and respect, impacts well on pupil motivation and behaviour. Pupils have great trust in and respect for their teachers, who they say always

listen to them, support them and make learning fun. Reflection has a high profile throughout the school. Pupils are enabled to consider what they have learned and how it impacts on their own ideas and beliefs within a trusting and non-judgemental atmosphere. Teachers' high expectations inspire children to achieve and to be 'the best they can be'. Pupils, including those with additional needs, are well-supported, enabling all to make a positive contribution to the life of the school. Standards of achievement are consistently high. Pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is excellent. The rich and varied curriculum, through which Christian values are explicitly woven, ensures that pupils develop a growing understanding of their place in God's world. Pupils know why they support those less fortunate than themselves and actively enjoy the charitable events they plan. For example, they talk excitedly about the link with the Joy School in Uganda and their current chosen charity Mustard Tree in Manchester. Music, the creative arts and sports feature strongly in the daily life of the school. Pupils enjoy performing and working together, saying that 'being a team and working together is important.' The school's environment supports spiritual development very well. Pupils grow fruit, vegetables and herbs which are used in the kitchen. The recently developed peace garden provides an area in which pupils can reflect and be still. Displays throughout the school celebrate achievement and inspire further learning. The reflection areas in each classroom are well-used. They demonstrate the high level of collaboration between staff and pupils as well as the very positive, welcoming and supportive approach a visitor feels when in the school.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.**

Worship is central to the daily life of the school. Themes, based on Christian values, festivals and gospel teaching are planned thoroughly by the headteacher and vicar. The themes are also used in some Sunday worship. Pupils really enjoy their worship experiences, saying, "We have really good activities which get everyone involved." This was reflected in the worship observed, when the whole school played a copy action game. The headteacher then demonstrated the notion of service by cleaning one boy's shoes, explaining as he did so that this was a bit like Jesus washing the disciples' feet. Being prepared to serve and help others was reiterated through a Bible reading and pupils were given time to reflect on how they could 'copy Jesus' during the day. Pupils appreciate the various styles of worship led by members of staff, the church and people from other local faith groups such as the Salvation Army and Baptist Church. Pupils are regularly involved in delivering class-led worship in school. However, opportunities for them to plan and lead worship independently are limited and this is an area for development. The church is used for special services such as at Christmas and Easter when pupils take a significant role in leading worship. Pupils are also actively involved in leading worship at the annual 'Day School Sunday' service. Parents and governors value the opportunity to share in the school's work and worship. Attendance is good and feedback is very positive. The evaluation of worship is exemplary. Both teachers and pupils evaluate each act of worship and this has a very significant impact on the quality and range of worship experiences. Pupils are able to make clear connections between what they learn through worship and how they choose to think and behave. For example, they explain that their concern for the welfare of others and the environment stems from their understanding of stories about Jesus and how he served and loved everyone no matter what they looked like. Prayer is an important feature of daily worship. Pupils write and use their own prayers and they are familiar with a range of traditional prayers such as the Lord's Prayer. Their prayers of hope and thankfulness feature strongly in the classroom reflection areas and the prayers written by pupils form the prayers used at different times of the day. Music is a key feature of worship and pupils sing with joy and enthusiasm.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education (RE) is outstanding.**

Pupils demonstrate a very positive and mature attitude to religious education (RE). They are very enthusiastic about the subject and really enjoy their learning. "We do fun things in RE and get to talk about lots of big questions," explained one pupil. Pupils particularly enjoy using their creative skills in RE. Portfolios of pupil work reflect the range of learning experiences and activities used across both key stages. Lessons are very well-planned and delivered by teachers who are secure in their subject knowledge and in their use of assessment. Careful and challenging questioning encourages pupils' thinking and inspires self-reflection. For example, in one lesson observed, pupils considered how they may have reacted given the difficulties faced by Daniel. They demonstrated a secure knowledge of the

events leading up to his trial in the lions' den and the values and qualities, such as trust and perseverance that he showed. Careful teacher questioning challenged pupils' thinking about God and his relationship with believers and non-believers. Such experiences have a very positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. RE makes a significant contribution to pupils' cultural development. Through the study of Judaism, Islam and Hinduism, pupils develop an understanding of how other people worship God and celebrate significant festivals. Pupils enjoy this aspect of RE. "I feel more comfortable about people from other faiths now I know more about them," explained one older pupil. A very good balance is achieved between learning about and learning from religion. This can be seen in pupils' writing, 'I think this story teaches you to think about other people and not just yourself.' Pupils have a developing knowledge of the Bible and the events in Jesus' life and stories he told. The standards achieved in RE are very high and pupils make outstanding progress. The subject is extremely well-managed and monitored. Assessment is rigorous and processes are well-established, ensuring that all pupils achieve their potential.

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

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have a very clear and distinctive Christian vision for the school. This is agreed and shared by staff who demonstrate the Christian values of love, hope and trust consistently. Relationships throughout the school are strong and mutually supportive. Teachers feel valued and well-supported personally and professionally. Governors have a very clear understanding of their role. The collaboration on school self-evaluation is exemplary, ensuring that church school issues have a consistently high profile and feature strongly in school development planning. Governors visit the school regularly, providing useful feedback through their observations which inform continual improvement. They support the school by leading clubs, such as the nature and sewing clubs and accompanying trips. Joint governor and staff training ensure that a unity of purpose is agreed and maintained. Links with the church and local community have been strengthened and enhanced. For example, the governors meet with the Parochial Church Council and church and school events are jointly advertised in the school's regular news bulletin. The school choir performs at church functions and the church sometimes uses the school facilities for their events. The pupil voice is very strong and well-established. Pupils are confident that their opinions are heard and valued. They are proud of their contributions to the life of the school. They organise fund raising events for national and local charities. The recently introduced school (Physical Education) PE kit was achieved at their suggestion. Pupils participate in a range of extra-curricular clubs and sports, valuing the opportunity to work together and support their school. Parents are very supportive of the school, confident that their children are happy, safe and nurtured within a Christian environment. They say that the school is welcoming and that teachers are always approachable and friendly. Parents value the opportunities to share in the life of the school, such as the 'parent lunches' which are very well-attended and received. Effective use is made of a range of partnerships to enhance provision and provide additional learning opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

SIAS report October 2012 Sale St. Mary's Church of England Primary School, Sale, Cheshire M33 6SA.