

**Smallwood Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

School Lane  
Smallwood  
Sandbach  
Cheshire  
CW11 2UR

**Diocese: Chester**

Local authority: Cheshire East  
Date of inspection: 31 January 2013  
Date of last inspection: 30 January 2008  
School's unique reference number: 111257  
Headteacher: Mrs B Edleston  
Inspector's name and number: Ian Newton 273

**School context**

Smallwood School is a smaller than average sized primary school serving a widely scattered rural population. It has provided education to this community for almost 170 years. A number of additions have been made to the original building, including the incorporation of the school house and the provision of a mobile classroom. A pre-school and childcare provision operates from the site, which is managed independently of the school.

**The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Smallwood Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are good**

Smallwood Church of England School is one whose strong Christian values are widely known, shared and supported in this widespread rural community. Values are evident in the outstanding relationships which exist at all levels of school life and the care and consideration shown by all to all. The school benefits from good leadership and strong parental support and community links.

**Established strengths**

- The head teacher and her staff who through their strong commitment to Christian values, provide exemplary role models for the children in their care.
- The outstanding relationships which exist at all levels of school life.
- The opportunities that have been developed for monthly family worship in the parish church which the school leads and which has strengthened links with the parish.

**Focus for development**

- Review the processes for monitoring, evaluation and review of collective worship, to involve all stakeholders.
- Review procedures for the evaluation of the denominational aspects of the school and associated policies.

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

The Christian values which underpin the life of the school are reflected in the outstanding behaviour of pupils, excellent relationships between members of the school community at all levels and the care, compassion and consideration shown to one another. Parents and governors spoke highly of the strong Christian commitment of the staff who are exemplary role models for the children and who nurture and encourage them to explore the Christian faith. The values that children learn give them a firm foundation to grow into responsible citizens. Parents stated that the school was welcoming and supportive. Those who had had particular difficulties in their lives spoke very positively about the support they had received

from the school. Children spoke of the importance of being able to get on together and being able to forgive someone is part of the school's culture. Parents strongly supported the values that the school promoted. Children and their parents felt that the school's system of having older children "buddying" younger ones was a particular strength in that it gave responsibility to the older ones and helped the reception children settle quickly. The school follows the recently revised Cheshire East Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education (RE) and they have managed to link it in well with what the school is trying to achieve in collective worship and social, moral, spiritual and cultural education. RE supports the school's Christian distinctiveness well. Children stated that they liked RE and enjoyed learning about aspects of Christianity and traditions from other religions. They enjoy dramatising stories and being able to have opportunities to express their opinions. Children are aware of the challenges that people in the wider world face through their charitable fundraising efforts and the recently established link with a school in Kenya and one in France. Reciprocal staff visits involving the Kenyan school and email links by pupils involving the French school have aided children's understanding of these cultures. Throughout the school there are reflection areas for children's use in classrooms and the corridor. There are opportunities for children to have some quiet time and write prayers. A reflection area has been planned for the school grounds which will provide further opportunities.

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

Children are keen to participate in collective worship. They are enthusiastic, listen attentively and know how to adapt their behaviour when the mood changes. They are very positive about collective worship. Some said they found it "fun," "interesting" and they experienced "peace and quiet." One child said she felt relaxed when she had the time for reflection. A number spoke of the importance of hearing religious stories and having opportunities for prayer. Collective worship is not confined to acts of worship in school. Classes take turns, on a monthly basis, to organise and lead the family service in the parish church which is adjacent to the school. The incumbent, church warden and foundation governors valued the commitment of staff in giving children and their families these opportunities, which have significantly contributed to strengthening links between church and school. Through regular worship in church, and reinforced in the school setting, children are familiar with many aspects of Anglican practice. Following encouragement by the school some children in Year 6 were confirmed last year and so experience receiving the Eucharist in church. The collective worship co-ordinator is responsible for planning a good range of worship themes, including major Christian festivals. However, evaluation of collective worship and the worship policy need reviewing. Thought needs to be given to the practicalities of the monitoring, evaluation and review of this central part of school life. A significant omission is that currently there is little opportunity for children to be able to give their feedback. A revised worship policy is now necessary to fully reflect the good practice that is evident in this school. The act of collective worship that was observed was led by the headteacher and was on the theme of "Candlemas." There was a good, calming atmosphere which was strongly supported by very good use of the school's buddy system, with older pupils accompanying the reception children. A focal point of an illustration of "praying hands" was projected onto a screen. Singing was very good and enhanced by the accompaniment of a very able pianist. Hymns chosen reflected the theme well. As well as the story of Jesus going to the temple being told and explained to the children, they also found out about the French custom of making crêpes and an Orthodox custom of blessing beeswax candles. A number of children and staff were involved with readings and prayers. Parents are free to come along and take part on some days of the week. Over the course of a typical week children have a variety of worship leaders, with members of staff leading on a rota basis. The incumbent leads worship on a fortnightly basis, alternating with a local evangelical church which focuses on the biblically themed "Open the Book" worship scheme.

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

The head teacher provides good leadership and drives the school's vision, based on Christian values, to ensure that it is clearly understood by all members of the school community. Governors are clear that the school is about developing the whole child through nurturing and looking after one another. Parents fully understand what the school is trying to

achieve and are very supportive. They said that children were well looked after, parents liked the family feel to the school, the religious values which drove the school, the good manners which children exhibited and the strong sense of community. In this sparsely populated rural community the school is seen as the hub of social life. Regular opportunities are provided to enable parents to inform the school what they think about it through judicious use of questionnaires and through many feeling confident to call in and talk to a member of staff on an informal basis. Links with the parish are supported through the incumbent taking on a chaplaincy role, rather than being a member of the governing body, and the head teacher's membership of the Parochial Church Council. The staff are considered to be very approachable and any issues that arose were considered to be dealt with swiftly. The good links with local churches are supplemented by those with local schools and provide additional opportunities for children's development. The head teacher promotes a collegiate approach amongst the staff, encouraging all to take on responsibility for which they feel suited. There is a sense of good teamwork. Staff share and promote the school's Christian ethos well. Appropriate opportunities are taken by staff and governors to engage with training provided by the Diocese and Local Authority. Governors know the school well. The issue from the previous inspection related to formally recording the monitoring and self evaluation of the school as a church school has been implemented to some extent; however, the unstable staffing situation which persisted until relatively recently meant that this was not fully tackled. Self evaluation of the school as a church school has been limited because of other pressing priorities, as has the review of some policies which impact on issues related to Christian distinctiveness.

SIAS report January 2013, Smallwood CE Controlled Primary School Sandbach, CW11 2UR