

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### Altrincham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Townfield Road, Altrincham, Cheshire WA14 4DS.

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Chester</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Trafford
Date of inspection	18 January 2018
Date of last inspection	24 January 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 106341
Headteacher	Jim Inglis
Inspector's name and number	Anne B. Woodcock 445

#### School context

The school is above average in size. It serves a wide area within Altrincham which includes the three original parishes and those of Broadheath and Timporley. The majority of the 349 pupils are of White British heritage and they come from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding for social disadvantage is much lower than average. The school supports a lower than average proportion of pupils with special needs and/or disabilities. The staff team is stable and experienced.

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

- The strong Christian leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, ably supported by dedicated, skilled staff and governors, drives all aspects of school improvement. This has created a positive, inclusive Christian environment in which all pupils can flourish and achieve.
- Very well-established, explicitly expressed Christian values make a strong impact on pupils' excellent behaviour and remarkably positive attitudes to life and learning.
- Extremely strong, purposeful links with the church contribute significantly to the school's Christian character and to pupils' spiritual growth.
- High quality teaching and learning in religious education (RE) contributes substantially to pupils' remarkably mature understanding of diverse faiths and cultures, including the multi-cultural nature of Christianity.

#### Areas to improve

- Extend the evaluation of collective worship to include a wider range of pupils, staff, clergy and visitors to provide deeper insight into the impact of worship on the life of the school community.
- Develop prayer and reflection spaces to further support pupils' spiritual growth and emotional well-being.

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

Deeply embedded Christian values are thoroughly understood and lived by all members of the school family. 'God is always there for us, especially when times are tough,' wrote a Year 5 pupil. Pupils of all ages talk confidently about Christian respect, trust, hope and compassion. 'Christian values are the things a person should be so that everyone can lead happy lives,' explained a Year 4 pupil. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary because they strive to show Christian love and friendship. Members of the Year 6 ethos group explain that parables such as the Good Samaritan and the Lost Sheep teach about compassion and forgiveness. They describe how they try to use these values in the own lives.

Pupils are highly motivated, confident and enthusiastic learners who enjoy school life and attend well. They strive to achieve the high expectations set for them by teachers who they respect and admire. Pupils make rapid and sustained progress from their starting points. Standards of attainment are consistently high, being well-above national expectations. Pupils with additional needs are well supported so that all can flourish and achieve. Parents agree that the way in which their children are known, nurtured and supported as unique individuals loved by God, reflects the school's vision and values.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is very good because it is effectively promoted across the curriculum, and especially in religious education. Regular, high quality learning experiences through which pupils explore the wider world, support their understanding of global issues such as poverty and conservation. The extremely strong church links enhance provision for spiritual development. As a result, pupils are mature, highly reflective and passionate learners who are confident that their ideas can be expressed freely in an atmosphere of acceptance and respect.

Pupils have a very good understanding of diversity and the needs of the world. They support Christian communities in Uganda and Brazil. As a result, they are aware of the way in which Christians across the world celebrate and worship God. They recognise that each person can, in a small way, make a difference in the world. As one Year 6 pupil explained, 'We help those less fortunate and try to be generous, not selfish. Jesus taught this in the parable of the widow's mite.'

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

Collective worship is a much valued and integral feature of the daily life of the school. Pupils' attitudes are very positive because they feel included. They enjoy their experiences, particularly when they are involved in helping to lead worship. Worship is very well planned and recorded. Themes are rooted in Bible teaching and Christian values. As a result, pupils have a very good knowledge of Old Testament stories and the life and teaching of Jesus. A Year 5 pupil explained, 'Jesus used parables to teach about forgiveness and compassion and how to treat others.'

Pupils experience a range of different worship styles led by staff, clergy and visitors from local faith groups, such as the Baptist and Methodist churches. The extremely close relationship with the parish churches ensures that pupils are familiar with church-based worship and traditional Anglican practices. Parents and friends attend festival services in both churches as well as class-led worship in school. Clergy are frequent visitors, leading worship and supporting planning. They also provide much valued spiritual guidance and pastoral support, particularly at times of sadness and bereavement.

Pupils speak assuredly about their understanding of God as a caring father who is always there for his people. 'God knows every single one of us and cares for us. God is inside all of us,' wrote a Year 6 pupil. Many pupils are aware of the Christian concept of the Trinity. Although this is at an early stage, efforts are made to reinforce the concept using candles and imagery during worship and RE. Prayer, reflection and praise are key features of daily worship. Pupils write prayers and are increasingly willing to extemporise their prayers during worship. They know and use traditional prayers and graces, such as the Lord's Prayer. However, leaders agree that the ethos group's identification of the need for a 'proper prayer and reflection spaces somewhere in school' is appropriate. This is because classroom and personal reflection spaces, in which pupils can be still and find solace at times of worry or stress, are limited at present so are not available to all pupils.

The extent to which pupils are involved in planning and leading collective worship has improved significantly since the last inspection. Older pupils regularly plan and lead whole school worship. For example, a group of Year 6 pupils prepared the worship on the day of the inspection, based on their own parable of the 'dares'. All pupils help to plan and deliver class-led worship to which parents are invited. Older pupils and staff evaluate worship and

monitoring by leaders and governors is effective. However, broadening this to other groups will provide valuable insight as to the impact collective worship is having on the lives of all members of the school community.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding**

Pupils' attitudes to RE are extremely positive because they enjoy the varied and creative approaches used. They are excited and enthused by their work. 'RE is really good. It is about what we think and feel. It helps us to respect everyone's opinions,' stated a Year 5 pupil. The curriculum promotes the development of key skills and concepts so that pupils come to understand ideas about the nature of belief. In doing so, RE makes a substantial contribution to pupils' SMSC development.

Pupils make extremely good progress in RE. This is because teaching is of a consistently high quality. It inspires, supports and challenges pupils' learning so that all can achieve. Lessons are planned creatively, making good use of available resources to meet the different learning styles and needs of all pupils. As a result, standards are high, and in line with those achieved in other core areas. This is reflected in pupils' high quality learning journals, portfolios and displays, all of which reflect the pride taken in their work.

RE is led by an extremely capable, dedicated teacher whose expertise and vision continues to inspire and drive improvement. All staff feel well supported and resourced, so that they approach new materials and syllabuses confidently. As a result, standards continue to improve and the profile of RE remains very high. Although assessment systems are in place, they are being continually developed in the light of syllabus and other changes. They make effective use of some pupil self-review as well as marking and teacher assessments. Progress and attainment are tracked efficiently and gaps in learning are identified to inform future planning. RE is monitored effectively by senior leaders and governors.

Pupils are fully aware of diverse faiths and beliefs. 'RE helps us to learn about the religions of the world so that we can celebrate everyone's differences,' explained a Year 6 pupil. They talk knowledgeably about holy books and festivals and can identify similarities as well as differences. For example, a group of Year 6 pupils described the relationship between the Last Supper, Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt and the Jewish festival of Pesach.

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

The strong, unwavering Christian leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, ably supported by dedicated staff and committed governors promotes all aspects of church school improvement. As a result, the school has maintained its impressive standards and improved outcomes for all pupils. This fully reflects the school's declared mission 'to work in partnership with parents and the church to nurture children in the Christian faith and to provide them with the best possible educational opportunities'. Relationships across the school are founded on deeply embedded Christian values. Staff and pupils feel valued and respected and they know that their well-being is considered in decision-making at all levels. Pupils know that their ideas are valued and acted upon. They accept responsibilities eagerly and older pupils frequently help and support younger children.

Governors have a clear understanding of their strategic role. They have secured extremely strong leadership for RE and collective worship. Both areas are well supported and resourced and they meet all statutory requirements. Issues for development from the previous denominational inspection have been fully addressed. Effective monitoring and evaluation processes continue to identify ways in which further improvements can be made. Governors ensure that the needs of all pupils are met through the careful use of human and financial resources. Regular, robust self-evaluation strategies ensure that church school issues are prioritised within whole school planning. Governors consider the future development of the school wisely, supporting staff professionally and developing the curriculum. For example, they supported the deputy headteacher on the Christian leadership course. Partnerships with the diocese and local Trafford cluster of church schools support curricular and staff training developments.

The impact of the school's longstanding, close and mutually beneficial liaison with the parish churches of St. George and St. Margaret is substantial. Clergy support staff, pupils and their families ensuring that the spiritual dimension of school life is prominent. The wider links with other local Christian, Jewish and Muslim faith groups support pupils' understanding of community and diversity. As a result, pupils contribute willingly to charitable and church activities and do not rely on stereotypical concepts of their world.

The school is therefore very well placed to move confidently into the future as an outstanding church school.