

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Overleigh St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Old Wrexham Road, Handbridge, Chester, CH4 7HS

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Chester
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Chester West and Chester
Date of inspection	4 May 2018
Date of last inspection	March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 111290
Headteacher	Emma Drew
Inspector's name and number	Stephen Burrow 622

School context

Overleigh St Mary's CE Primary School is an above average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average as is the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium is below average. The percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is in line with national but has increased rapidly over the last two years. The school has had recent changes in leadership with the headteacher having been in post since September 2017 and the deputy headteacher since September 2016.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Overleigh St Mary's CofE Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The strong, purposeful Christian leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, supported by committed staff and governors, ensures that pupils maximise their personal and academic achievement.
- A deeply embedded Christian ethos underpins all that the school does. Pupils are highly valued and nurtured as individuals in a caring Christian environment, enabling them to grow exceptionally well academically, spiritually and socially.
- Collective worship and religious education (RE) make a strong contribution to the promotion of distinctively Christian values and develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) very effectively.
- Supportive relationships between all members of the school community have generated resilience during recent periods of change.
- The strong, mutually supportive links with the local church make a significant contribution to the school's Christian character and the spiritual development of all members of its community.

Areas to improve

- Extend the role of the pupils' worship group in the planning and delivery of worship, thereby enhancing their leadership skills and involving them directly in the spiritual development of the whole school family.
- Refine the evaluation of collective worship to include all who deliver worship, especially the pupils, so that this informs future planning and leads to on-going improvement.

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

The school's motto 'Children First,' along with its mission to promote positive, caring relationships where Christian love at the heart of everything, is prominent throughout school and in all documentation. This drives all that the school does. As a result, strong mutually supportive relationships exist throughout the school. Adults provide excellent role models, displaying Christian values which are mirrored by the pupils. Teachers know each child as a unique individual and ensure that their academic and personal needs are fully met. Pupils speak with clarity and conviction about the Christian values that are promoted in all aspects of school life. They are proud of their school and speak confidently about why it is special to them. They feel safe, happy, valued and cared for. Parents readily explain how distinctive Christian values are deeply rooted in the life of the school and speak of the impact these have on their children. Pupils are excited and challenged by interesting RE lessons which make an excellent contribution to the development of SMSC. The school's extensive focus on nurture and care is demonstrated in the commitment to pastoral support of families, which is reflected in pupils' high levels of attendance and excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning. National and school data shows that progress has accelerated rapidly and is at least good for the vast majority of pupils.

Prayer and reflection are important features of school life. A group of pupils explained that prayer is important, 'So God knows we love Him.' They added, 'We always have a friend to go to and can be open to Him.' There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere throughout the school with well utilised reflection areas in all classrooms that provide opportunities for pupils to think and quietly pray. A newly created reflection room enhances this provision significantly. High quality displays emphasise the school's Christian distinctiveness. These and the reflection areas support pupil's spiritual awareness and development extremely well. The clergy have a high profile in school, giving practical and prayerful support, which is valued and appreciated by the whole school family.

Pupils' awareness of Christianity as a global faith is strong due to the way they are taught about other world faiths, in relation to Christianity. The recent International Faith Week effectively promoted their acceptance of and respect for the views and beliefs of others. The school is also involved in fundraising for charitable organisations, such as Christian Aid and the World Down's Syndrome Association.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is central to the daily life of the school and, along with its strong Christian foundations, drives forward the school's Christian values. It provides valuable opportunities for pupils to encounter God. Messages given in collective worship promote the school's explicit Christian vision. Themes are well planned around the school's core values, the Bible and the teachings of Jesus. Staff lead worship on a regular basis and there are frequent opportunities to worship in church. The rector regularly leads worship in school, which strengthens the bond between church and school. Parents are invited to share in the celebration of key Christian festivals in church as well as pupil class led worship in school and the celebration of pupils' achievements, thus enhancing links between home and school. Explorations of the festivals celebrated by other world faiths together very effectively promote pupils' acceptance of and respect for the views and beliefs of others. The school recognises, however, that although the pupil worship group is becoming involved in the planning and delivery of worship themes, this is an area for development and the school is committed to further embedding pupil involvement.

Pupils have an age-appropriate appreciation of the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and speak confidently about having a relationship with God. One pupil said, 'God shows he is in three parts but is the same God who came to us in Jesus and is all around us as the Holy Spirit.' Their understanding of the Trinity is further strengthened through the lighting of three candles at the beginning of worship. Collective worship inspires the positive, caring relationships that exist within the school. It enhances pupils' spiritual development which is explicitly planned for and implemented across the curriculum. Pupils value their worship experiences. One pupil said, 'It's about our relationship with God.' They talk confidently and with enthusiasm about the messages they receive.

Worship effectively links pupils' achievements with the Christian values and reinforces them well. It also provides pupils with the opportunity to reflect on the weekly themes, for example, 'doing God's will.' They are frequently reminded that, in line with the Christian understanding of God's forgiveness, they will always be given another chance. Pupils enter worship and leave quietly, utilising the opportunities to reflect on the message displayed on the large screen. Worship is enhanced by a worship table with a Bible, cross and candles, which create a reflective atmosphere. Staff appreciate the opportunity to worship on a daily basis as a school family and value the impact that this has on each individual and on the daily life of the school. Prayer and reflection are regular features of all forms of worship and pupils make good use of the reflection areas in each classroom, which instil an understanding of personal prayer. Pupils say that during reflection and prayer time they, 'Never feel on their own, there is always someone to

talk to.’ Pupils also write their own prayers, a selection of which are read aloud during collective worship. The school has procedures in place to monitor and evaluate the impact of worship. However they acknowledge that this needs to be refined to include all who deliver worship, especially the pupils, so that it informs future planning and leads to on-going improvement.

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

The strong leadership of the school provides an extremely clear vision for sustaining the powerful Christian ethos which is at the core of school improvement. This vision to provide a caring Christian community where everyone is valued, respected and has a contribution to make is lived out across the whole school family. The school motto, ‘Children First’, reinforces the view that everyone is created in the image of God. This places the uniqueness of each child at the heart of school improvement and nurtures the excellent relationships found in the school. The successful leadership is enhanced by a close working relationship with the church, as a result of which prayer and pastoral links between church and school are very effectively interwoven. The Diocese also provided strong and valuable support during a turbulent period of leadership change.

Governors have regular involvement in the school’s life and work and have established strong relationships with the headteacher and staff, based on mutual trust. They effectively monitor and evaluate the work of the school, ensuring that church school issues are identified and addressed through improvement planning. One governor said that, ‘Christian values are a way of life rather than an add on, they are woven through the school like cloth.’ They receive detailed information on developments in RE and worship. This is through regular reports from the headteacher, RE and worship leaders, visits to school and learning walks. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the significance and responsibilities involved in leadership of a church school and carry out their roles very effectively. Staff are encouraged to contribute and develop their leadership skills. They are kept up to date through training and professional development opportunities. Staff are aware of what is expected of them in relation to the Christian ethos of the school. They feel their ideas are listened to and valued and say their personal well-being is given a high priority. One member of staff said, ‘It’s not just talking about the values, it’s living them.’

Pupils take their responsibilities very seriously. They are confident that their voice is heard and that their views are valued. The pupil worship group and school council provide opportunities for pupils to share their ideas and suggestions. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and there is a strong Parent Teacher Association. They say the school listens to their views, their children enjoy school and are happy, safe and nurtured within a Christian environment. They agree that the school’s Christian ethos is a prominent aspect of school life that allows their child to explore the meaning of faith and belief. They are openly very appreciative of how the school lives out its Christian mission and attribute the excellent pupil behaviour to the school’s Christian values. One parent summed up by saying, ‘The school values provide our children with an important stepping stone in life.’

SIAMS report May 2018, Overleigh St Mary’s CofE Primary School, Old Wrexham Road, Handbridge, Chester CH4 7HS