

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

<b>St Luke's Halsall Church of England Primary School</b>	
Cooks Road, Crosby, Liverpool, L23 2TB	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Liverpool</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Sefton
Date of inspection	28 September 2017
Date of last inspection	March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 104921
Headteacher	Richard Miller
Inspector's name and number	Mike Graham 286

### School context

St Luke's Halsall is situated in the heart of Crosby, a mixed urban area north of Liverpool. In recent years the school catchment area has widened. This has led to an increasing proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those supported by pupil premium extra funding. It is a broadly average size school with its own nursery. A very large majority of the pupils are from a white British heritage background. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Luke's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Excellent Christian leadership from the headteacher is supported with the utmost conviction by the senior leaders, staff and governors. This has led to the establishment of a vibrant Christian vision for the school that is lived out by all its members.
- Exemplary pastoral care given with Christian love by the whole staff team has established a secure school family within which all pupils and adults flourish in their learning and personal development.
- Outstanding worship leads the pupils on an exciting exploration of the Christian faith, which is widened and deepened through excellent teaching and learning in religious education (RE). These experiences enable pupils to grow spiritually, morally and culturally.
- Christian values are exemplified by loving and respectful relationships throughout the school community.

### Areas to improve

- Enable and encourage children to write a new school prayer, thus extending and deepening their significant contributions to the school's distinctively Christian ethos.
- Continue with and extend the work being done to deepen the staff and pupils' understanding of the Holy Spirit's impact on worship and life. This in order to deepen their spiritual lives and to extend the growing ease with which staff and pupils use spontaneous prayer.

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

St Luke's is a school where every pupil is nurtured and cherished as an individual, precious in God's sight. Christian values are the bedrock of all that occurs in and around school. The Christian vision of the headteacher is crystallised in the mission statement, 'Inspiring lives, building futures, together with Jesus'. The pupils' ethos group have promoted the question 'What would Jesus do?' through example and by making and displaying posters around school. The effect is evident in conversations and in behaviour, which is exemplary. Bible verses referring to the love of God and the example of Jesus from which pupils draw support and inspiration for life are prominent in displays. They also feature frequently in worship and RE. The Christian love with which the pupils are surrounded gives a sense of peace and security, so that there is no fear of failure and they are all enabled to give of their best. School and national test data, and the most recent interim Ofsted report, show that progress is consistently outstanding, often exceeding national expectations.

The Christian values that guide the school's work include love and fellowship. All members of the school family demonstrate these values supremely. All the staff play their part in caring for individual children and, where appropriate, their families. The attitude inspiring such work is summed up by a comment from the vicar, 'Love and life are articulated and lived naturally as Christians'. The Christian values make a significant and positive impact on the social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) development of the pupils. All are made to feel warmly included. For example, a mother was thrilled about the way in which her son was welcomed to the school family with just one half term left as a primary pupil. He had been depressed and withdrawn, yet she said that 'within 9 days' his life was transformed. Visitors from other faith groups and outstanding RE teaching give pupils secure knowledge and understanding of the major religions. They are excited by such opportunities and well prepared to play their part in breaking down cultural and religious barriers.

The rich curriculum and many extra clubs and activities provided enable pupils to grow emotionally and to broaden their experiences of life. One excellent example is the 'Worship warriors' club, trialled by the school, which focused on Christian worship and values making significant differences to the pupils' lives. School council members are proactive and articulate in providing a strong pupil voice within school. Staff and leaders give the council respect, and they have introduced many improvements.

The school environment is bright and inviting, with numerous, often interactive, displays and quiet areas both in the school and in the grounds. There is a log cabin for outdoor-based work, and staff have built a 'willow chapel'. A Year 6 girl said with pride and excitement, 'The teachers built that. It's going to be great!' The reflection garden is well used and appreciated by the pupils, who regard prayer and reflection as a normal part of life. The impact on their spiritual and social development is strong, demonstrated by one comment from a pupil: 'It's like a magnifying glass – magnifying God's creation!'

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

Collective worship is inspiring. It is relevant and sincere, and makes a significant difference to the lives of all members of the school community. The variety in leadership, style and format of worship ensures that it is always engaging. Biblical teaching is a very strong element, setting the values into their Christian context. Humour is well used and the respect and awe shown by all present is most impressive. The leader of a worship time based around the Bible as our instruction manual and guide demonstrated exceptional skill in engaging the pupils. The variety in presentation and involvement of staff and pupils was outstanding. Singing and prayer are both sincere and moving, and the pupils frequently play key roles in planning, leading and evaluating worship. They therefore have a deep understanding of several elements of Christian worship. The impact of collective worship on the spiritual lives of the whole school family is clear and impressive.

Prayer is a natural part of school life, with the use of pupils' own prayers in worship and throughout the day clearly evident. The school prayer is, however, somewhat out-dated. Staff have used prayer with parents when appropriate. One mother commented that the deputy headteacher 'listened to my concerns then politely asked if I minded if we pray, which we then proceeded to do. I thought this response was amazing.' The pupils have an understanding of God as Trinity. They have a clear understanding of God as Father and creator, and of Jesus as Son and saviour. They are also aware of the role of the Holy Spirit, with one Year 5 boy commenting, 'The Holy Spirit is the part of God in us that gives us power!' The potential of such power to inspire Christians in life and in prayer is yet to be explored to an appropriate extent. The contribution to worship from the vicar and other key church members, including the chair of governors, is significant. Anglican traditions are understood by pupils and used regularly and sensitively. Easter and Harvest 'experiences' bring these festivals alive for all involved. The pupils speak highly of the 'Assembly Team', a group of Christians who work in many local schools bringing Bible stories to life through drama and music. 'We get to act and dress up, and the stories come alive!' as one pupil put it.

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

Good to outstanding RE teaching results in excellent progress by all children in line with and often beyond the expectations of the syllabus. Studies are undertaken of the major world faiths, and this area of work often includes visits from members of the faiths studied. Discussions with children, lessons witnessed and work in children's books demonstrate that Christian teaching and learning is often outstanding. Examples include an exemplary lesson in Year 6 during which the pupils explored in great detail the heroes of the holocaust. Their engagement with the lesson was total. Discussions and research into the Christians and Jews who sacrificed themselves to save others led to deep spiritual self-examination. The impact made on all by the teacher's sensitive yet deep leading towards the wonder of 'laying down' of life for others was clear and very impressive.

In Year 2 a study focused on the Bible's immense value for Christians. The teacher's own revelations and unveiling of old family Bibles and her own special more modern testaments had the pupils engrossed. The story of Mary Jones and her pursuit of her own Bible added to the impact. During discussion groups a girl commented on Mary's character, saying that 'she was determined!' in sharing how inspired she was by Mary's resilience and willpower. The growth in understanding through such inventive teaching is clear. Reception pupils enjoyed an outstanding re-telling of Jesus' parable of the 'Prodigal Son'. The focus was on the Christian value of forgiveness. These very young ones were captivated. When asked how the father might react when his son returned home to apologise, one pupil said he might say 'Go straight to bed!' The inclusion of the comparatively complex ending to the story, which includes the reaction of the elder son, was impressive. The learning about the depth and uniqueness of God's forgiving love for us all was exemplary.

The biblical basis for the Christian values taught is clearly established through RE, and the impact on the pupils is significant. There is an impressive focus on applying faith to everyday life. Pupils spoke of their learning in RE with great enthusiasm and impressive levels of understanding. The subject leader is passionate and committed to building on the achievements of recent years. She and her fellow teachers are extremely able and knowledgeable, providing thorough in-service training, assessment and monitoring and evaluation. This maintains and builds upon the high standards in teaching and learning. The Christian values taught through RE are a benchmark for everyone, and new ways of presenting and learning from faith are constantly sought.

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

The headteacher leads with a strong Christian conviction and an uncompromising determination that pupils will receive nothing but the best in care, teaching and encouragement. He leads by example. His staff and governors follow that lead in giving unstinting love and care so as to bring out the pupils' best qualities. Success has been achieved through exemplary teamwork, achieved whilst welcoming several new members of staff. They feel privileged to be part of St Luke's, commenting on the outstanding quality of support they have received. They are strongly influenced by the Christian love and fellowship underpinning school life.

There is excellent support for the work being done from church members, notably the vicar and chair of governors. Members of several denominations form the Assembly Team, who come in to support the school every third year and whose base is St Luke's church. The school's Christian vision is directly linked to the Bible and the life, teachings and example of Jesus. The chair of governors said 'Christ is the heartbeat of this school'. The Christian values arising from and exemplifying this vision make a strong impact on the school curriculum. Governor monitoring and evaluation ensure that it is balanced and develops the whole child, and that worship and RE meet statutory requirements. The Christian character of the school shines through, and is experienced by all who enter this warm and welcoming community. Every family is aware that the openly Christian love and care is always available, especially at times of need. The impact of the Christian vision of the school is secured through diligent strategic planning. The senior leadership team and the governors regularly undertake thorough and honest evaluation of this planning and policymaking. The governors' evaluative work is supportive and yet challenging when appropriate, keeping staff strong and focused on the Christian vision. The areas for development from the previous report have been tackled well. Preparation for future leadership in church schools is built on excellent teamwork, delegation and high quality in-service training.

Partnerships with the local churches, the wider community and of course the parents are strong and mutually supportive. The school raises money for various charities, and the children are proud of the fact that this is a demonstration of the Christian sense of justice and of compassion in action. Parents and carers are very appreciative of the Christian care shown especially when life is difficult. They know that, for all of the staff, the wellbeing of every child is paramount. Parents are very proud of their school. Their comments included 'My son was singing a new Christian song after the first three days here – it's amazing!', 'St Luke's shows the children how being a Christian makes a difference,' and 'Absolutely the best school!'

SIAMS report, September 2017, St Luke's Halsall Church of England Primary School, Crosby, L23 2TB