

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Hoole Church of England Primary School

Hoole Lane, Chester, Cheshire, CH2 3HB

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Chester
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Date of inspection	15 June 2017
Date of last inspection	November 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled Primary. URN: 134248
Headteacher	Cheryl Bullen
Inspector's name and number	Stephen Burrow 622

School context

Hoole CE Primary School is an above average-sized primary school serving a diverse community which represents a wide range of faiths and cultures. The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium is slightly below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupil mobility is slightly higher than the national average. There is a strong mutually supportive bond between the school and church. It is a Forest School.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Hoole CE Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Outstanding leadership by the headteacher, with excellent support from senior leaders, staff and governors, demonstrates a clear Christian vision. This strongly promotes the school's Christian character and mission.
- The Christian values of God's love inspire and guide all aspects of school life. Pupils are valued, nurtured and encouraged to flourish, within a distinctive Christian environment.
- Relationships in this happy and harmonious school are exceptional and promote a shared Christian vision for development and learning.
- The recognition of the school as part of the church family makes a significant contribution to the school's Christian character and to the spiritual development of all members of its community.
- Religious education (RE) and collective worship are central to the life of the school and highly effective in supporting the spiritual development of all pupils and staff.

Areas to improve

- Establish ways for pupils to be more involved in the planning of worship, so that their ideas and thoughts can be shared and discussed to further enrich the experience of worship.
- Extend opportunities for professional development for newly appointed staff to support their understanding of the distinctiveness of a Church of England school.

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

The school places high emphasis on Christian values, which are deeply embedded in the life of the school. Exceptional relationships, rooted in the teaching of Jesus, are evident in every part of school life. They demonstrate very positively the distinctively Christian character of Hoole CE Primary School. Each child is known as a unique individual in a community, where care and respect is bestowed on each and every member. Pupils feel safe, happy and valued. They are polite, courteous and respectful of adults and each other, mirroring the excellent adult role models provided for them in the school. A calm and purposeful atmosphere permeates the school. The curriculum is rich and varied, providing a wide range of experiences. These contribute greatly to pupils' enjoyment of school and to their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The high profile of RE and collective worship makes a significant contribution to the school's Christian character. A Bible is given to each pupil for their use in school, which they then keep as a gift when they leave. The school's extensive focus on nurture and care is demonstrated in the commitment to pastoral support for families in need, which results in high levels of attendance, excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning. All groups of pupils, including those for whom English is not their first language and those who join the school other than at the start of the school year, make good progress from their starting points. Staff are pro-active in supporting families where help is needed and ensure that all concerns are dealt with quickly and effectively. This is aided well by the work of the very effective school learning mentor. As a result, there are excellent relationships with parents. One parent said, 'The staff are amazing, nothing is too much trouble for them.' Prayer and reflection are very important to all members of the school family. A group of pupils in discussion about prayer observed, 'It's a time to talk to God or just reflect.' One pupil commented, 'It's fun that we talk about God at school.' Creative, high quality displays throughout the whole school, together with well-used areas for reflection and prayer, reinforce the message that the school has a strong Christian foundation. The vicar and the church team 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. One parent commented, 'We are a diverse community but one big family.' A pupil said, 'I love learning about different religions and how God loves everyone with different faiths and beliefs.' Charitable giving, such as Water Aid and the Shoe Box Appeal, is clearly seen as part of the school's Christian foundation and contributes well to spiritual, moral and social and cultural development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is inclusive and central to school life. Worship is recognised as a hugely important part of the school day and ensures that core Christian values are at the forefront of daily life. Worship is very well planned and led. An experienced and enthusiastic leader ensures that themes are developed around the school's core values, festivals, the Bible and the teachings of Jesus. Pupils have a good understanding of Bible stories which enables them to explain Jesus' place at the heart of the Christian faith. The differing needs of the pupils are met through whole school, key stage and class led worship. A wide range of people including the vicar, church team and other Christian visitors lead worship. During the year, the school shares in church events with parents and members of the local community. These include celebrations such as Harvest, Christingle and a Candlemas service at Chester Cathedral. The church also organises an 'Easter Experience', where the school buildings and grounds are used to follow the stations of the cross. All of these experiences effectively underpin and extend the school's deeply embedded Christian ethos. Worship places great emphasis on encouraging pupils to explore the Christian faith along with providing an understanding of the beliefs and practices of other world faiths. Consequently pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. This is also supported by a range of visitors and visits to other places of worship. In addition the pupil RE Ambassadors, who regularly organise opportunities for pupils to share different faiths with each other, are also involved in the delivery of worship. However, the school recognises that pupils are not yet fully involved in the planning of worship themes and intends to address this further. Pupils have an age-appropriate appreciation of the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. One pupil reinforced this by explaining, 'God is three in one.' The act of collective worship observed on the day of the inspection was the weekly worship delivered by the Open Book Team. This group present Bible stories in a lively and inclusive way. Pupils spoken to were unanimous that this was one of their favourite worship experiences, as it is 'fun and interactive'. Pupils enter worship respectfully to reflective music, often played by the school's Be Still band. They are reminded that God is with us by the sharing words of Christian commitment. Prayer is a key feature of all acts of worship and pupils are familiar with a range of traditional prayers. There is a school prayer and pupils have opportunities to write their own prayers which are chosen daily to share with the class. Opportunities for prayer throughout the day together with class reflection areas, a prayer tree and the developing Peace Garden enable pupils to establish an understanding of the importance of prayer in their own lives. The school has effective procedures in place to monitor and evaluate the impact of worship. Findings are then used to influence ongoing improvements in order to ensure that the spiritual needs of the whole school community are met.

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

The highly effective leadership of the headteacher and her senior leaders provides an extremely clear vision for sustaining the powerful Christian ethos that permeates all aspects of school life. This vision is understood and extremely well supported by everyone involved in the life of the school, including governors and parents. It is lived out across the whole school family. The focus of the school is very much on ensuring that each pupil is given the opportunity to flourish and reach their full potential as children of God. Governors are justly proud of their school and the rich Christian tradition associated with it. They are actively involved in self-evaluation and in the life of the school. Each governor has a subject link and regularly meets with their subject leader. This, together with the detailed information they receive on developments in RE and worship, through regular reports from the headteacher, ensures that they know the school well. They ensure clear and focused school improvement planning secures the Christian distinctiveness of the school. They monitor standards and progress and effectively challenge and support the headteacher and staff. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of what it means to lead a church school and carry out their roles extremely effectively. Potential future leaders of church schools are prepared well through a strong emphasis on supporting professional development. The deputy headteacher has completed the Christian Leadership course and the RE/collective worship lead has completed a two-year training on 'Learn, Teach, Lead RE'. As a result of this a local RE hub has been established, led by the RE lead from Hoole CE Primary. The hub works on a rota basis around a group of schools within the diocese, providing support and opportunities to share and develop new ideas. One outcome of this hub was a 'Faith Carousel', where leaders of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism shared their faith. The hub provides opportunities for schools to promote an understanding of the beliefs and customs of other faiths which can then be explored in each school. However, the school agrees that there needs to be more professional development offered for newly inducted staff to give them an understanding of the distinctiveness of a Church of England school. Staff feel that their ideas are listened to and valued, they are encouraged to be reflective and are supported by a 'wellbeing governor'. One teacher said, 'We are here for each other, the children and their families.' The school council and RE Ambassadors group provide excellent opportunities for pupils to offer suggestions and know that their views are valued. There is a strong PTA which actively supports the work of the school through social and fund raising events. The school is active in the local community. Parents are very proud of the school and the impact of the Christian values on the lives of their children. They speak highly of the school's pastoral and all-embracing care of all pupils, accurately reflecting the inclusive nature and friendliness of everyone in school. One parent summed up the views of other parents by saying, 'Our children respect the school values because they see these values in action.'

SIAMS report June 2017 Hoole CE VC Primary School, Hoole Lane, Chester, Cheshire, CH2 3HB