

# National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

## Sutton Oak CE (Controlled ) Primary School

Goodban Street  
Sutton  
St Helens  
WA9 3QD

<b>Diocese:</b>	<b>Liverpool</b>
Local authority:	St Helens
Dates of inspection:	9 <sup>th</sup> May 2013
Date of last inspection:	9 <sup>th</sup> /10 <sup>th</sup> April 2008
School's unique reference number:	104791
Headteacher:	Iwan Williams
Inspector's name and number:	Mike Graham 286

### School context

Sutton Oak is an above average sized primary school serving an urban area of significant socio-economic disadvantage. There has been an increase in recent years in the number of children with special needs. A pastoral team has been established to support the more vulnerable children. There is an integrated nursery on site.

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

The school is a beacon of love and care for children and their families. The underlying philosophy is grounded in Christian values, which are lived out by the whole school. Achievement is excellent, with disadvantaged children making progress well above the national average. The teamwork and support for each individual in school makes a significant impact on academic and spiritual development.

### Established strengths

- Strong and focused Christian leadership which brings Christian values alive and strives for continuous improvement for the good of all
- Excellent leading and teaching in worship and religious education (RE), through which the impact made by Christian values is reinforced
- Outstanding pastoral care for all, driven by Christian love and compassion

### Focus for development

- To forge closer links with All Saints church community
- To pursue an application for the Diocesan Church/School Partnership Award

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

The Christian love and care extended to all the children make a significant impact on their academic and personal development. The spiritual, social, moral and cultural maturity of the children is a strength of the school. They are able to make informed life choices based on Christian values. The chair of governors commented that this culture of care is a commitment from staff towards 'not just children but parents (and carers) as well'. The school's motto summarises this by describing the community as a 'school family, where all are valued,...centred on faith in Christ'. The recently established pastoral team work tirelessly to support the vulnerable, and the impact is demonstrated by these children's achievements. The progress of the children overall is good whilst the achievements of vulnerable children are outstanding. This is a remarkable testimony to the high quality of teaching together with the Christ-like compassion and care given to all. Relationships in school are warm, open and respectful. The creation of 'God's Garden' has had a significant impact on many, giving a

secure and peaceful space. It contains plants, prayer displays and a large wooden cross, encouraging individuals and small groups to pray, reflect and find security and comfort. The distinctive Christian ethos fosters excellent relationships within and around the school and local community. One school council member said that the Christian values are seen in 'how we treat each other outside', adding 'we always forgive!' Understanding of and respect for one another and for other cultures and faiths is clear. A Muslim girl said 'It's good to learn about other faiths. We can understand and love each other better'. Two lessons observed demonstrated excellent RE teaching and learning which promoted this culture of love and acceptance very effectively. The subject is expertly led with detailed, precise planning and evaluation together with outstanding teaching. It makes an invaluable contribution to the Christian character of the school.

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

Worship is central to the ethos created in this school. The reverence and respect demonstrated by the children in worship are outstanding. Their utter absorption in the worship is striking, as is the vibrant singing, involvement in the leading by children and the participation from every member of staff. The impact of such high quality worship is summed up by a child who commented, 'Minds are open to the Lord'. The children's understanding of the concept of the Holy Trinity has been developed with skill and sensitivity. Older children have a clear idea of the importance in the Christian faith of the concept of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. During a discussion with a group of children on this topic a child mentioned a demonstration of the three-in-one God using three candles which combined to give 'a wonderful fire!' Another referred to his favourite recent RE topic on symbols of the Holy Spirit. The relevance of the worship and the potential it has to make a difference in the lives of all who participate is clear from their reactions. One child said, 'It shows me I can trust in God' and another commented, 'I liked it when I was singing 'I'm special' because I felt good inside'. The children's worship group or 'Ethos Warriors' make excellent contributions to the leading and evaluation of worship. The variety, sincerity and expertise of the various leaders, including children, staff and clergy, lead to significant depths of personal spirituality. Prayer is a key element, and informal prayer is frequently part of school life, not just during collective worship. A 'prayer washing line' is prominently displayed and regularly updated with children's own prayers. As the school team is aware, the school prayer is in need of revision with the involvement of the children.

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

Leaders articulate and are a living demonstration of an explicit Christian vision which has a positive and significant impact on the well-being of the whole community. The high standards of achievement spring from the warmth and security engendered by the Christian principles by which the school family lives. The headteacher summed up the vision thus, 'Through our Christian values, to prepare these children for life so that they have a fighting chance'. Thorough strategic planning involving all staff and governors includes excellent shared use of the diocesan 'toolkit' to evaluate the distinctive Christian elements of school life. The issues from the previous report have been addressed thoroughly. The active and well run school council ensures that children's voices are valued and have a positive impact. Preparation for future Christian leadership is excellent, and involves good delegation, teamwork, coaching and in-service training. The partnerships with the diocese and the wider community, including parents and carers are strong, but the links between the local church and the school less so. The new rector is keen to build deeper links and this is welcomed by the school. A recent baptism service in church attended by classes from school and well supported celebration services demonstrate commitment and good will. Parents are delighted with and proud of their school, and are frequently able to give informal as well as more structured feedback. Comments included, 'The headteacher always has time for you', 'Care for her (daughter with learning difficulties) was second to none' and 'It's fantastic!'

SIAMS report, May 2013, Sutton Oak CE Primary, St Helens, WA9 3QD