

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Sutton Oak Church of England Primary School

Goodban Street, Sutton, St Helens. Merseyside WA9 3QD

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| Current SIAMS inspection grade | Outstanding |
| Diocese | Liverpool |
| Previous SIAS inspection grade | Outstanding |
| Local authority | St Helens |
| Date of inspection | 18 January 2018 |
| Date of last inspection | May 2013 |
| Type of school and unique reference number | Voluntary Controlled 104791 |
| Headteacher | Iwan Williams |
| Inspector's name and number | Stephen Burrow 622 |

School context

Sutton Oak CofE Primary School is a larger than average primary school. The majority of pupils are White British with a few from minority ethnic groups, having English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium is well above the national average and the number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly higher than the national average. Attendance is improving but is still below national figures. The school has achieved the School Church Partnership Award.

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

- Outstanding leadership at all levels demonstrates a clear Christian vision, strongly promoting the school's Christian character and mission.
- There are very strong and mutually supportive links between the school, the church and the local community which make a significant contribution to the school's Christian character.
- Relationships between all members of the school community are firmly rooted in its Christian ethos. Christian values are at the very heart of the school's work and influence the day to day actions of all who work and learn there and lead to the exemplary behaviour of its pupils.
- Collective worship and religious education (RE) contribute significantly to the promotion of distinctive Christian values and significantly enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC).
- The pupil worship group's involvement in planning and delivering of worship promotes pupil discussion and decision making and creates stimulating and meaningful worship.

Areas to improve

- Refine pupil evaluation of collective worship to include more personal impact comments, so that this informs future planning and leads to on-going improvement.
- To further develop the use of the church and school facilities in order to enable joint school/church Sunday worship to take place at specific times during the year, thereby providing increased opportunity for the church congregation and school community, including parents, to worship together.

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

This is a school where Christian values underpin and are evident in all areas of school life. They are central to its ethos and vision and are understood, fully embraced and lived out by all members of the school community. This is evident in the great respect and care everyone shows for each other. The chair of Governors, during an ethos learning walk stated that, 'Without a doubt, the Christian ethos permeates the whole educational experience. The school is a beacon of hope and excellence in the community.' Pupils mirror the clear role models that adults in the school provide. As a result, relationships at all levels are exceptional. Pupils know they are loved and that each individual matters to all adults in the school. Consequently, they feel safe and happy and know they can talk to someone if they need to share a worry. The SMSC development of pupils is given high priority. As a result, RE and worship have high prominence.

Christian festivals are celebrated and pupils learn about other world faiths. As a result, tolerance and respect for the views and beliefs of others is effectively promoted. RE lessons, worship and other subjects across the curriculum support this well. The school's positive approach to behaviour management is rooted in Christian love. Support for vulnerable pupils and their families is exceptional. As a result, pupils want to do well and give of their best. Their achievement is at least in line with and often above national outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2.

High quality displays emphasise the school's distinctiveness and support pupils' spiritual development and awareness extremely well. A stunning cross surrounded by the school's values in the entrance area greets every visitor and unmistakably proclaims the Christian character of the school. The values are clearly evident around school and are especially prominent on two large 'Values trees'. Bible verses and 'Motivational Monday' thoughts are displayed on doors around school. 'God's Garden', created by the pupil worship group, along with prayer bottles and reflection areas in all classrooms, are used by pupils for thinking and praying, making a significant contribution to their spiritual development. One pupil explained, 'We talk to God and he listens. When he listens it makes me feel stronger.' Another added, 'We go to God's Garden for quiet time.' The school's strong emphasis on caring for others leads pupils to raise money for national charities as well as a local Hospice. The two new Rectors have further developed the already strong links between the church and school, giving practical and prayerful support, which is valued and appreciated by the whole school family. Parents explained how distinctive Christian values are deeply rooted in the life of the school and spoke of the impact these have on their children. The school and church recognise, however, that there is untapped potential in extending the use of facilities for the benefit of all stakeholders.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship inspires the whole school community. It is at the heart of the school day and promotes the Christian distinctiveness of the school exceptionally well. High quality planning of Christian themes includes a strong emphasis on Bible teaching and Christian values which enhance pupils' SMSC very effectively. The school has worked hard to promote an understanding of the Holy Trinity and pupils have an age-appropriate appreciation of the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This understanding is effectively supported through high quality work in RE. One child said, 'We invite the Holy Spirit into our lives and we are safe because he is all around us.' The worship group are extremely enthusiastic and actively involved in the process of planning and delivering collective worship. The two Rectors, along with the enthusiastic RE and Worship leaders work closely with the worship group to embrace new developments. They all participate fully in the review of worship which enables them to keep governors very well informed. The school has procedures in place to monitor and evaluate the impact of worship. Findings are then used to influence ongoing improvements to ensure that the spiritual needs of pupils are fully met. The school recognises, however, that evaluative comments need to be sharper, focusing on the impact of worship.

Prayer and reflection are regular features of all forms of worship as well as being an integral part of school life. Pupils say that during reflection and prayer time, when talking to God, they are given time to think about decisions they make. Daily prayers include the Lord's Prayer, lunchtime and home time prayers as well as prayers written by pupils, which are shared in worship. Pupils value highly times of personal prayer after reflection, especially their interactive classroom prayer spaces and God's Garden. Regular themed weeks are based around thought provoking questions, such as, 'What is Heaven like?' 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. As a result, pupils are prepared well for life in British society.

Pupils are enthusiastic, reverent and respectful in their responses to worship. The playing of appropriate peaceful music, as pupils enter worship, creates a calm welcoming atmosphere. A table with a cross, Bible and candles provide a clear focal point. Messages from worship and a Christian blessing ensure that pupils are well prepared for the day ahead. A good example is the message that it is, 'more blessed to give than receive.' Pupils and staff are actively involved and everyone is encouraged to reflect on how to share their individual talents with others.

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

School leaders, through their strong personal Christian faith, articulate with commitment a strong vision, expressly rooted in Christian teaching. They live out this Christian vision of achieving and growing together, through inspiring a love of learning, love for one another and faith in God. This is not just used and spoken about, but is lived out every day. This informs all policy and practice in the school. Thinking about faith is carefully woven throughout the curriculum and reinforces that Christianity is the heart of the school. The distinctive Christian character and vision is shared, agreed and upheld by all members of the school community. It is reinforced by the strong, nurturing relationships which permeate the school. Everyone understands what is expected of them in relation to promoting the Christian ethos of the school. They are encouraged to be reflective and feel that their well-being is given a high priority. One teacher said that the school is, 'A place where everyone is given the opportunity to thrive but where, if you need support, someone is always there.' There is a clear focus on meeting the needs of the individual child through a well-developed and effective self-evaluation process that places the uniqueness of each child at the heart of school improvement. A real passion for every pupil to succeed is clearly evident.

Governors are proactive and know the school very well. They are actively involved in monitoring and evaluation, through learning walks and the receipt of updates from the headteacher, Rectors, RE and worship leaders. They provide both challenge and support for the headteacher. This results in a shared commitment to the school's vision and future development. The issues from the previous inspection have been fully addressed and have had a significant impact on the Christian distinctiveness of the school, particularly in the achievement of the School Church Partnership Award. The headteacher and senior leaders have a clear understanding of what it means to lead a church school and carry out their roles very effectively. They have created an atmosphere underpinned by Christian values in which all staff feel their ideas are listened to and appreciated. There is a consistent emphasis on supporting the development and leadership role of all staff. Two members of staff having completed the 'Aspiring to Leadership in a Church School' course. The school council and worship group have a powerful voice. Their suggestions and ideas are heard, valued and acted on. The worship group is extremely pro-active providing the opportunity for pupils to direct and lead worship as well as sharing their knowledge and understanding with younger children. The RE and collective worship leaders, through their enthusiasm ensure that both have a high profile in school and drive the ethos. The school's strong and effective links with the church, the Diocese and local and wider communities are integral to developing the whole child.

Parents speak highly of the school and value its openness. They feel that the school supports them well and especially in times of great need. One parent summarised their views of the school by saying that it, 'Encourages their children to live correctly, following Christian values.'

SIAMS report January 2018 Sutton Oak CofE Primary School, Sutton, St Helens, Merseyside, WA9 3QD