



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Thomas' Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior and Infant School

Church Street,
Golborne
Warrington
WA3 3TH

Previous SIAS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Liverpool

Local authority: Wigan

Date of inspection: 16 October 2015

Date of last inspection: June 2010

School's unique reference number: 106487

Headteacher: Michelle Brindle

Inspector's name and number: Paul Adnitt 590

School context

The school is a smaller than average primary school. Almost all pupils are White British, with a very small number of pupils from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Thomas Junior and Infant school as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Inspiring and inclusive daily worship is central to the life of the school. Its quality and vibrancy has a significant impact on pupils' spiritual development
- The outstanding and distinctive Christian ethos permeates all aspects of school life and has an important and affirmative impact on pupils' personal and spiritual development
- The exemplary Christian leadership of the headteacher ensures that the school's Christian character has a strong impact on pupils' academic achievement and spiritual growth.
- Strong links between school, home and the local churches, underpinned by gospel values, provide a positive Christian impact in the wider community.

Areas to improve

- Provide more opportunities for multi-faith learning to enable pupils to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of other religions and beliefs.

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

The school's distinctively Christian ethos nourishes, encourages and challenges the spiritual and cultural development of the whole community. Chosen core Christian values of love, hope, peace and joy are made explicit and are deeply embedded in the daily life of the school. These Christian values clearly contribute to pupils' behaviour which is outstanding. The staff and governors expound these core gospel values by example, evidenced by the excellent quality of relationships between all members of the school community. This, together with the emphasis on caring for others, makes an exceptional contribution to the pupils' social and moral development. All pupils feel safe and special and have positive attitudes to their learning. They know they are valued and loved by staff. The pupils are proud of their school and speak confidently about why it is special to them. One pupil commented, 'We share our Christian values each day. This helps us to do the right thing, even when we are feeling down. We all care for each other. This is important to me.' The distinctive Christian character of the school has a significant impact on the good academic standards and progress achieved by the end of Key Stage 2. It also impacts on the pupils' excellent personal development and improving school attendance. Pupils are highly motivated, exhibit a love for learning and enjoy being in school. Older pupils are positive role models for their younger peers. Parents are very positive about the Christian ethos of the school. One parent remarked, 'The school's Christian ethos means it is very supportive of all children and their families. It does its very best for all our children.' Interactive worship and religious education (RE) displays both in classrooms and central areas engage pupils and promote prayer, reflection and spirituality. They are a constant reminder that the school is a place where the Christian faith is alive and nurtured. Ongoing development of the school's outdoor environment is creating places for reflection and prayer. The school's work on the place of Christianity throughout the world is very effective. This ensures pupils have a thorough understanding and awareness of Christianity as a relevant, multi-cultural and vibrant living faith. This is strengthened by the school's commitment to supporting local and international charities. Excellent and imaginative teaching in RE, which is of the highest standard, contributes well to the pupils' spiritual development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Because worship is inspirational, inclusive and of the highest standard, it has a central place in the life of the school. The daily act of worship enhances the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith and Anglican tradition. Pupils show a keen awareness of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and understand and experience the importance of the Eucharist at the centre of Christian life. They are confident when discussing their faith and demonstrate significant levels of spiritual maturity. 'Worship is a time when we can reflect on things we have done. Then God will forgive our sins and we can have a fresh start. We can tell God that we love him and thank him for all he has given us,' remarked one pupil. Worship also enables pupils to recognise their responsibilities towards others and to reflect on community and personal values. Opportunities for reflection and prayer enhance pupils' spiritual awareness. Worship is a valuable experience for everyone in the school family and makes an exceptional impact on their spiritual development. As a result of the strong promotion of gospel values during worship, they are clearly understood by the pupils. They enjoy worship and speak enthusiastically about the value of worship in their lives. Because of this, pupils are respectful and enthusiastic in helping to plan, lead and evaluate their own worship. This is led by the school's Ethos Group, open to all pupils, which is proud of its contributions to school worship and spiritual development. Adult leaders of worship include the school's senior leadership team. The parish priest and leaders of other local churches also play an important part in the worshipping life of the school. They are well liked by the pupils who greatly value their contribution. One pupil commented, 'They are important to us as we are a Christian school. They teach us new things about the Bible. The vicar and the other Christian leaders are special people in our school.' A large cross, together with excellent

interactive worship displays on the wall and an altar, candle and Bible provide a clear and positive focus. Monitoring, planning and evaluating are outstanding and include contributions from pupils, staff and governors. This has added significantly to the maintenance of outstanding, child centred worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious education (RE) lies at the heart of the school curriculum. Because the quality of teaching is outstanding it has a significant impact on pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development. The governors have adopted the Liverpool diocesan syllabus for RE which reflects national guidance. Planning of RE is excellent. The RE Co-ordinator regularly and effectively monitors lessons, scrutinises teachers' plans and pupils' work, and holds discussions with learners. This ensures the continued high achievement of pupils in the subject and identifies areas for continuing professional development. Pupils enjoy RE because it helps them understand what it means to be a Christian. One Year 6 pupil remarked, 'Christians know that Jesus died but then rose from the dead: for us to live. He died for our sins.' Effective whole school assessment shows that progress made by pupils from Foundation to Year 6 is at least good and often outstanding. Disadvantaged pupils and those with disabilities and special educational needs make progress in line with other school groups. Pupils demonstrate clearly the impact of RE on their lives and the life of the school. Outstanding teaching, which has pace and challenge, enables pupils to develop a high level of spiritual maturity and knowledge of many of the key aspects of Christianity and the Bible. One Year 6 pupil said, 'God is in the Bible. All our answers are there. It tells us how to live the right way.' Pupils have many opportunities to engage with other faiths. Further resources and opportunities are required to provide even greater depth to this area of the RE curriculum. Older pupils apply their learning to possible scenarios in their own lives. They are actively encouraged and supported in this reflection and are keen to discuss their feelings and experiences in lessons.

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

The headteacher leads by example and her personal Christian values permeate the life of the school. This is reflected in the school's outstanding worship and Christian distinctiveness. The headteacher has a strong and clear Christian vision for the school. She is well supported in this by the senior leadership team and the governing body, who are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. They have a strong commitment to the school's Christian foundation and consistently emphasise the message of the Gospel. Continuing professional development of all staff and governors is a high priority within the school. This has ensured that leadership of both RE and worship continues to be a strength of the school. All members of the school family make a positive contribution to church school self-evaluation. This clarifies the present position of St Thomas' as a distinctive, motivated and caring Anglican church school. The governors' SIAMS committee ensures that this evaluation is regular, rigorous and effective. The development of the school's distinctive Christian character and RE are key components in the school's development planning. The influential School Council, together with many other ways to be of service to others, ensure pupils are encouraged to play a responsible role in the life of the school. Parents and pupils speak highly of the school. They feel that the school listens to their views and that problems are dealt with quickly and sensitively. The school has a strong tradition of working with and for the community and enjoys outstanding links with the churches and the locality. This ensures that it remains at the heart of the community. This helps pupils understand the involvement of the church in the local and wider context. St Thomas' is a fully inclusive school where all are welcomed. As a result, pastoral care, family values and community spirit are highly effective and celebrated. This school is an outstanding faith community that is living out its Christian values.