



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Wharton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Greville Drive
Winsford
Cheshire CW7 3EP

Previous SIAS grade: **Good**

Current inspection grade: **Good**

Diocese: **Chester**

Local authority: Cheshire West and Chester

Dates of inspection: 26 November 2015

Date of last inspection: April 2010

School's unique reference number: 135635

Headteacher: Claire Spinks

Inspector's name and number: Ruth Wall 548

School context

Wharton Church of England School is a larger than the average size primary school with 386 children on roll. Children come from a wide mix of socio-economic backgrounds. The percentage of children eligible for the pupil premium is similar to the national average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is slightly below average. Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes in school leadership, staffing and governance.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Wharton as a Church of England school are good

- Distinctive Christian values permeate relationships throughout the school and result in the school being a happy and secure place to learn and work.
- The vision and drive of the headteacher, supported by the school community, are effective in driving all aspects of the school forward.
- Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well supported by broad learning experiences and interactive activities.
- The strong link with Christ Church impacts positively on pupils and promotes the Christian character of the community.

Areas to improve

- Involve the whole school family in a review of the mission statement and aims so that they reflect the school's distinctive Christian ethos.
- To ensure that Christian distinctiveness and effectiveness underpin the school's development, governors need to work with senior leaders to formally evaluate and plan their ongoing development.
- In order to develop the pupils' confidence and skills, promote their greater involvement in the planning and leading of collective worship.

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

Christian values make a positive impact in all areas of school life and are evident in the attitudes of adults and children. Embedding Christian values is a major focus for the school. Children speak with pride about the values chosen by their own classes. The creation of the 'Christian Values Tree' display, described as a huge undertaking by the whole school, stresses the importance and permanence of the values. Children explained, 'The roots of the tree show the Christian values', and, 'If these are strong, we stand tall'. Vibrant displays and Christian signs and symbols are evident throughout the school. These emphasise the school's distinctiveness and support the children's spiritual awareness and development extremely well. Spiritual development is excellent. Time for reflection is integral to both worship and learning. The resulting calm and peaceful atmosphere contributes to the pupils' outstanding behaviour. A group of parents affirmed that this helps to influence children's conduct at home. The school has put in place strategies for raising attendance and are very pleased with the improvement made. There is a focused Christian perspective given to planning across the curriculum. Children are engaged both as enthusiastic learners and independent thinkers. Whole-school values activity days are successful. They help children to learn about life, learn from life and make a response in applying their learning to living out their beliefs and values. 'One World' weeks, with multi-sensory experiences, artists and specialists, have enabled children to learn about cultural diversity and sustainable development. Christian values also support the development of the children's strong social and emotional learning, their self-esteem and their confidence in their dealings with others. Children show concern for world issues and, as an expression of their Christian service, support a range of charities. Religious Education (RE) makes an outstanding contribution to both children's understanding of Christianity and to cultural education. Children agree that learning about other faiths gives them a respect and understanding for diversity. Opportunities for pupils to learn from religion, by making a creative response to their learning, have resulted in moving creative writing and thoughtful art work. Children know that any issues are dealt with promptly and fairly and as a result they feel valued and secure. In this happy learning environment attitudes to learning are excellent. From a lower than average starting point, children make expected or better levels of progress. Current progress data shows that over the last three years progress has been good or better across school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is central to the life of the school. It is inclusive, vibrant and valued by all. Children particularly enjoy being involved through music, visual stimuli, and drama. Staff agree that they enjoy worship. One teacher commented, 'It provides a time for me personally to feel refreshed and renewed'. Christian tradition is seen in the artefacts used as part of worship and in the use of traditional prayers such as the Lord's Prayer. Worship provides the opportunity for quiet reflection and prayer, and children respond well and respectfully to this. The quality of singing is outstanding and enhances the worship experience. The headteacher, coordinator and church leaders plan themes together based on Christian values, the Bible and major Christian festivals. Themes introduced in worship are followed up in class worship and in other areas of the curriculum. Children are involved in presenting worship when their class Christian value is the school focus. They are not developing their skills in planning and leading worship independently and leaders recognise the need to include this in school improvement planning. Children are developing their skills in evaluating the way worship challenges them. Beautifully presented evaluation books in each class emphasise the importance of pupil voice. Their comments have led to changes being made. Children have a very good knowledge of the life and person of Jesus and a developing understanding of the nature of God. Children reflected, 'God is all powerful, knows everything, is everywhere', and, 'The Holy Spirit helps us to see when we have done wrong and how to put it right'. The close partnership with Christ Church enriches worship. Children say that the families and children's minister 'makes it interesting and fun'. Relatives and governors enjoy joining the school for worship for special services. Prayer is a

very important aspect in worship and during the school day. Worship areas in all classrooms are used effectively and include children's prayers for sharing in class worship, including, 'When I pray I feel safe, like I am in God's arms'. Demonstrating children's personal response to prayer, some are marked as private prayers to God.

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

The headteacher's Christian vision is supported by the school community and lived out in action. Her leadership has been a driving force for school improvement. She is committed to developing the staff team. School action planning has highlighted the need to revise the school's mission statement, with the whole school community, as it does not reflect the school's distinctive Christian character. The way in which staff model caring relationships contributes to the high levels of care demonstrated by the children. Recruitment processes of new staff effectively support the school's church foundation. A recently employed teacher said, 'I have never been in a school with so much emphasis on the children's wellbeing, ensuring they are happy, safe and loved'. School leaders have benefitted from training and on-going diocesan support. This demonstrates a commitment to investing in future development. Governors are actively involved in the life of the school and use their various skills to very good effect. However, they have not developed formal procedures for self-evaluation and strategic planning of the school as a church school. Leadership of RE is outstanding and is highly successful in driving through school development initiatives. The church youth leader's work has proved effective in enhancing the spiritual dimension within school through worship, 'Bible Explorer' courses and a weekly lunchtime club. Leaders and governors recognise the importance of the school's Christian character in creating an ethos which supports effective learning. Parents agree that all children, regardless of ability, are given the same warm Christian nurture and therefore progress well. Children take their responsibilities seriously and are proud of the contribution they make to decision making through the school council. They have made significant changes in school, and beyond to the town council through the pupil forum. The words of one teacher reflects the thoughts of many, 'I feel honoured and proud to be part of such a supportive and caring school, where everyone feels valued and cared for'.

SIAMS report November 2015 Wharton CofE VC Primary School, Winsford CW7 3EP