



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### Witton Church Walk C of E Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Walk

Chester Way

Northwich

CW9 5QQ

**Diocese:**

**Chester**

Local authority:

Cheshire West and Chester

Date of inspection:

23 October 2014

Date of last inspection:

July 2009

School's unique reference number: 111389

Headteacher:

Kathryn Magiera

Inspector's name and number:

Ruth Wall (548)

#### School context

This large school is situated close to the town centre of Northwich. The majority of children reside in the local area, which has some pockets of social deprivation. There are few children from minority ethnic groups and very few children do not have English as their first language. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals and the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national norm. The school was awarded the Family Learning Kite Mark and the silver Quality Mark for Religious Education (RE) in 2013.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Witton Church Walk as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The Christian vision and inspiring leadership of the head teacher, supported by the whole school community.
- The school is extremely successful in creating a caring and Christian environment in which children thrive, succeed and are happy.
- The very strong link between the school and St Helen's Church which supports members of the school community on their spiritual journey.

#### Areas to improve

- To develop a portfolio of assessed RE work, in order that all members of staff will have a sound understanding of expected standards and those being achieved.

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

A strong commitment to Christian values and the development of the whole child underpin the work of the school. Children speak with clarity and conviction about the Christian values that are important for their lives. An example of this was demonstrated in the outstanding presentation given by a group of children on, 'What it means to be part of a church school'. A teacher says she is 'proud to be responsible for sharing our Christian values with the children, their families and the wider community'. The weekly head boy and head girl award celebrates the way in which individual children demonstrate Christian values in their daily lives. Children's Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development is excellent as a result of the focused Christian ethos. The school is rightly proud of its high attendance rates. Behaviour is outstanding and expectations are consistently linked to the school's core Christian values. As a result, children demonstrate high levels of self-esteem and awareness of others. All members of the community know that they are valued and the outstanding ethos of trust and respect is clearly evident. The school has a strong commitment to Christian service in supporting a range of charities. A child reflects, 'Giving is like watering a flower - if we keep watering it, it will become healthy'. High quality displays and Christian signs and symbols emphasise the school's distinctiveness and support the children's spiritual awareness and development extremely well. The school community values the beautiful reflective garden in the school grounds and children say that it is an area where they can think and reflect quietly. A recent external school improvement report affirms that there is evidence of a high standard of work in books and attitudes to learning. The school's rigorous assessment processes indicate that there is a rising trend in progress over Key Stage 2. Children are now beginning to make at least expected levels of progress and school data shows increasingly good achievement levels. The outstanding Christian environment creates a culture in which all children are able to feel secure and supported and this enables them to learn with confidence. Children are made aware that Christianity is a global world faith through a range of activities including their 'Afri-twin' partnership.

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

Collective worship is central to the life of the school. Planning is thorough and incorporates themes based on Christian values, the Bible and major Christian festivals. The vicar and lay minister regularly lead worship and are involved in the planning process. Children demonstrate a high level of involvement and enjoyment through worship. They listened attentively and participated enthusiastically during an act of worship which focused on caring for the world. Children see the value of personal prayer and contribute their own prayers to the 'prayer wall' at the start of worship. Parents comment that children want to bring this experience of prayer into their home lives. Anglican responses and prayers contribute to the development of children's prayer life. Of particular note is the active, yet sensitive way in which the whole school community 'share the Peace' with each other. Worship songs are chosen carefully in order to support the central themes and children sing very well. Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship is embedded, involves all members of the school community and leads to highly effective school improvement. Of particular note is the development of the ethos group. Children in this group demonstrate enthusiasm and leadership skills in planning and leading worship on a regular basis. The school community, including parents, join in worship in the parish church. This creates a valued link with the worshipping life of the church and it enriches the experience of the whole school. The school, church, and other local schools work together on Experience Easter, Harvest and Christmas activities which make an excellent contribution to children's spiritual development, reflection and understanding of key Christian festivals. Worship enables children to understand the

qualities of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit through lighting three candles and in the themes and stories which are included in the planning cycle.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding**

The school has a strong commitment to developing all aspects of teaching and learning in RE which is evidenced in their achievement of the silver RE Quality Mark. There is evidence of outstanding progress in children's books and in their verbal responses. This is achieved through excellent and varied teaching and good use of a wide range of resources. The subject is taught in a creative way and there is a strong emphasis on developing Christian values within each lesson. Children are enthusiastic and say 'we enjoy expressing ourselves creatively in music, dance, drama and art'. Good prior knowledge and thinking skills were demonstrated in a Year 2 lesson on the Bible story of Creation. Children respond confidently when asked to express their opinions and show consideration of other children's ideas and opinions. This makes an outstanding contribution to children's spiritual and moral development. All children with special educational needs are supported very well by skilled and sensitive staff. Visits to the parish church, and places where people of other faiths worship, support and enhance children's learning and give them a strong sense of the multi-faith nature of society. All staff are supported in their professional development and the newly appointed RE co-ordinator is mentored very well by an experienced and knowledgeable colleague. The link governor also provides active support. The subject is monitored thoroughly using observations, book scrutiny and cross-checking of standards. This ensures that highly effective teaching and learning take place. A sound programme of assessment activities and thorough recording of attainment ensure the school maintains high standards in the subject. Marking gives children a clear indication of how their work can be improved and they respond effectively in the 'fix-it' time allocated to do this. A child explains, 'next steps help us improve our work'. Leaders have rightly identified the need for teachers to moderate children's work together to give them an even clearer understanding of all the standards achieved by children. A detailed action plan for RE is incorporated into the school improvement plan and this is monitored regularly by the governing body.

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

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are highly effective in articulating the distinctive Christian vision and ethos and in promoting and establishing that ethos throughout the school and beyond to the community. The headteacher's Christian faith is evident in all aspects of her leadership. Foundation governors are knowledgeable and have a clear understanding of their role. They seek the views of all stakeholders in reviewing the Christian distinctiveness of the school. This includes the mission statement and aims. Leadership has responded to reports from external advisors and there are now excellent structures in place for self-evaluation of the church school status. All aspects of governance incorporate church school distinctiveness and ensure the continuing development of the school's Christian foundation. Provision is made for staff to attend training in order to support succession planning for future leadership in church schools. Parents recognise the distinctive Christian qualities of the school and speak highly of the respect with which they and their children are treated. Parents also speak positively about the many ways in which the school and church work together. 'It is good to see the children having fun in church' is one parent's comment. Members of the school community speak very highly of their family support worker. There are numerous examples of how she has provided 'invaluable support' of a practical and pastoral nature to individuals and families. Her work is rooted in the Christian ethos of the school. Children have many areas of responsibility and know that their opinions and ideas are valued. The Christian character of the school is clearly defined and effectively promoted so as to make a significant impact on the spiritual development and academic needs of the children. There is a clear focus on encouraging children to be reflective in their learning which has increased expectations for the whole school community.

