



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Whitchurch CE (VC) Junior School

Salisbury Rd,
Whitchurch,
Shropshire,
SY13 IRX

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Lichfield

Local authority: Shropshire

Date of inspection: 19 May 2016

Date of last inspection: 4 May 2011

School's unique reference number: 123514

Headteacher: D West

Inspector's name and number: R M Gale 337

School context

Whitchurch CE VC Junior school is a three from entry junior school with 327 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils live within the local community. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. There have been changes to the wider leadership team since the previous inspection. The school has very close links with St Alkmund's church and the local community.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Whitchurch CE VC Junior as a Church of England school are good.

- The respectful and articulate pupils who demonstrate good attitudes to learning.
- An effective Christian environment permeated by positive values in which learning flourishes.
- The ambitious vision of the headteacher, supported by the governing body to enable the school to move forward.
- The positive and inclusive support for vulnerable pupils.

Areas to improve

- Develop further opportunities to deepen pupils' understanding of spirituality through effective questioning and the enhancement of reflection areas.
- Be more explicit in linking the school's Christian values to the life and teachings of Jesus.
- Build upon the firm Christian foundations in the school by increasing pupils' knowledge of the Bible.
- Extend links with St Alkmund's church by providing opportunities for pupils to learn about the Eucharist.

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

Whitchurch CE VC Junior School is a happy, secure and caring environment where pupils are supported fully in all aspects of learning. Christian values are in the "*heads and in the hearts*" of

pupils and staff and the community that supports the school. This school is building on and embedding its Christian beliefs and values to ensure that pupils make good progress. As a result, the majority of pupils meet the national floor standards, which are the minimum standards for the achievement of pupils by the end of Key Stage 2 set by the government. Effective systems are in place to monitor outcomes and target interventions to ensure the needs of all pupils are addressed. They are, therefore, well-prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils are keen to attend school because they see school as an interesting place to be. One pupil stated “*I never want to go home!*” This results in very good levels of attendance and punctuality. Reward systems enable a culture of praise and encouragement and serve as a reminder of the school’s core Christian mission “*Inspiring Achievement for All.*” Behaviour is generally good and pupils report that they feel safe and secure. The pupils clearly relate behaviour strategies, such as the “Stamp out Bullying” and “Give a gift, give a smile” initiatives to the school’s Christian values. As one pupil said “*Jesus was respectful to others and therefore we must follow this rule*”; another stated “*even if you do something bad, turn it around and never give up!*” The core values of the school are clearly displayed in the school environment and pupils know how they relate to their personal lives. They are less secure in explicitly relating these values to the life and teachings of Jesus however. Special areas such as classroom reflection areas, the Japanese garden and outdoor seating areas, with peaceful views over the countryside, give pupils opportunities to develop their spirituality through reflection on the wonder of the natural world. This spiritual development is supported by quality experiences across the whole curriculum. Pupils speak confidently about their learning especially with regard to forest schools and other wild life projects such as the John Muir Awards. This supports the way pupils are encouraged to appreciate a sense of awe and wonder from their learning. Pupils talk positively about religious education (RE) and how this contributes to the Christian character of the school. Monitoring by the RE subject leader shows that the RE scheme of work impacted well upon this. Pupils have a growing understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith, and the difference and diversity between faith communities. This is due to effective links, such as the African Pearl choir. Wall displays and artefacts visually express the school’s Christian distinctiveness and promotes discussion and debate. The display on the liturgical calendar is one such example. Fund raising events such as “Christian Aid”, “Children in Need” and the work of the choir within the community celebrate the school’s Christian outreach. In all these ways, pupils are committed daily to making a difference to the lives of others as well as their own families. All of this is supported by effective Christian moral teaching and guidance. Members of the school council speak proudly of their team work, maturity and responsibility for God’s world. They are encouraged to be pro-active and responsible. Pupils have a good sense of self-belief and self-worth and are being prepared well for their journey in life.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The school promotes acts of worship in a setting which encourages active participation rather than passive attendance, thus making it special and distinct. Collective worship provides opportunities for pupils’ spiritual development as well as informing their behaviour, attitudes and relationships. It deepens their understanding of where the school’s values “sit” within the Christian tradition. Pupils have recently started learning a bible memory verse to support their developing understanding of these values. These keep the values “*at the heart of the school*” as one pupil said. Collective worship is highly valued and pupils enjoy worship. They understand that responses, prayer and song are central elements to the structure of worship and participate fully in these. One pupil was able to use British sign language to exemplify key words directly related to worship and is also exploring how these signs can be shared with the whole school community. The spiritual atmosphere of worship is enhanced by music playing on entry and exit. This promotes reflection and reverence. Pupils in years 3 and 4 were able to explain about the importance of the Trinity and used practical examples to support their developing knowledge such as references to an “*apple with its skin, flesh and seed.*” Collective worship is delivered by a range of leaders from school, parish church and the community. Daily worship is overseen and monitored by the headteacher, who ensures that Christian values as well as the seasons and festivals of the Christian year are fully explored. More explicit links to Bible stories would

ensure a consistent approach and a broader coverage. Pupils and parents join with the church community for major Christian festivals and special services. These services are enjoyed by the pupils and promote their understanding of core Christian beliefs. "Experience" sessions at church also support pupils' understanding of these aspects. They have contributed art work towards a school stained glass window and a temporary church window to enhance worship and reflection. The central image of the window represents children's growth during their time at school. Images of St Alkmund's church are also represented as well as images of happy children holding hands. Pupils have yet to explore aspects of the Eucharist and its centrality to worship at St Alkmund's. Each week pupils collaborate in the writing of prayers linked to the focus Christian values of "respect" last term and "cooperation" this term. These prayers are then shared at Friday celebration worship and also included in the regular news letters. The school council have requested that prayers are said regularly during the school day. They have written a variety of prayers for this purpose. Prayer boxes give further opportunities for pupils to make prayer personal to their own lives. As one child said "*prayer helps you to get closer to God*". Worship is monitored using pupil voice and direct observation in a variety of settings by governors. Parents state that attending worship "*is a must*" as the worship experienced is "*lovely and supports community fellowship.*"

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

Christian values are central to the life of the school. Leaders consistently model the school's values. The headteacher, supported by governors and in particular the foundation governors, share a clear ambitious vision for the school as a Church of England school. The governing body have undertaken a theological reflection on the school's values resulting in a clear understanding on how each value supports pupils' spiritual and personal development. There is a close and fruitful relationship between St Alkmund's Church and the school. The pupils speak of it as '*their*' church - as do many of their parents and grandparents who grew up in the town. The relationship is kept strong by mutual involvement – the church in the school and vice versa. Members of the church family are part of the school community and support the school both prayerfully and practically. Parents are very supportive of the school. They attribute the strengths of the school to its family ethos and Christian values. They say that this has an impact on the development of pupils in the widest sense. The school is described as a welcoming place by pupils, parents and visitors, who are sure their views are respected and acted upon. They comment on the openness of the staff and the headteacher, resulting in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. Pupils visit the church often as part of their religious education as well as for worship during key Christian festivals. This gives pupils a developing experience of Anglican tradition. There is an active, elected school council and this gives pupils an opportunity to take democratic responsibility for their school. The RE subject leader and worship co-ordinator are effective in their monitoring and evaluation responsibilities. The headteacher and governors, through targeted professional development and succession planning, have strengthened the school's capacity to plan for the future. This ensures staff are trained for potential future church school leadership. Governors monitor and evaluate the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school as a church school, suggesting ideas to develop and delegating resources as appropriate. Leaders use additional funding such as pupil premium and sports funding effectively to support the individual needs of pupils. Partnerships and links with other faith traditions are developing and this enriches pupils' experience of cultural diversity. The developments points identified in the previous inspection have been addressed.

SIAMS report May 2016 Whitchurch (VC) Junior School, Whitchurch, Shropshire SY13 IRX