



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Whixall Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School

Brownsbrook
Whixall
Whitchurch
SY13 2SB

Previous SIAS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Lichfield

Local authority: Shropshire

Date of inspection: 2 July 2015

Date of last inspection: 18 June 2010

School's unique reference number: 123516

Headteacher: Nicola Brayford

Inspector's name and number: Allyson Taylor 768

School context

Whixall Church of England Primary school is a small rural school with 126 learners on roll, taught in five classes. The majority of learners are of white British background. The number of children on roll with additional learning needs and those in receipt of pupil premium funding has increased in the last three years. There is a privately run nursery on site.

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

- Dedicated, child-centred leadership of the headteacher, staff and governors, which is motivated by Christian principles and ensures all members of the school community feel nurtured in their personal lives and learning
- A shared Christian vision means this is a school filled with love and mutual respect where individual achievements are celebrated by all
- The excellent way Christian values support learning across the curriculum and learners' well-being at home and in school
- Longstanding support from members of both local churches which extends and deepens learners' understanding of the Christian faith

Areas to improve

- Embed formal systems for governors to monitor religious education (RE) so the impact of development plans may be better evaluated
- Increase the opportunities for learners to independently plan and lead worship, indoors and outdoors, to provide more variety in the worship life of the school
- Create a definition of spirituality to inform planning for spiritual development

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

Whixall school puts the needs of learners first. All adults, and indeed many learners, are examples of the Christian duty of care for others. Members of staff go the extra mile to ensure the range of learners' needs is met. The school has established a culture for living and learning based on seven Christian values: respect, trust, forgiveness, thoughtfulness, perseverance, caring and supportiveness. These were chosen by all members of the school community and are widely understood as related to the Bible. The chosen values are a constant touchstone for all aspects of school and often influence family life beyond the school day. For example, parents describe how their children talk about persevering with their reading or even learning to ride a bike. One child described the impact of perseverance: 'it gives us an extra boost of determination.' Showing the values during the day is rewarded by a system of coloured cubes. These are celebrated on Fridays when the whole school rejoices in which of the seven values they have shown most and which might need more focus. As a result, the chosen Christian values have a positive impact on learners' approaches to learning and to their personal development and well-being. Relationships across all the ages are based on mutual support and respect. Learners, some of whom have additional needs, feel safe and secure and so tackle challenges in their work. Consequently, they make expected progress from their individual starting points and the majority of learners achieve test results in line with national averages. The school provides good support for those who need extra help, notably with regard to communication skills, reading and writing. Christian values are at the heart of actions to promote good attendance. RE enables learners to develop their understanding of and respect for those of the Christian and other faiths and for those of different cultures. They have a more limited understanding that Christianity is itself a multi-cultural world faith. Nevertheless, RE makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural growth of learners. The subject has a high profile and is popular with learners who enjoy the practical and creative way it is taught. The school does not yet have a definition of spirituality which is understood by most adults. This restricts teachers from planning for deeper spiritual development through RE and the wider curriculum.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is the mortar in the Christian foundation of the school. It enhances the day to day lives of the whole school community. The time to come together, to reflect and to share thoughts and prayers is valued by all ages. Acts of worship are consistently based on the Bible and teaching of Jesus. The school also plans worship to reflect its Christian values. Bible stories are used regularly to illustrate these and to help learners to apply them in their own lives. Worship is led by the headteacher, some staff and local clergy. There is a good level of support for worship from local clergy and church volunteers. Their contribution gives learners experience of some Anglican traditions. At this time, learners have a basic understanding of the Christian belief in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Most learners have the opportunity to lead school and church worship and do so with enthusiasm. An informal group of learners has taken a special role in developing child led worship recently and this is set to continue. The 'worship group' expresses a wish to plan and lead worship, both indoors and outside, on a more regular basis. Prayer and time for reflection are central to worship. All learners know the Lord's prayer. Each class writes its own prayer which may be used at lunchtime and the end of the day, although this is not consistent in all classes. One child commented that 'the Lord's prayer is our school prayer; we all know it and it says it all.' The school attends services to celebrate the main Christian festivals in both local churches and uses the buildings for curriculum study as well as worship. Parents' views of worship are sought in a questionnaire and their comments confirm how much family members appreciate attending church with school. This has led to a closer relationship between some families and the local churches. Governors attend worship and talk to learners about their views. Feedback from such monitoring has led to improvements in provision, for example using prayers written by class 5 in whole school worship.

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

Leaders of Whixall school shine as beacons of faith in action; faith in each other and faith in the children in their care. They are secure in the faith Christ has placed in them to serve the needs of the school. All leaders continuously live out their shared vision that each member of the community experiences 'life in all its fullness.' Through their leadership, the Christian values are the lifeblood of the school. This is seen in the practical application of the values which leads to good overall academic progress and excellent personal development. Leaders' knowledge of each individual shapes their decisions. They use resources to meet the increasingly complex needs of learners. Governors are well-informed about progress and standards and take appropriate action to steer improvements in both, for example, managing staff changes to maintain continuity for learners. The school is blessed in the outstanding dedication of the headteacher. She, ably supported by governors and local clergy, provides the role model for ensuring each child knows they are unique and loved. Partnerships with families are exceptionally strong and of mutual benefit. Parents describe the way individual members of staff in school support them in times of difficulty as well as caring for their children. They speak with great warmth and appreciation of the difference the headteacher makes in creating a positive learning environment. In this way, the impact of the Christian values is seen in family as well as school life. Links with the local churches and diocese are good and have developed further since the last inspection, for example learners used both churches to plan and deliver worship experiences based on the 'Stations of the Cross' at Easter. Leaders have addressed all of the areas for development identified in the previous report. They have guided changes in the teaching of RE which have resulted in more consistency in practice across classes and a richer experience in lessons. At present, governors' role in monitoring RE is not fully developed. Systems to link their monitoring to development plans and so enable them to evaluate the impact of actions are not yet embedded, although governors plan to develop this. Statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are met and good provision in both confirms the Christian foundation of the school. Whixall school's Christian character is a palpable, living presence and this is a tribute to the exemplary leadership of all involved in this special place of love and learning.

SIAMS report July 2015 Whixall VC Church of England Primary School SY13 2SB