

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Luke's CE Primary School	
Church Lane, Lowton, Warrington, WA3 2PW	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Liverpool
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Wigan
Date of inspection	09 November 2017
Date of last inspection	March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 106485
Headteacher	Steve Hardaker
Inspector's name and number	Sue Mawdsley 930

School context

St Luke's is a smaller than average voluntary aided primary school. The school predominantly serves an area of social and economic advantage. The proportion of pupils identified as disadvantaged is low but in recent years has increased. The number of pupils with special educational needs is lower than the national figure. Pupils are of predominantly White British origin with very few pupils speaking English as an additional language. Two newly qualified teachers have recently joined the staff. There is currently a lead rector assigned to the school who has responsibility for three parishes, following the recent departure of the school rector.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Luke's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- School leaders have a compassionate and highly ambitious Christian vision for the school community, leading to a shared culture of purpose and achievement.
- Christian values, rooted in Biblical teaching, have a significant impact on all aspects of school life. As a result, very strong personal relationships enable all to flourish.
- Collective worship is highly valued and themes inspire a high level of spiritual and moral reflection which impacts strongly on pupils' personal development.
- Pupils are inspired by religious education (RE). They have a clear understanding of how the themes they study impact on the choices they make in life.
- The school is highly valued by its community. Partnerships are exceptionally strong, inclusive and mutually beneficial.

Areas to improve

- In order to sustain leaders' clear Christian vision for the school, ensure that the school's Christian values are clearly articulated in whole school strategic planning and policies.
- Extend the rich and inclusive spiritual experiences for the school community by developing pupils' leadership of collective worship.

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

St Luke's core Christian values of hope, love, peace and joy are deeply held by the whole school community. They have a significant impact on the success of this happy, caring and popular school. Adults and children speak passionately about the school's mission of 'following in God's way' and how this sits at the heart of a strong commitment for all to flourish. There is a strong sense of the school as a family based on a clear Christian ethos which is embedded in the school's culture. Achievement is high, both academic and sporting, and success is clearly linked with the school's Christian values. Pupils say they love coming to school and absence rates are low as are pupil exclusions. There is a deeply Christian sense of inclusion that permeates all aspects of school life, from the classroom to the sports field. Children with special educational needs and disabilities are particularly well supported. The school was nominated by one parent for a national award for epilepsy and featured in a national magazine. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the commitment of the staff. One parent said about them, 'They don't just talk about the core values, they live them. Nothing is too much trouble for the staff.' The personal development and well-being of pupils is a strength of the school. Pupils have a clear understanding of the Biblical basis of their school values and they relate to each other with care and compassion. 'Our values come from Jesus,' said one child. 'Like Jesus showed love for the paralysed man, we all love and care for each other.' As a result, standards of behaviour are high. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education (SMSC) is woven through the life of the school and is rooted in a Christian vision. There is a shared sense of spirituality throughout the school. Reflection areas in classrooms show pupils reflect and pray sensitively on aspects of their class value. Christian values are clearly embedded in activities such as the school council where members link them with being good moral role models. The school has a deep commitment to social justice. Pupils speak movingly about their school sponsoring a girl in Africa and her picture is displayed throughout the classrooms. RE makes a significant contribution to the school's Christian distinctiveness. Even younger children are able to talk about values such as justice and, for example, how this was shown in the story of Joseph and the pharaoh. The school has been highly proactive in developing the children's understanding and respect for diversity. It recognises this as an important focus for a school with families largely from a White British heritage. Older pupils say how much they learnt from a recent visit by a Muslim outreach worker who spoke about her faith. One pupil said, 'The visit really changed my understanding of Islam. It's important that we learn about other faiths because we all have to get along and remember we are all just one big family.'

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship has a deep and sustained impact on the life of the school. Whole school collective worship is highly valued and pupils speak movingly about the importance of joining together to sing, pray, celebrate and reflect. They particularly value the distinct nature of coming together in a variety of settings. One whole school worship a week celebrates the learning and achievement of a particular class and is well attended by families. Parents join in enthusiastically with singing and reflections. Biblical teaching and Anglican traditions are deeply embedded in collective worship, with a familiar welcome and response. Adults and children hold hands during the grace which provides a moving symbol of the school's view of itself as one big family. Parents value the opportunity to join in with school worship regularly, including attending festivals in church. The presentation of young children's Bibles to Reception children at the annual Harvest Festival has a significant impact on the development of personal spirituality. Both parents and pupils describe how these Bibles become treasured possessions at home. Weekly class worship is valued highly by pupils as a more intimate experience where they can explore their Christian values in a deeper way. Reflection areas in classrooms show how themes inspire a deep response, with personal thoughts and prayers regularly displayed or posted in boxes. Pupils clearly remember a range of worship themes and how the Christian message impacts on their daily lives. One older pupil spoke about the way they talked about their school value of koinonia in class worship. 'This means fellowship,' she said. 'We thought about how we are all part of God's family and it helps us work together as a team and listen to each other.' Pupils show a developing understanding of the Trinity and are able to talk about God appearing to Christians in three different ways. Collective worship is effectively planned. There are explicit links in planning with the school's Christian values and the liturgical year. There is a detailed framework for monitoring and evaluation. Evaluations show the school listens to feedback from adults, governors and pupils and effectively works on aspects of improvement. The school has a well-established 'Worship Wonders' group of children who feedback ideas and have a key role in developing pupil involvement. Worship is led well by a range of people. Pupils participate in leading worship, making up and saying prayers and acting in role plays. To extend the rich experiences already in place, the school has rightly identified giving pupils more responsibility for leading worship as its next focus for improvement.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

There has been significant progress in the quality of religious education since the last inspection. As a result of strong leadership and a clear vision, achievement in RE is now high and in line with core subjects in the school. Pupils are inspired by RE and many opportunities are provided to investigate themes and use a wide range of skills to think more deeply. Pupils eagerly share their work. They point out in their books many examples of the impact of religion on believers and delve deeply into questions of meaning and purpose. The school has found creative ways of overcoming a lack of local places of worship to visit. The internet is used to great effect to take classes on virtual tours of different places of worship. Pupils speak about how this helps them understand the religious practices of a range of different faiths. Following a visit from a local church member, older children were able to thoughtfully link the Muslim tradition of the Hajj with Christian forms of pilgrimage. Leadership training in RE is having a significant impact on subject development. Since the last inspection, the RE leader has completed the diocesan programme for Christian leadership. Following her successful participation she was asked to be part of the planning group designing the revised RE curriculum for Liverpool Diocese. This places the school in a strong position to take on the challenges of the new curriculum, designed to stretch children's theological thinking even further. Teaching and learning in RE is of a high quality throughout the school. The quality of teaching is monitored regularly and reported to leaders twice a year. Pupils say they really enjoy RE because it is exciting and relevant to their lives. In one Year 4 lesson the teacher effectively explored the metaphor of light to describe Jesus. Through lighting different lamps in the darkened classroom, one child described light growing in the darkness 'like Jesus's love spreading out'. Another child thoughtfully connected a tripod glass wax lamp with the Trinity and the flames of Pentecost. Links between RE and the school's Christian values are strong and expressed in a variety of ways. For example, one younger pupil described how he wrote a newspaper report on the trust David had in God as he fought Goliath. He said, 'This story makes me think about our class Christian value of trust because I trust St. Luke's community to keep me safe.' High quality teaching and learning is underpinned by a rigorous system for assessment. Moderation between staff is in place that supports consistency of judgments across the school. Since the last inspection, teachers have worked hard to put in place a framework of child friendly statements that they share with the children in feedback. This enables children to know how well they are doing in RE and identify the next steps in their learning, leading to sustained progress for all groups of learners.

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

The committed headteacher articulates a powerful and passionate Christian vision for the school, securely rooted in Biblical teaching. He is ably supported by an effective deputy, RE and collective worship leader as well as hard working staff and governors. Governors know the school well and give an effective balance of challenge and support for school leaders. They have a clear understanding of their strategic role in a church school. Leaders' Christian vision drives the high standards the school achieves academically as well as in other areas such as sport. Arrangements for religious education and collective worship meet statutory requirements. A deeply held common Christian purpose leads to a tangible sense of love and compassion for every pupil and family. As a result, personal development and well-being amongst the whole school community is very strong. Parents, staff and pupils are united in their appreciation for the dedication of the school's leaders. When talking about the headteacher one child said, 'He loves us all and shows our Christian value of forgiveness because he brings us all together and helps us sort things out.' Similarly, staff clearly see the headteacher as a visionary leader who lives out the school's deeply held Christian mission, valuing and nurturing every member. One newly qualified teacher described the school as a 'Christian community in action. This is a special and unique place. Because we are valued, the children feel valued and it filters right down to everyone.' This is supported by a carefully planned programme of church school training for all staff. A strong Christian vision for the school is clearly articulated verbally by the school leadership and drives every aspect of school life. However, it is not always clearly expressed in written form. A number of aspects of strategic planning, development plans and key policies are not explicitly linked to the school's mission and values. As a result, the school's Christian vision is not fully secured for the future. Partnerships are strong. Since the last inspection the school has achieved a diocesan church school partnership award. However, the school's rector recently left the parish. The current team rector is working hard with school leaders to maintain a strong partnership in the interregnum. For example, pupils and the rector talk enthusiastically about the benefits of the older children joining in with morning communion in church twice a term and a confirmation group continues for pupils. However, the capacity of the team rector in linking with school is stretched. School leaders recognise the vital importance of maintaining and strengthening links during this transition period of local church leadership. Partnerships with parents are a strength of the school. Parents speak passionately about the impact of school leaders on making every family in the school feel valued from 'the very first moment we walk through the door'. There is a clear sense that St Luke's fully upholds its mission of following in God's way and sits at the very heart of its community.