



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

### **Christ Church Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Harden Road  
Leamore  
Walsall  
WS3 1EN

**Previous SIAMS grade: Good**

**Diocese: Lichfield**

Local authority: Walsall

Dates of inspection: 11 December 2014

Date of last inspection: 7 December 2009

School's unique reference number: 104220

Headteacher: Sean Davies

Inspector's name and number: Rosemary Woodward 538

#### **School context**

Christ Church is a small urban primary school of 253 pupils situated in a socially deprived area close to the centre of Walsall. Its bright modern buildings were opened three years ago and are surrounded by extensive grounds which include a forest school area. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs or in receipt of pupil premium funding is significantly above the national average. The present headteacher is in his third year in post. The nearby parish church is currently without a vicar.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Christ Church as a Church of England school are outstanding**

- The very strong leadership of the headteacher who works closely with staff and governors to embed Christian values and relationships in all areas of school life.
- Pupils are very well supported in striving to attain 'life in all its fullness'
- Appropriate and varied opportunities for prayer and reflection underpin school life
- Exceptional levels of care and support that reaches out to encompass all members of the Christ Church family, particularly when circumstances are challenging.
- Strong links with the local church enrich the spiritual life of the school

#### **Areas to improve**

- Encourage pupils to take an increasingly active lead in planning and delivering worship
- Create opportunities within religious education (RE) lessons to explore the concepts and beliefs at the heart of each faith studied with appropriate depth and challenge.
- Build opportunities across the curriculum to provide experiences and develop understanding of the diverse nature of the Christian and other faiths and cultures.

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

Christ Church is a very happy and caring community in which pupils feel valued and secure and are empowered to succeed. The Christian values of love, peace, forgiveness, endurance, friendship and thankfulness underpin all aspects of school life. They are clearly displayed in age appropriate ways around the school, alongside explicit links to related Bible verses. Pupils have a clear understanding of the values' meaning and can talk confidently about their relevance to themselves. They also relate them clearly to Jesus' teaching. These values are modelled very well by staff who are passionate in their role of providing care and nurture for their pupils. Levels of pastoral support are extremely high, with the individual needs of pupils well understood and supported. Teachers champion their pupils' cause passionately even through very difficult times. This loving care enables pupils to flourish and strive to achieve their full academic potential, with progress often well above expected levels. As a result of the enabling support given attendance figures are high and exclusions rare. Behaviour of pupils is of the highest standard. The focus on the value of friendship results in pupils' relationships being extremely respectful and inclusive. The school has very effective strategies for personal, spiritual and emotional development, and ensures that the pupil voice is listened to and acted upon. The school regularly celebrates success, including presenting 'Christian values awards'. The school environment is used extremely well to promote spiritual development, providing many inter-active areas to enrich spiritual thought and reflection. Nurture groups in the forest school area that include the writing and hanging of prayers on trees demonstrate the way in which Christian care is embedded and lived out in school life. Pupils and their parents share many examples of specific nurture that has sustained them during challenging situations. They constantly relate these to the underpinning Christian love lived out by the school and church. This all-embracing community is constantly referred to as 'the Christ Church family'. Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions, and are taught to develop and serve as responsible citizens, including being given opportunities for charity and community service. Considerable steps have been taken to develop issues regarding community cohesion highlighted during the previous inspection, although the nature of the school's locality means that this remains an ongoing challenge. Well planned RE lessons enrich the understanding of and respect for a variety of faiths and cultures, but the breadth of study means that the concepts that lie at the heart of belief are not always explored in depth.

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

Well planned and relevant worship is central to school life for the Christ Church family and has a key role in developing the pupils' personal spirituality. Children are confident in discussing its importance to them and are able to share things they have learnt from worship. The school's Christian values are constantly referred to within worship times. Pupils have a good understanding of the Christian belief in the Trinity, explaining that God can be known as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is reinforced by the use of a three branch candle during worship, and a reminder that, although the candle is extinguished, God remains with us during the day. Older pupils can discuss how Jesus was both God and God's son, and how His death and resurrection offers new life to believers. Pupils also know Jesus as teacher and story teller and God as creator, while nursery pupils are confident of Jesus' central place in the Christmas story. Pupils very much enjoy singing and praise and can link the content of the songs to the Christian message. They talk confidently about the Bible and can share stories that they know and enjoy, and something of their meaning. Whole school, Key Stage, house and class groupings for worship ensure that content is relevant and age appropriate so that children can participate fully. Prayer underpins the life of the school, with many opportunities for worship within classrooms supplemented by the provision of 'the reflection room'. This contemplative and inter-active prayer space is used frequently by the whole school community, not only children but also adults. Parents regularly visit to spend time here, and speak very positively of its importance. It is also available to those of other faiths such as Muslim staff, who appreciate this aspect of inclusivity. The centrality of worship throughout the school community means

that prayer and reflection are also a feature of staff and governor meetings. The importance of worship has also been recognised by the recent provision of a generous budget for worship resources. There are now very effective strategies for evaluating worship in the school and pupils and parents have been consulted for their views which are then acted upon. These have indicated a desire by pupils to be further involved in the planning and delivery of worship. The recent formation of a worship committee is a first step to enabling children to take more responsibility for their own spiritual development through exploring new opportunities. The pupils' understanding of the Anglican tradition is strong, and the partnership with the local church has been greatly strengthened since the last inspection. Whole school worship is enriched by the provision of beautifully embroidered liturgical coloured cloths. The use of these colours is reinforced through their use in class worship areas. Pupils have a very good understanding of the principle Christian festivals, and are confident in using the Lord's prayer. All pupils greatly enjoy and value opportunities to visit and worship in the church, and these times are also strongly supported by parents, as are open school worship times. Recent teaching about the meaning and place of the Eucharist with older children culminated in the introduction of a Holy Communion service for pupils. They speak with great understanding and respect for this new opportunity to worship.

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

The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school as a beacon for Christ within a very needy local area. This vision is fully shared and endorsed by the whole staff team and governing body. Dedicated staff work hard to ensure that the vision becomes reality. The school's mission statement – 'Achieving excellence, inspiring dreams, opening minds, creating futures' is explicitly linked with the school's Christian values, strong church links and the distinctive Christian foundations of the school within the school's self-evaluation documentation. Governors are very active within the life of the school, taking a full role within the school's leadership team. They are involved in the school's self-evaluation process and taking a role in strategic planning for its future. There have been positive steps to involve governors in listening to the views of pupils, so they can discuss the impact of the school's Christian effectiveness with confidence. Staff are supported very well and given good opportunities to develop professionally. All staff are involved in leading worship and embedding the Christian values across the whole curriculum, with excellent guidance from a dedicated member of the senior management team. Parents speak extremely highly of the care and support offered by the school, not only to their children but to their whole family. Many share their own experiences and give specific examples of how the Christ Church family 'does what it says on the tin' and previously unhappy children have thrived on coming to this 'amazing school' which is described as 'an oasis of calm' in this troubled area. Parents recognise the strong partnership with the church and see the community as a 'Christ Church family' that includes school, church and parents. They explain that Christian support does not end with the school day. They assert that the school do not just talk about its Christian values, they live them, and 'if we can't go to church, church come to us through the school'. They affirm that every pupil is seen not just as a child but as a unique individual. One tells of how, during a very difficult family situation, the school 'tightened the safety net around their daughter without making her feel different'. Instead she was secure and loved and as a result made significant academic progress instead of 'falling apart'. Parents talk of staff modelling Christian relationships and this being reflected in the way parents relate to one another. They also recognise the servant role played by the headteacher. Many parents attend worship events in both school and church and value these very highly. Despite the interregnum the church continues to work in close partnership with the school offering strong support through its curate, lay readers and wider membership. This is augmented well by visits from a youth worker based in a nearby church, something pupils see as a real highlight. Ties with the Diocese are strong and staff and governors benefit from their training and resources.

