



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St. Nicholas CofE Primary School

Nicholas Road
Liverpool
L23 6TS

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Liverpool

Local authority: Sefton

Dates of inspection: 11 March 2015

Date of last inspection: June 2009

School's unique reference number: 104922

Headteacher: Rebecca Woods

Inspector's name and number: Jean Forward (625)

School context

St. Nicholas is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of children from minority ethnic groups is lower than average. The proportion of children with special educational needs or disabilities is below the national average as is the proportion of children who receive funding through the pupil premium. St. Nicholas has recently become a teaching school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness St. Nicholas as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The strong Christian leadership of the headteacher and her vision for the development of the school ensure church school distinctiveness is a priority.
- The school is extremely successful in creating a caring environment underpinned by Christian values which has a direct influence on children's well-being and academic success.
- Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is outstanding and is rooted in the school's Christian ethos.
- The school's focus on developing all aspects of Religious Education (RE) has a positive impact on children's understanding of Christianity and other faiths.
- Links with the parish church of St. Nicholas, Blundellsands are extremely strong. As a result, children have a clear sense of belonging to the wider Christian community.

Areas to improve

- Fully develop the school's new RE assessment portfolio in order to establish clear and consistent moderation of children's work.
- Re-establish Eucharistic worship throughout the school in order to extend children's knowledge, understanding and experience of Anglican liturgy.

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 are able to talk about the importance of core Christian values in the context of the teaching and example of Jesus. The school's promotion of these values is evident across the curriculum and in the daily life of the school. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is outstanding as a result of the focused Christian ethos. 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. Children are extremely courteous, friendly and responsible. They know that their opinions and ideas will be valued. They comment that they are able to share concerns with their teachers and they know that these will be addressed in a sensitive way. Parents say that the school prepares children extremely well for the transition to secondary education. They also say that they feel welcome in the school and that staff are approachable and supportive. They commented on the fact that their children are excited and enthusiastic about learning and that 'the school develops happy people'. The school has a strong commitment to Christian stewardship, supporting a range of charities including Water Aid, Comic Relief and Oxfam. Children spoke of the importance of showing generosity and compassion for those in need. A child said, 'We realised that there are people in our area who need help.' As a result, the school now supports a local food bank. Colourful displays and Christian signs and symbols emphasise the school's distinctiveness and support the children's spiritual awareness and development extremely well. Attractive classroom displays relate to themes in Religious Education (RE) and Christian values. Children value the reflection areas in their classrooms and outside and say that these help them to think and pray. The school delivers highly effective teaching about other faiths through RE and cross-curricular work and this contributes well to children's cultural development and their positive attitudes to the diverse nature of society. Ofsted Data Dashboard and the school's own analysis show that attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics are above the national average by the time children leave in Year 6. 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. Links with St. Nicholas church are well-established and members of the congregation are involved in joint activities including the development of the outdoor reflection area and Experience Easter.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The act of collective worship is central to the life of the school. Planning is thorough and incorporates themes based on Christian values, the Bible, major Christian festivals and saints' days. When appropriate, the worship plan also includes reference to key festivals of other faiths. The school places Christ at the centre of all it does and collective worship enables children of all ages to understand how the teaching of Jesus guides Christians in their daily lives. The experienced co-ordinator monitors and evaluates the planning and delivery of worship. There is a clear programme of observations and opportunities for the whole school community to evaluate individual acts of worship. The children demonstrate a high level of involvement and enjoyment. The whole school listened attentively during an act of worship focused on peace which had been prepared and was led by a group of Y6 children. Children eagerly participate and love to lead worship, both whole school and in the classroom. They work in worship teams and enjoy selecting greetings and dismissals, music, stories and prayers. They also choose symbols to place on the worship table in the hall. Silence and moments for reflection play an important part in the school's approach to prayer. Anglican responses and traditional prayers also contribute to the development of children's prayer life. Music and worship songs are chosen carefully in order to support the central themes. The parish priest from St. Nicholas church leads worship in school and supports many activities linked to the development of the children's faith and understanding. The school worships in the parish church for major festivals. Y6 children also attend a celebration of the Eucharist in church which is linked to work in RE. It would be of great value to the worship cycle and the children's experience if the Eucharist could return to being a whole school celebration. Visits to the church make an excellent

contribution to children's spiritual development, reflection and understanding of key Christian celebrations and create a unique link with the worshipping life of the parish and the Anglican tradition. Worship also enables children to deepen their understanding of the qualities of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The school has a strong commitment to developing all aspects of teaching and learning in RE using the diocesan syllabus. Progress is outstanding and standards are comparable to those in other subjects. 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 with a strong emphasis on developing Christian values within each lesson. There is an excellent balance between learning about religion and learning from religion. Children are enthusiastic and say that they enjoy a variety of written activities, discussion, role play and art. Good prior knowledge and thinking skills were demonstrated in a Year 2 lesson about the Paschal candle. Children in Year 6 used prior learning when they completed group tasks about similarities and differences in world faiths. They responded confidently when asked to express their opinions and their written work was of an extremely high standard. The sharing and careful consideration of ideas and opinions make an outstanding contribution to children's spiritual and moral development. Use of the outdoor reflection area is incorporated into lesson planning and this further enhances children's spiritual awareness. One child commented that 'everyone enjoys RE' and another said, 'We learn to respect others in our lessons'. The well-informed and committed co-ordinator monitors the subject thoroughly using observations, book scrutiny and cross-checking of standards. The school has recently established development practice teams for RE which provide excellent opportunities to work co-operatively on raising standards in teaching and learning. A sound programme of assessment activities and effective recording of attainment ensure the school maintains high standards. The recent introduction of a standards portfolio has the potential to enhance the moderation of children's work. High quality marking guides children and enables them to understand next steps in their learning. A detailed action plan for RE is incorporated into the school improvement plan. Professional development plays an important part in ensuring that teaching and learning are of the highest quality.

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

The headteacher is a dedicated Christian leader who takes every opportunity to promote the school's distinctive Christian character. Through her leadership, staff and governors are committed to sustaining an outstanding Christian environment in which all aspects of children's development and well-being are fostered and promoted through biblical teaching and Christian values. The headteacher attributes children's successful learning to the ability to draw on their understanding of the Christian way of life and the Christ-centred qualities of the school. The extremely strong senior leadership team is highly effective in identifying clear priorities for the development of the school's Christian ethos. A parent said, 'This is a very special school', explaining that children's happiness and success are rooted in the Christian values at the heart of the school's daily life. Excellent policies and planning have Christian values and the school's vision at their heart. Foundation governors are knowledgeable and have a clear understanding of their role. They are highly effective and support the school in a variety of ways. The Christian distinctiveness committee monitors a range of activities and submits minutes to the full governing body. This ensures that all aspects of church school distinctiveness continue to contribute to the development of the school's Christian foundation. Excellent provision is made for all staff to participate in continuous professional development. This makes a valuable contribution to highly effective teaching and learning throughout the school. The headteacher also ensures that staff have access to training which supports 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 speak enthusiastically about the ways in which the school and church work together to provide an outstanding Christian education.