

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### Highfield St. Matthew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Billinge Road  
Pemberton  
Wigan,  
Lancashire  
WN3 6BL

**Diocese:** Liverpool

Local authority: Wigan

Dates of inspection: 6<sup>th</sup> May 2008

Date of last inspection: June 2004

School's unique reference number: 106450

Headteacher: Mrs Elaine Tyrrell

Inspector's name and number: Graham H Nuttall 456

#### School context

This large school on the outskirts of Wigan receives pupils from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Almost all children are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average and only a small proportion is entitled to a free school meal. The school has gained a number of accreditations including the Activemark, Healthy School and Eco School awards.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Highfield St. Matthew's as a Church of England school are outstanding

Pupils are secure and happy in a vibrant, caring and welcoming school where Christian values underpin all aspects of school life. The spiritual depth evident within the community has been created in an environment where the presence of God is both acknowledged and celebrated. As a result of the outstanding provision made by the school pupils make exceptional progress in their learning and personal development. Links with the church and local community are very strong.

#### Established strengths

- High standards of provision and outcome for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- A highly effective leadership team that has a clear Christian vision for the school.
- The promotion of Christian values and Anglican traditions through some outstanding acts of worship.
- Exceptionally high levels of care and guidance for pupils within a firm and supportive Christian ethos.

#### Focus for development

- Develop the existing framework for assessment in Religious Education (RE) and incorporate further opportunities for pupils to assess their own work.
- Implement and fully resource the recently revised RE syllabus

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

The school is highly successful in promoting an understanding of the Christian faith and values because of the exceptionally wide breadth of experiences it offers to all pupils. The high levels of self-esteem, maturity and independence evident in children is testament to the dedication of all staff as they encourage the development of confident and caring individuals. The mission statement highlights the Christian values and attitudes expected and the school

exemplifies these in practice. The school is strongly inclusive. This is witnessed by the support given to children recently arrived within the locality. Attitudes of tolerance, respect and care for one another are considered to be important. As a result pupils are confident that their views are valued. Children work co-operatively and accept responsibility in their roles as highly effective school councillors, office helpers, school ambassadors and lunchtime play leaders. Relationships throughout the school are of a very high order. The school is exceptionally well resourced and offers a stimulating environment within which to work and play. Parents speak highly of the school. "We recommend Highfield St. Matthew's because the school promotes sound moral values and positive social skills within a Christian community" is typical of comments offered in support of the school. The Christian foundation of the school is overtly displayed through wall displays, artefacts and Christian signs and symbols. Such displays impact positively on pupils' spiritual development; they are proud to belong to a Christian school. The provision of a broad range of extra-curricular activities together with opportunities for day and residential visits is outstanding. In addition to visiting places of interest within the locality residential visits are organised to the Lake District and France. These activities broaden pupils' social and cultural development and provide them with opportunities to complete team challenges and develop personal skills which they will require throughout their lives.

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

Worship is a highly important element in the school's Christian witness and fully embraces the local Anglican tradition. The appointment of an assistant head with responsibility for both RE and collective worship ensures both areas occupy a prominent place in the life of the school. Planning, based on a two-year cycle, is both detailed and consistent. It ensures that worship is well led and pupils are confident when taking part. Pupils experience a variety of worship styles from different leaders, thus ensuring it remains vibrant and meaningful. Children also lead services throughout the year, both in school and church. As a result they see worship as an integral part of their school life. A deep understanding and an ability to share their prayers in an open and honest manner illustrate how clearly they recognise this. Children of different faiths are given opportunities to share their beliefs with other pupils. A child who had attended a religious festival overseas was able to share her experiences in an act of worship with confidence and pride. Visiting speakers from other churches, both within the UK and overseas, promote interest and discussion amongst pupils. The vicar is pivotal in his ecclesiastical role within the school. He executes his duties with sincerity and honesty. He leads school worship weekly and all Key Stage 2 pupils attend church for Eucharist on a monthly basis. Children take an active part and talk enthusiastically about the experience. This develops learners' understanding of the Anglican faith and practice. The positive attitudes and active participation in worship by all pupils are recognised by parents and visitors as strengths of the school. Good links have been established with a school in South Africa which has brought an added dimension to learning about the Anglican tradition. This helps to broaden the cultural development of pupils.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

Standards of teaching and learning are good, with children engaged and enthusiastic about the subject. Planning is now increasingly linked to developing children's skills and understanding. Practical and well-differentiated tasks are used in lessons which make learning enjoyable and memorable. Teachers use a variety of strategies effectively including drama, mind-maps, ICT and role-play. Staff set challenging tasks and pupils are secure in exploring difficult issues with a level of maturity that highlights the school's focus on developing independent learners. This has resulted in an improvement in children's engagement with RE and they see the subject as one in which they can participate fully. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is enhanced as a result of an increasing number of lessons now focussing on aspects of spirituality rather than on scriptural story telling. Good links between RE and collective worship also impacts on pupils' spiritual and moral development. Standards of attainment in RE are above the diocesan syllabus expectations and particularly by the end of Key Stage 2. The subject is monitored and evaluated well on a termly basis in line with 'best value' principles. The co-ordinator has identified the need to purchase additional resources as a result of the introduction of the revised diocesan syllabus. Two classes are currently trialling pupil self-assessment using the, "I can" statements taken

from the syllabus. This, used alongside teachers' own assessments, is a good tool for measuring progress and attainment to track pupils' progress, but strategies are not yet in place to do this throughout the school.

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

The school is led by a highly effective team including the headteacher, deputy headteacher and governing body. The headteacher and her deputy are dynamic and enthusiastic and this enthusiasm pervades the school. Their day-to-day management and leadership is driven by their total commitment to Christian values. This permeates every aspect of school life. Together with the governors they work exceptionally hard to successfully sustain school improvement, raise levels of self-esteem amongst pupils and support families. Parents speak highly of the energy and commitment of the dedicated staff. The close working relationship between the head, deputy and assistant head with responsibility for RE and worship helps to communicate the Christian vision of the school to all members of staff. As a result all feel confident about their role in sharing the school's ongoing development. Governors have a good understanding of their role and foundation governors speak with clarity about the school's distinctiveness and purpose. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and are very supportive, yet challenging. Governors support pupils in their journey through school by being linked to an individual class. They consider that monitoring and evaluating the progress of the school is an important and integral part of their work and they carry out this task with diligence. Governors and some senior staff have recently utilised self-evaluation materials in order to determine the effectiveness of the school as a church school. As a result there are clear plans and targets for future development.

SIAS report May 2008 Highfield St. Matthew's C E (Aided) Primary School, Wigan WN3 6BL