

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### Hollins Green St. Helen's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Birch Road  
Hollinfare  
Warrington  
WA3 6JS

#### Diocese: Liverpool

Local authority: Cheshire

Dates of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> December 2006

Date of last inspection: 20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2001

School's unique reference number: 111364

Headteacher: Nick Roberts

Inspector's name and number: Graham H Nuttall 456

#### School Context

St Helen's is a smaller than average village primary school attracting pupils from the surrounding villages of Hollins Green, Glazebrook and Cadishead. Most pupils are of white British heritage and of a very mixed socio-economic background. When compared with national norms a slightly larger than average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also statements of educational need. The school is currently working towards Healthy School status.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Helen's as a Church of England school are good

The Headteacher, Governors and staff all seek to apply the Christian values of a church school by promoting qualities of respect and tolerance to others. As a result a friendly, caring Christian environment where everyone is highly valued has been created successfully. The standards of behaviour and the manners of pupils are good illustrations of the school's Christian ethos which underpin all aspects of school life.

#### Established strengths

- A strong, warm, Christian ethos which supports the development of the whole child.
- The mutually beneficial and strong links between the school, the church and the village community.
- The vision and commitment of the Foundation governors, Headteacher and staff towards furthering the Christian foundation upon which the school is based.
- The high quality of personal relationships within the school.

#### Focus for development

- Refine existing structures to evaluate teaching and learning assessments within R.E.
- Expand opportunities for in-service training for all staff teaching Religious Education.

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

Pupils experience a high quality of Christian care in a welcoming and supportive atmosphere. Relationships within the school are good and characterised by care and concern for others. Classrooms are bright, stimulating places where there are many examples demonstrating that 'Every Child Matters' is high on the school agenda. Pupils are very polite, behave well and they are made to feel special by the staff. They get on well with teachers and this contributes significantly to the positive and purposeful atmosphere in lessons. Many parents praised the warm Christian, family ethos evident in the school, stating this attribute as a major factor influencing their choice of this school for their children. The School Council ensures that children have a say in 'their' school. They can discuss issues and consider different viewpoints maturely. Pupils are proud of the fact that the school is now working towards

Healthy School Status. Achievement is celebrated in all aspects of school life and as a result pupils develop tolerance and respect for their peers and adults. The curate-in-charge plays a significant role in supporting the school. The headteacher writes in the Church magazine to help to promote church, school and community links. Christian values underpin all that the school does and are fundamental to the ethos of the school. Foundation governors are rigorous at promoting the distinctive Christian character of their school and as a result pupils receive a firm foundation upon which to build their future lives.

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

The daily period of collective worship is important in the life of the school and is based on sound Christian principles. It provides pupils with opportunities for spiritual growth and reinforces Christian teaching and values. Pupils enjoy coming together as a school to share a variety of well-planned activities and also 'to be quiet for a time during our busy day'. The headteacher and foundation governors talk with tremendous enthusiasm and sincerity about the importance of collective worship in the life of the school. As a result worship is well led and pupils are confident to participate through readings, drama and music. There is a varied pattern in the leading of school worship with both Anglican and Methodist clergy being very regular contributors. Children take part in church services that celebrate major festivals. Pupils look forward to worship and the careful choice of some lively Christian music captures their imagination which encourages a good standard of singing. Children are encouraged to write their own prayers which they can hang on a 'prayer tree' located near to the main school entrance. These prayers are used within school worship and pupils felt that it was important, 'it's when we have our own special time with God'. Pupils also take part in short class prayers and they do so reverently. Children know the importance of thinking of others less fortunate than themselves in their prayers and this is to be commended. However the inclusion of a period of guided personal reflection into collective worship would enhance pupils' experience.

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

Good use is made of the Diocesan syllabus and pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of Christianity although they are less confident about other world faiths. RE lessons make effective use of a range of teaching styles with good emphasis on the use of drama and discussion. Pupils in KS1 were involved in acting out the story of the birth of Jesus and the visitation of the angels to the shepherds. They were frequently asked about the 'feelings' of all the main characters in the story challenging them to think and reflect. Older pupils were asked to compare and contrast the two gospel accounts of the birth of Jesus. Children look forward to lessons 'they are often quite good fun', and they achieve good standards. Teachers demand independent thinking through effective questioning and well-planned lessons encouraging good spiritual and cultural development of pupils. The co-ordinator has made a good start in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning within the subject, however this aspect now needs to be refined and extended. Little in-service training for RE has been undertaken by staff since the last inspection and this aspect should also be developed.

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

Christian leadership by the Headteacher and foundation governors is good. The happy working atmosphere reflects the Headteacher's energetic and 'people friendly' approach and as a result a shared vision has been developed over several years through good consultations. The prospectus points out clearly that the school seeks to provide the best possible Christian based education and it succeeds in this aim. The Headteacher is very well supported by his staff. All members of staff are aware of the importance of Christian education. The school provides effective pastoral support that is highly sensitive to children's needs. Governors play an important part in supporting the school and carry out their management responsibilities most conscientiously. Parents recognise that the school has a distinctive Christian quality, and whilst not all are regular church attenders, they are happy to support this ethos because of the positive effect it has on their children's personal development and sense of identity.