

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Hilda's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Whittaker Lane
Prestwich
Manchester
M25 1HA

Diocese: Manchester

Local authority: Bury
Dates of inspection: 22 October 2007
Date of last inspection: 5 to 7 February 2001
School's unique reference number: 105351
Headteacher: Ross McMurdo
Inspector's name and number: Janet Cowley

School context

St Hilda's is a small school. Although numbers on roll have reduced, the number of pupils admitted in the foundation stage this year has increased, with the 2008 intake likely to be oversubscribed. Pupils come from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. Most of the children are white British and there is also a transient pupil population. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average as is the number of pupils who have statements of special educational need.

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

St Hilda's is a good Church of England Primary school with some outstanding features. This is because Gospel values permeate every aspect of school life and enable everyone within it to flourish and develop their skills and a valuable part to play in their school, their community and the wider world. There is a clear sense of purpose which binds the school, church and local community together.

Established strengths

- The leadership and management of the school as a church school, which is committed to developing the whole child academically and spiritually.
- The positive attitudes displayed by pupils in Church worship.
- The commitment, co-operation and support of all staff.
- The positive relationships formed in all areas of the school community.
- The quality of teaching and planning in religious education.

Focus for development

- Assessing pupils' progress in religious education.
- Evaluating the impacts of worship and religious education.
- Developing a strategic approach to promoting spirituality across the curriculum.

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

St Hilda's is a happy school where all work together collaboratively and co-operatively. All learners feel safe and secure and express feelings of being valued by other pupils and staff. They have a developing sense of hope for the future as seen by display work showing high aspirations in the careers they wish to follow and their desire to become the best that they can be both academically and through the many extra curricular activities on offer. They express great pride in their school. Pupils' self-esteem is high as expressed in the work of the school council and the realisation of the impact they can have on school life such as the refurbishment of Key Stage 1 toilets and running a tuck shop where pupils manage their own budget effectively. Learners develop well in spiritual matters through their use of quiet areas at lunchtime for reading and drawing despite the limitations of the school site. Spiritual development is less well achieved, however across different subjects of the curriculum. Conflicts are dealt with quickly and with a sense of justice, reconciliation and forgiveness. Learners know what is expected of them and have a highly developed sense of right and wrong as expressed by the school council and by pupils in general. This is reinforced in worship both in school and in church. Pupils of different faiths feel valued because the school is welcoming and inclusive as indicated in parental questionnaire responses.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is important in the life of the school for pupils and staff alike as it successfully reinforces Gospel values. Both pupils and staff value worship in church and school. Pupils speak positively about worship, particularly that in church, expressing awe and wonder at what they see, hear and experience, "it's a very special place for us". They show respect and reverence in worship, but also enjoyment, particularly of the input of the incumbent, "we like his stories and when he walks near to us". Pupils understand elements of Anglican faith and practice quite well because they use a children's hymn book which includes traditional and modern hymns, celebrate major Christian festivals in Church and prayer follows the Anglican tradition. Pupils know the Lord's Prayer, but their understanding of it is less certain. The new school prayer, written by pupils is a positive development. The pupils welcome times of quiet and stillness and they have the skills to reflect well. The strong impact of worship is aided by the clear aims in the worship policy. However, the school does not evaluate the impact of worship in formal ways.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Pupils learn about religion and from religion well. This was particularly so in a lesson on Martin Luther King where pupils were beginning to explore what drives a person to do extraordinary things for the good of all. Learners talk in depth and with confidence about fundamental concepts and challenging issues and show a high level of maturity with the subject content. Learners are positive about religious education, speaking about their learning with enthusiasm and enjoyment. For example, many pupils wanted to stay and discuss issues from the lesson with their teacher, rather than having a break because the relevance of the topic was extremely powerful. The positive impact of religious education is due to the high quality of the teaching. Teachers are confident in the content have positive relationships with pupils and excellent classroom management. They plan well and are well supported by the co-ordinator. There is no assessment of pupils' progress in RE although this is identified in the development plan.

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

The Christian vision for the school is articulated clearly by the mission statement devised by the head teacher, governors, staff and pupils. This is evident in policies and other public documentation. Christian values stand at the centre of school life and staff actively support them. Relationships with the local church and diocese are positive, with support being given on a wide range of issues. The chair of governors knows the school well, has the needs of the children at heart and, together with other governors, provides challenge and support to the head teacher and takes an active role in the life of the school. Leaders have an accurate knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of most aspects of the school and a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve further but evaluation of the impacts of worship and RE is not undertaken regularly.

November 2007 St Hilda's CE Primary School, Bury. M25 1HA