

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St. Luke's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Lane
Lowton
Warrington
WA3 2PW

Diocese: Liverpool

Local authority: Wigan
Date of inspection: 11th December, 2007
Date of last inspection: 30th June – 2nd July 2003
School's unique reference number: 106485
Headteacher: Mrs. Christine Groves
Inspector's name and number: Gaynor Goodson No. 406

School context

St. Luke's is an average sized primary school. The pupils are of predominantly white British origin. The school serves an area of social and economic advantage. Few pupils are eligible for free school meals and the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below the national average. The school has a number of awards including Investors in People, Activemark Gold, Work Life Balance, Basic Skills and one for National Healthy Schools.

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

A strong Christian ethos – centred on Love - permeates the school and brings positive values and attitudes to teaching and learning. Pupils thrive in a happy, relaxed and secure environment. They respond extremely well to the high expectations for behaviour and to the demands made to care for and to show consideration for each other. Adults are excellent role models and deeply committed to providing a strong, distinctive Christian vision for the school.

Established strengths

- Strong Christian leadership.
- The contributions made by religious education and worship to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The quality of relationships between all members of the community of whatever age.
- Regular consultation with all members of the school community.

Focus for development

- To make sure the distinctive character of the school is recognised by making an annual budget allocation for religious education and a separate one for worship.

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

Loving kindness abounds in this school with the full support of a committed head. Children speak of being happy and feeling safe. They learn from the school mission statement to, 'Follow in God's way'. This message is clear for all to see in the beautiful glass panel positioned right at the entrance to the school. Pupils, following the example set for them by others, speak confidently of how they try to make new children in the school feel happy and comfortable. They say their teachers, 'always find time to have a quiet word with you' and can be, 'trusted and confided in'. Policies and rules are based on Christian values and principles. This encourages good relationships, respect and zero tolerance of bullying and racist incidents which is evident in the atmosphere of harmony across the school. Pupils have a very good understanding of what is right and wrong and a sense of fairness and

justice. Staff work hard at helping them to understand that it is personal behaviour that is unacceptable and not an individual. Positive behaviour management is at the core of the behaviour policy and children are able to discuss openly the reasons for, and the consequences of, their behaviour from an early age. As a result pupils show tolerance, consideration and respect for one another. They say, 'We are taught to be like Jesus and help each other'. A Year 3 pupil observed, 'God knows when a person needs help. I like to be the person to help make someone happier inside'. Pupils' self-esteem is high. The school enhances their personal well-being through celebrating achievements, rewarding good works and providing a high standard of pastoral care. Developing social awareness and responsibility is encouraged. Plans to involve Year 6 pupils at new intake induction meetings in the future will provide them with a very public arena in which to share their knowledge and perceptions of the school. The regular use of questionnaires and the school council provides another good opening for developing mature attitudes to serving the wellbeing of the school community. Pupils recognise their views are important and can bring about change. Awareness of their own local community's needs and those of the wider world are successfully raised by the support of numerous charities. Charitable giving, often instigated by the pupils themselves, is a significant feature of school life and to help less fortunate people is seen as a Christian duty. Pupils develop their awareness of cultural diversity during multicultural weeks when they participate enthusiastically in diverse religious and cultural experiences. An emphasis on Christian display provides an environment conducive to promoting spiritual development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.

The collective worship policy accurately reflects the current practice and the school's foundation. The newly appointed collective worship leader has successfully introduced measures to gain feedback from children, governors and parents on the quality of worship. She, the incumbent and members of the senior leadership team have gone to great lengths to ensure the pupils' experience of worship is a very positive one and offers good opportunities for spiritual development. Christingles made by the pupils, gave all those present at an act of worship a good opportunity to demonstrate their ability to interpret symbols. The use of an interactive whiteboard was used very effectively to provide a moving period of quiet reflection with evocative images, appropriate text and a good choice of music. The special class assemblies, which are led entirely by the children, give parents, governors and the rest of the school the opportunity to share in and learn about an aspect of the curriculum the class has been studying. The Year 4 act of worship was of a very high quality and well attended by governors and families of the children involved. Pupils are attentive and focused throughout during these periods. They behave appropriately; keeping to rules they have devised; understanding why candles are lit and how music is chosen to create a mood and atmosphere conducive to quiet reflection. They appreciate what is provided for them and speak very positively about the experiences offered. They willingly participate in reading, leading prayers and dramatising stories. They praise God enthusiastically and tunefully in their singing. Prayer is obviously very important in the life of the school generally. Children learn how and why people pray. They are encouraged to write their own prayers and this helps them feel more involved in acts of worship as they know their prayer requests are often incorporated. They say, 'It feels soothing speaking to God.' 'You can let out all your worries and send them to Him.' 'You feel better inside, even if things aren't sorted out.' 'God listens to all of His children all of the time.' A Year 3 pupil remarked, 'God brightens up my day when I think of Him.' Worship features in the school development/improvement plan and in the plans for continual professional development of teachers (CPD). Resources are currently being audited and a budget has been made available for new materials. The local parish church features significantly in the life of the school community. The Rector introduces a specifically Anglican dimension when he leads worship and liturgical colours are used on the focus table each day. When attending special services in church each term, children are able to further extend their experience of Anglican teaching and practice. Currently Year 5 and 6 pupils join the congregation for a mid-week Holy Communion service, but the school intends to extend this to Year 4 children as well so more pupils can develop an understanding of the Eucharist and its place in Anglican worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

Religious education is clearly recognised as an important subject and is allocated an appropriate amount of curriculum time. In response to the last inspection, there have been significant improvements in standards and the teaching of RE in the school. Some

outstanding teaching was observed using 'role play'. This enabled pupils to 'step into the shoes', of other people and really appreciate their behaviour and feelings. Lessons are well planned, lively and interactive with optimum use being made of interactive whiteboards to motivate and engage the children. Foundation Stage pupils were captivated by the Christmas story and excited at the prospect of being able to smell frankincense and myrrh. Staff seek to achieve a balance between the two attainment targets for RE of learning from and learning about religion. This successfully helps children make sense of their curricular experiences and to progress in spiritual understanding. Pupils are positive about lessons. They ask challenging questions and show a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject content. They are comfortable and confident to speak openly and honestly about their own faith and to learn, through visitors to the school, for example the Epiphany Trust, to empathise and understand the impact of faith on the lives of others. They enjoy the way teachers always try to make lessons interesting and fun. In the school's self-evaluation the need to be more proactive in monitoring RE and particularly assessment processes has been identified for future action. Setting individual targets for pupils in RE is at an early stage of development. Its impact on standards needs to be evaluated with care. Resources have improved more recently and continue to be built on. Children have benefited well from using the more up to date purchases and having access to religious artefacts. An annual budget is not, however, given for RE, although CPD for all staff is now ongoing and this has led to raised staff confidence in the teaching of religious education. The incumbent is used successfully by staff as a valuable resource in their teaching and there are plans to use him more fully in teaching RE.

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

The school sees itself as a vibrant Christian community effectively and explicitly communicating and promoting its Christian foundation and values at every opportunity. This is a view shared by parents. They see the Christian values taught at the school helping in 'character building for life' and have 'treasured' the strong links with the church and found them an 'ideal spiritual environment' for their children. The mission statement and aims, arrived at through extensive consultation, are reviewed and rigorously evaluated annually. They are understood by pupils who know them to be at the heart of what goes on in the school. Appointing staff who have a Christian faith or are supportive of the Christian ethos of the school is seen as a requirement, in the school's promotion of its Christian vision. Staff speak of feeling valued and know they are trusted to be part of a developing, mutually supportive team. They provide good Christian role models for pupils in their behaviour and relationships. The school's diligence in obtaining and acting upon the views of its members is valued by everyone. Working parents speak positively about the good lines of communication which keep them informed about all aspects of school life including church and extended school events. They find the school extremely friendly and welcoming; speak of how their talents are used well to benefit their children's education and many have chosen St. Luke's because of its Christian character. Monitoring and evaluating itself as a church school is an area taken seriously by school leaders. The head has consulted with diocesan officers for help in fulfilling this role and feels supported as a spiritual leader. Working together closely, raising funds and through prayer, the head and incumbent have strengthened the partnership between the school and church. They are committed to achieving a better education and a better life for the children. Pupils foster good relationships with the school's immediate neighbours, who respond positively to cards delivered by Year 6 pupils asking them to look after their school during holiday periods.