

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

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

Heys Lane
Heywood
Lancashire
OL10 3RD

Diocese: Manchester

Local authority: Rochdale

Date of inspection: 11th March 2008

Dates of last inspection: 7th – 11th June 2004

School's unique reference number: 105815

Headteacher: Nigel Castledine

Inspector's name and number: Graham H Nuttall 456

School context

The school serves a mixed catchment area with an increasing number of children experiencing higher than average levels of socio-economic deprivation. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is double the national average. The number of pupils with identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. The school holds the Leading Aspect Award, Activemark and Healthy Schools Award.

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

An ethos based on a clear vision of its Christian foundation underpins the positive values and attitudes embedded within the school. The outstanding leadership of the Headteacher ensures that the school is successful in creating a caring environment where everyone is highly valued. Great care is taken to nurture pupils' personal development and to provide exceptionally high levels of care, guidance and support to both children and their families.

Established strengths

- The clear vision of the headteacher, foundation governors, clergy and staff in promoting a Christian ethos and their commitment to school improvement.
- The exceptional quality of care and guidance offered to all pupils and their families.
- Warm relationships and improving standards of behaviour based on firm Christian principles.
- The highly effective use of external welfare and educational support agencies.

Focus for development

- Adopt self-evaluation strategies in order to ensure the continued development of the school's distinctive Christian ethos.

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

Pupils experience a high level of care in a welcoming and supportive Christian atmosphere; they are friendly and all feel valued. Staff have built up positive relationships with both pupils and their families. The appointment of a Mentor in this respect is innovative and has a good effect on securing the trust and support of families in addition to improving levels of attendance. As a result standards of achievement have been raised, especially amongst pupils who previously encountered barriers to learning. Pupils behave and concentrate well and have a strong sense of well-being because of the good use of external welfare, medical and educational support agencies. Parents appreciate the school and confirm that its values influence their children's lives as seen for example in how they care well for one another and

respect individual differences. Pupils develop a good sense of right and wrong, with rules being consistently applied by staff and children recognising the clear parameters set for them. They are keen to help one another and applaud the efforts of others. The school's close links with St. Margaret's church and its clergy are a considerable strength; for example pastoral links with families are good as a result of parents and children being able to 'drop in' to church and talk with the vicar most evenings after school. Older pupils take on roles such as playground buddies and school counsellors very effectively. These roles opportunities help pupils to develop high degrees of independence, confidence and self-esteem because of the trust and responsibility the school gives to them. Displays of work undertaken in religious education (RE) help to emphasise the school's distinctiveness and impact strongly upon pupils' spiritual development. Local and international charities are well supported and enable pupils to understand world problems and develop their cultural awareness very well. Pupils make a positive contribution to the local community through their involvement in the Rochdale Young People's Forum and the Darnhill Festival.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Worship is important in the life of the school and is based on sound Christian principles. Formal strategies are not yet in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and impact of worship. Pupils have a good understanding of Christian practices because in addition to whole school worship, each key stage visits the church regularly for a service led by the vicar. Pupils make good spiritual growth because worship reinforces Christian teachings and values. They appreciate the church services and the input by the vicar, "it's important to go to church because it's when we think about God". The programme for collective worship is well planned and there is a consistent approach with all leaders following the weekly theme. As a result, pupils are able to consider the strengths and attributes needed to tackle life's problems. Pupils make good moral, social, cultural and spiritual development because class prayers and periods of reflection effectively support worship and because all classrooms have a dedicated area for personal reflection. These areas provide a centre of focus when children wish to experience a period of quietness during the school day. Pupils write their own prayers and these are published in class prayer books and often used in whole school worship and at times of class prayers. Achievements are celebrated within school assemblies, ably supporting children's sense of self-esteem. Good use is made of appropriate music and most children take part enthusiastically in the singing of prayers, hymns and Christian songs.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The content of religious education (RE) is based firmly on the diocesan syllabus and the subject is an area of equal importance as the other foundation subjects. Standards of teaching and learning are good overall. Scrutiny of work shows that pupils achieve at least the expectations of the diocesan syllabus. Some achieve a higher standard. This is particularly evident when children learn about religions. Lessons make effective use of a range of learning activities with some good emphasis placed on drama and role-play. Pupils learn well about other religions particularly Islam and Judaism. The school demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusion, with pupils developing respect and tolerance towards each other and other faith communities. RE has a positive effect on the behaviour and outlook of a substantial majority of pupils as a result of some good and effective teaching. The close and active involvement of the church community and parish priest clearly supports RE teaching within school. The enthusiastic RE co-ordinator carries out her role very well and informs staff about developments within the subject. Assessment of pupils' work is currently very informal and there are no formal strategies to monitor and evaluate the quality and impact of RE.

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

The personal commitment and outstanding leadership of the headteacher contributes significantly to the success of the school as a church school. The use of appropriate self-evaluation materials in order to determine the effectiveness of St. Margaret's as a distinctive church school is at a very early stage and has yet to be developed. The headteacher, governors and senior leadership team fully realise the many challenging issues facing the school and they work exceptionally hard to sustain school improvement, support families and

raise levels of self-esteem amongst children. As a result of a full school review the headteacher and governors clearly identified areas which needed to be addressed and they are now in a very strong position to enrich the school even further. The governing body is well informed and is now enabling improvements through accepting the responsibility of making timely and effective decisions. All staff are involved and appreciated, with relationships between all members of the school community of a high order. The headteacher has established a strong senior leadership team and is adopting a team approach to school organisation and management. As a result staff morale is good and positive improvements have been made, for example, in ensuring that children adopt the Christian model of "forgiveness" when instances of undesirable behaviour have occurred. The headteacher has taken the lead in establishing a cluster group in order to promote the distinctive Christian nature of Anglican schools in the Rochdale area. The school promotes strong emphasis on working with parents and carers as partners. Parents are confident that their children are well looked after and pupils appreciate the good range of clubs and extra-curricular activities.

SIAS report March 2008: St. Margaret's C E Primary School, Heywood, Rochdale OL10 3RD