

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Margaret's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

School Rd
Orford
Warrington
Cheshire
WA2 9AD

Diocese: Liverpool

Local authority: Warrington
Dates of inspection: 14th January 2009
Date of last inspection: 26th & 27th May 2004
School's unique reference number: 131349
Headteacher: Mr C Metcalfe
Inspector's name and number: Mrs S Bowen 454

School context

This larger than average school is based on a split site. The social and economic context is below the national average, although the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is around the national average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language. The headteacher and four new teachers took up post in September 2008.

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

This is a good church school with a clear focus on its mission and a determination to keep improving. The headteacher leads the school strongly and keeps everyone aligned with his personal Christian vision. Relationships within school are clearly based on the Christian values of kindness, respect and tolerance.

Established strengths

- The strong Christian leadership of the new headteacher and his influence on the school community
- The cohesive teamwork of the staff leading religious education which enables the problems engendered by working in a large split-site primary school to be overcome.

Focus for development

- Capitalise on the outstanding provision for collective worship by involving more parents and visitors in order to reinforce the school's mission
- Ensure that the Christian ethos is strongly represented in both the internal and the external environment following the new build
- Create opportunities to further disseminate the good practice which is already happening in religious education

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

All pupils in this school are crystal clear that they go to a Church of England school and that this makes it different from some other schools. They know that they are safe, and can cite instances of when the teachers went to extra lengths to ensure they felt protected. They know whom to turn to if things go wrong, and trust the staff to sort out any difficulties. Frequent opportunities are given for discussion and reflection on the impact that Christianity has on individual lives. Behaviour has improved recently and pupils can see that this is a direct result of the fair and kind example set by the new Headteacher. Parents also appreciate this recent improvement, and are enthusiastic about the school's church ethos and what this means for

them and their children. The internal environment gives clear messages that this is a church school through the good use of artefacts, displays and notices. This Christian focus is strongly reinforced by the new vision statement: "We care, challenge and celebrate with Christ". However, the outside environment does not give such positive opportunities for spiritual growth. In spite of this, the overall spiritual development of the pupils is good. There is plenty of opportunity to appreciate the wonders of the natural world and the joys of creation, as well as developing an understanding of the impact of prayer. Moral, social and cultural aspects of education are also good, and take into account the needs of those who have other faiths or none. A strong re-affirmation of social and moral codes is being explained and embedded by the headteacher. Pupils are given many opportunities to think about the needs of those less fortunate than themselves, and show compassion through their active support for charity fundraising.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective Worship is of central and vital importance to the life of the school. It is thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated by the pupils and the staff. Adults demonstrate their enthusiasm for the activity through very active participation. This gives a very strong feeling of a Christian community working together for a shared purpose. The pupils listen with great interest, contribute keenly and sing with gusto. Those children leading the worship do so competently. Other pupils gain a sense of responsibility from opportunities to help with the practical organisation. The junior department attends a weekly Eucharist, usually in school and sometimes in church. This affords an excellent regular opportunity for the pupils to know and understand the traditions of the Anglican church. Many opportunities are provided for the pupils to understand the importance of prayer in their lives. Books of prayers, a prayer box to ask for intercession, and chances to read out their own prayers in worship are all offered. Pupils speak with joy and pride about the active part they played in the parish church's recent centenary celebrations, and how they enjoy all their visits there. There is currently an interregnum at the parish church, but that has not deterred all involved from making every effort to overcome any disadvantages from this and maintain a high standard of provision. Pupils in the infant department greatly enjoy age-appropriate acts of worship. They are learning the Lord's Prayer and are gaining a good early understanding of Christian faith and practice.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

Religious education is regarded as highly important in the school, and pupils say that they really enjoy the lessons. The subject leader and her support leader for religious education work effectively together to ensure good provision across both departments. Their leadership ensures a clear focus on lessons that engage the pupils and challenge their thinking. They jointly oversee planning and assessment evidence for religious education to ensure good provision across the school. A staff audit is used effectively for providing training opportunities. The two lessons observed both featured a strong emphasis not just on learning about an aspect of Christianity but also on considering how it applies to the pupils' everyday lives. Pupils remembered details well from previous lessons because the teachers linked blocks of learning together so it makes sense to the pupils, and frequently revisited previous learning. In a highly effective lesson in Year 3, pupils identified the difficulties encountered by blind Bartemaeus when discussing how Jesus changed, and still changes, peoples' lives. They confidently tackled the abstract notion that Jesus' spirit is still part of our lives. In a Year 1 lesson, they showed that they understood that Jesus especially wanted to help people who were not very nice so that they could do better, such as Matthew the tax collector. They also rose to the challenge of how Jesus sets an example and how they can follow this in their everyday lives. Information technology is used effectively in religious education to demonstrate the structure of the lesson and to illustrate the stories. Standards in religious education are in line with diocesan/national expectations and work seen in books showed that pupils' response is thoughtful and individual. For younger pupils, collections of their work show that they have responded to spiritual issues such as the beauty of creation through their good work on "Earth Song". The two subject leaders are clear about the standards being achieved, and collect examples of work to exemplify their judgements. They have identified that the next stage of development is to make opportunities for teachers to observe the existing good practice in each others' classrooms.

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

The current headteacher began work in September 2008. He has quickly gained a very clear understanding of the quality of the current provision and the necessary next steps he wishes to take. He has established clearly his new vision statement for the Christian focus of the school, and staff enthusiastically support this clear message. He has not yet had the opportunity to revise the full mission statement so that it is collaborative and shared by all. The newly established management structure clearly reflects the centrality of religious education and the subject leader is a high-profile part of the leadership team. The headteacher is maintaining very good relationships within the school, so that staff, parents and governors all appreciate what is in place. Self-evaluation documents for religious education and collective worship have been updated, and are thoughtful, honest and accurate. The judgement decisions were made by key staff but were not subject to wider consultation; it is recognised that this now needs to be done. First and foremost, the governors have not yet had the opportunity to be involved in this evaluation of the school's impact as a church school. They are developing the skills to hold the school to account, and are clearly in support of the new goals. Significant areas of change are having a positive effect on the pupils, and the school's capacity for further development is very strong.

SIAS report January 2009 St Margaret's VA Primary School Orford Warrington WA2 9AD