

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### St. Oswald's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Grove Road  
Mollington  
Chester  
CH1 6LG

#### Diocese: Chester

Local authority: Cheshire  
Dates of inspection: 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2008  
Date of last inspection: March 2004  
School's unique reference number: 130929  
Headteacher: Mrs Phillippa Rowe  
Inspector's name and number: Graham H Nuttall 456

#### School context

This small school serves families in a relatively socially and economically advantaged village on the outskirts of Chester. The vast majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is low, whilst a below average number of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The headteacher was appointed in April 2007. The school has attained the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Healthy School and Sports Active Awards.

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

The headteacher has a secure and sensitive perception of the school and the community it serves. Her dedicated commitment to both pupils and families ensures the school gives a good example of Christianity, not just in theory but also in practical actions. The overall effect is of a harmonious and very secure place in which all pupils have opportunities to flourish.

#### Established strengths

- High quality relationships characterised by care and concern for others.
- Pupils feel valued, secure and happy in school and they respond well to the challenges and high expectations of staff.
- High standards of provision and outcome in respect of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development together with a strong commitment to inclusion.
- Mutually beneficial links between the school, incumbent and the local church community.

#### Focus for development

- Develop strategies for assessment in order to evaluate the quality and impact of both religious education and collective worship.
- Involve all stakeholders in self-evaluation strategies in order to ensure the continued development of the distinctive Christian character and ethos of the school.

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

Parents and pupils are justly proud of their school, which offers a vibrant, caring, and welcoming ethos. 'The school visibly demonstrates family values within a Christian ethos', and 'My child is happy here, he feels secure and children gain in confidence and self-esteem', are typical of the comments made by parents. The Christian ethos is evident in the way everyone is treated. Support for each other is fundamental in the day-to-day life of the school. All pupils are made to feel special by staff and as a result they respond to everything the school has to offer, for example, taking a full and active part in gaining the recently attained Healthy School and Sports Active Awards. . Pupils' personal, social, moral and

spiritual development is good as a result of well-planned provision. Throughout the school are many very good examples demonstrating that 'every child matters' is high on the agenda. The school's approach to the teaching of world religions allows pupils to discover that in God's world children come from different ethnic backgrounds and have different faiths. As a result cultural awareness has been raised and this is further enhanced by the decision of the active school council to purchase equipment for children in deprived areas of central Africa. Displays of work are outstanding and many include important Christian messages and prayers. There is an awareness that "God is listening to them". Pupils apply for and are interviewed to be trained as play leaders, whilst others act as librarians, road safety or recycling officers. These opportunities are highly valued by both pupils and their parents and are good examples of collaboration and co-operative work for the common good giving an excellent foundation for future social and civic awareness.

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

Worship is based on sound Christian principles. It provides pupils with opportunities for spiritual growth and reinforces Christian teachings and values. Acts of worship are well planned and follow a clear pattern. This allows for the Church's year to be followed effectively whilst a degree of flexibility permits topical issues to be included as worship elements. Achievements are celebrated within school worship ably supporting children's sense of self-esteem. Pupils talk with sincerity about the relevance of collective worship in their lives; some are regular members of the Sunday congregation whilst the "Beacons" Sunday school further cements the partnership between church and school. All members of staff contribute towards school worship, whilst the incumbent leads worship weekly. The geographical location of the church, approximately two miles from the school, prevents regular services being held within church. However, parents, governors and members of the church community are invited to attend services celebrating major festivals held within the school. Pupils are encouraged to write their own prayers, which can be placed in a special prayer box. These prayers are offered as part of school worship and pupils felt that this was important. Pupils take part in class prayers and they do so reverently; they realise the importance of thinking about others less fortunate than themselves. Anglican tradition is encouraged through the use of more formal prayers including the Lord's Prayer and older pupils are given the opportunity to prepare for Confirmation. The incumbent also leads a monthly "after school worship" where children and parents are given the opportunity to worship together, strengthen their faith and widen their knowledge of the Christian gospel. Formal strategies are not yet in place to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of worship.

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

The content of the religious education (RE) scheme is firmly based on the Diocesan agreed syllabus. Pupils have a good knowledge of Christianity. Units of study which include Judaism and Islam are appropriately taught within each key stage and are well responded to by the children. Standards of teaching and learning are good overall. Pupils are confident; they listen attentively and enjoy their learning. Good use is made of a wide variety of teaching styles with some particularly effective use made of video film clips and various web sites. Key Stage 1 pupils could confidently identify items of church furniture and spoke eagerly of their pending visit to the church with vicar Stephen. Older pupils effectively explored the need for respect and tolerance towards each other and other faith communities through their study of Islam. There is a strong commitment to inclusion. The Headteacher acts as RE co-ordinator; she is enthusiastic and carries out her role diligently. Assessment of children's work is currently at an early stage. This has been identified as an area for school development within the School Improvement Plan for 2008/09.

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

The personal commitment and leadership of the Headteacher contributes significantly to the success of the school as a church school. Since appointment she has taken a clear stance on the extent of the school's Christian vision. The happy working atmosphere and the welcoming environment reflect the headteacher's positive personality. She has worked exceptionally hard to maintain a highly effective level of provision through a period of intensive staffing difficulties due mainly to staff on long-term maternity leave. There is considerable evidence of the effectiveness and commitment of staff, with some teachers

gaining leadership and management experience during this period. Governors and especially foundation governors have been active in supporting the school and are now beginning to become more closely involved with monitoring and evaluating the school's work. The close working relationship between the head and the incumbent helps to communicate the Christian vision to all members of staff. As a result all staff now feel confident about sharing the vision and their role in the school's ongoing development as a church school. The Headteacher recently utilised self-evaluation materials in order to determine the effectiveness of St. Oswald's as a church school however this did not include input from all stakeholders.

SIAS report January 2008 St. Oswald's C E (VA) Primary School, Chester CH1 6LG