

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **St. Thomas' Halliwell Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Bolton.**

Eskrick Road,

Halliwell

Bolton.

BL1 3JR

#### **Diocese of Manchester**

Bolton L.E.A

SIAS Inspection: 7<sup>th</sup>. November 2007

URN : 105218

SIAS Inspector : Mr. D.B.Graham

#### **Context**

St. Thomas' is a larger than average primary school serving an area of high socio-economic disadvantage. The school has a waiting list for places. The proportion of children from minority ethnic groups and for whom English is not their first language are both well above the national average. The number of children eligible for free school meals is above the national average as is the number with learning difficulties.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. Thomas' C.E. Primary School as an Aided Church of England school are outstanding.**

This very effective school has a wonderful Christian ethos which is immediately apparent on meeting the children and staff. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and results from the strong promotion of Christian values and the care given to the nurturing of the personal development and well being of each individual child. This ethos has been created through the clear vision and direction of the headteacher, closely supported by the senior management team and the worship committee. It is a mark of the strength of the church/school links that members of the church who are not governors are active in the worshipping life of the school.

#### **Established strengths**

- Excellent relationships, which create a tension-free atmosphere fostered through love and respect.
- The behaviour and attitudes of the children.
- The productive links between the school and church communities.
- The involvement of the vicar, youth workers, governors and individual church members.
- The pastoral care of the children.
- The integration of the children of other faiths into the full life of the school.
- The headteacher's leadership and vision for this church school and the systems of self evaluation used to inform this vision.

#### **Focus for development**

- Look at enhancing the existing ways in which parents and visitors are immediately aware that they are entering an outstanding church school.
- Clarify the meaning of 'aided status' in the school brochure.
- Spread the examples of good practice using workbooks as RE 'diaries' consistently across Key Stage 2

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

The school meets the needs of all learners extremely well through the pastoral care and understanding they receive and the school's commitment to its Christian values, which are

stated in its comprehensive Mission Statement. This Mission Statement would have more impact if it had a 'headline' focus. Muslim parents spoke in very complimentary terms regarding the school's success in fully integrating children of other faiths and the school should be commended for its work in this area. Behaviour and attitudes are excellent. Each child is treated as an individual. The children's personal and social development is enhanced through a wide range of after school clubs and extra curricular activities, which include a Faith club. They are given a voice through an active, very articulate School Council and many older children are involved in the care of others through acting as Peer Mediators. In lessons all staff make time for children with difficulties. One teacher even stopped her lesson to make time to praise a child who was working on a differentiated task with a support member of staff. This exemplified the school's Christian caring ethos. Each child was treated with respect. None were belittled and no voices were raised. This ethos of Christian care is also evident in the children's support of many charities and their extensive involvement in the local community. This often continues after they have moved on from the school, under the guidance of the youth workers and is further demonstrated by the Headteacher's membership of HAFWAY (Halliwell Action for Working alongside Youth). The school is now working to consolidate school links in Namibia.

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

Worship in all its forms has an outstanding impact on the life of the school and reaches out into the local community. The children worship in church once a week, led by the vicar, a youth worker or visiting clergy. The school has developed links with the pastor from the Church of the Nazarene. Children are actively involved in setting out the church, performing the normal duties of sidesmen, undertaking Bible readings and leading prayers. The children are very respectful of being in the house of God, conducting themselves in a most reverent way before, during and after the service. Worship is of a very high quality and obviously has a great impact on the school community because there is an active Worship Committee which helps planning and evaluation. The school has introduced a 'Skyscraper' Family Service in school one Sunday each term for children, parents and friends who might find a traditional service a little daunting. Children spoke enthusiastically about acts of worship which took place in school and were able to distinguish between these and the assembly aspect which one said, "Did not concentrate on the Godly things".

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

The children enjoy the subject, develop a good understanding of religion and are able to talk about it and relate it well to their lives. Drama, discussion and aesthetic activities play a large part in the work, which does not always involve recording. In some classes children note the activities undertaken in their workbooks and this proves a valuable aid to memory and aid to self-assessment. This good practice should be extended to all Key Stage 2 classes. There are examples of very effective displays of RE work around school which help children recall what they have studied. Some of these illustrate the school's excellent work regarding the understanding of other faiths. Three lessons were observed, one of which was outstanding and two were good. In the best lessons children are challenged and involved in the tasks. The organisation of R.E is excellent. Under the very good leadership and guidance of the experienced Co-ordinator teaching and learning is well planned. The school is well resourced for R.E and these resources are classified and very effectively stored to allow staff easy access to all relevant materials. The school has adapted the Diocesan Scheme of Work to meet the needs of its children.

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

The headteacher should be commended on her untiring commitment to the creation of this excellent church school. She is very ably assisted by the deputy headteacher and the senior management team. The staff supports her vision with great enthusiasm and effectively puts her ideals into practice. She is very well respected and treated as a supportive friend by them. Non-teaching staff are made to feel valued and an equal part of the school. The newly appointed Vicar is actively involved in the school and sees it as part of his pastoral role. The church has followed this lead and contributes to the cost of two youth workers who have a great impact in school. The governing body, led by a most able chair, are active and effective

in supporting the headteacher in leading this church school. Church/school links are so outstanding that they would in no way be strengthened by the appointment of the vicar as chair of governors. A joint church/school outing to St.Annes took place earlier this year and the church also assists financially in the running of the Breakfast Club. Much of the school's success is founded on its excellent systems and procedures for self evaluation as a church school and its ability to utilise its findings to constantly seek to move forward.

SIAS report November 2007 St. Thomas' C.E (Aided) Primary School, Halliwell, Bolton BL1 3JB