



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St David Haigh & Aspull Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Copperas Lane

Haigh

Wigan

WN2 1PA

Diocese: **Liverpool**

Previous SIAS grade: **Good**

Present SIAMS grade: **Outstanding**

Local authority: Wigan

Date of inspection: 19 May 2016

Date of last inspection: July 2011

School's unique reference number: 106519

Headteacher: Catherine Boulton

Inspector's name and number: Mike Graham 286

School context

The school is well below average in size and is situated in the rural village of Haigh. The children are drawn mainly from the villages of Haigh and Aspull. They are from a variety of social and economic backgrounds and the vast majority are white British. The number of children with special educational needs is above average, as is the proportion known to be eligible for extra government funding for the disadvantaged.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St David Haigh & Aspull Primary as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The headteacher gives exemplary Christian leadership and is supported wholeheartedly by the leadership team, governors and all staff. This gives children security and confidence to give of their best. As a consequence, children's academic progress and spiritual development is outstanding.
- Christian values, clearly based on the life and teachings of Jesus, are lived out in the loving and caring relationships, which leads to excellent behaviour.
- Worship is central to the spiritual life of the school. It is sincere, varied and relevant and provides spiritual refreshment for the whole community.
- Excellent community links with St David's church and the parish as a whole are mutually beneficial. Sharing of expertise and ideas enriches the lives of all involved.

Areas to improve

- Devise a child-friendly motto that does justice to the loving Christ-like care given to all, so as to encourage and empower the school community in their Christian witness.
- In religious education (RE), seek to provide consistently high quality, varied and inspiring lessons with an increased focus on what can be learned from religion. This in order to deepen the children's spiritual understanding of the impact made by faith on a believer's life.

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

The school's loving and caring Christian ethos creates a secure and joyful context within which all the children are enabled to give of their best. The vicar commented that 'The homely secure atmosphere is the outworking of Christian values'. These values are clearly seen by the school family as being drawn from the life and teachings of Jesus. As a result of the security and trust that has been developed, there is no fear of failure. The enthusiasm with which the children tackle their work and life in school leads to good and outstanding academic achievement and personal development. Statistics show that the children make excellent progress throughout their time in school, often from a relatively low starting point. Focussed use of extra funding for disadvantaged children ensures that their achievements are equally impressive. The attendance rates are above national targets, largely because of the children's enjoyment of and desire to come to school. The Christian character of the school supports the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all the children extremely well. There is a lack of cultural diversity within school. In spite of this, sensitive and informed teaching about other faiths and cultures leads to respect for and understanding of similarities and differences. The children are in no doubt about the value of this. A Year 6 girl commented, 'We need to respect them. They may be right!' Children thus have an expanding understanding of world religions and faiths and of how other religions are woven into British society. Good teaching in RE underscores Christian values and blends biblically sound Christian teaching with work on other faiths. Children and adults are polite and respectful, yet full of life and joy in learning and growing together. Relationships amongst all members of the school community demonstrate Christian values superbly. Parents readily attribute this to the close links with St David's Church and the Christian values at the heart of the school's life. One said of the headteacher, 'She's always there to help (the children) whenever they are in need of a listening ear'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is varied, sincere and relevant, with variety in content, style and leadership. Everyone in the school community is involved and all readily acknowledge the impact it makes on their lives. A staff member spoke of the 'sense of Godly peace at the start of each day'. Worship involves fun, sensitivity, Bible readings, drama, reflection and prayer. The Lord's prayer, the morning collect and greetings and responses are well known and used regularly as integral parts of worship, which is full of joyful, varied music and is distinctively Christian. Jesus and his teachings are the source of the values chosen as themes for worship and for the whole of school life. Personal spiritual development is enhanced through a strong focus on prayer. Reflective, prayerful times are not limited to worship, but are introduced throughout the day as appropriate. Children describe the act of prayer as 'talking with God wherever we are', as one Year 6 girl put it. They have an excellent understanding of God as Father and Creator, and Jesus as the Son and Saviour. Most are not as clear about the person and role of the Holy Spirit. One Year 6 girl however described the Holy Spirit being '...sent to the disciples to build confidence!' Worship brings the whole community of Haigh and Aspull together at key points in the church calendar. The Easter walk of witness to Haigh Hall is a significant example, helping people to understand why and how Christians celebrate the resurrection of Christ. Impressively, the vicar leads worship in church weekly, and often teaches RE in church. For example, an 'agape' (Eucharist) service is held with Year 6, enhancing significantly their understanding of this vital part of Christian worship. A Year 5 boy said that he would like 'more worship in church. It's a special place'. In these times of worship the vicar brings accessible Bible teaching and many elements of the Anglican traditions to the children, staff and parents. The impact in terms of the building of mutually beneficial relationships between the village, school and church communities is significant. 'Messy church' held in Aspull church hall is open to all children in the community. It opens the children's minds and spirits to a fresh approach to Christianity. Children, especially the worship team, staff and clergy plan, lead and evaluate worship, giving vitality and a constant desire for further improvement.

The effectiveness of religious education is good

Good to outstanding RE teaching results in consistently good progress by all children. Standards are good and in line with the expectations of the syllabus. There is, however, a lack of inventiveness and variety in the teaching at times. There are also insufficient opportunities for children to reflect on the impact that learning about religion makes on their own lives and on the lives of believers. Studies are undertaken of some of the major world faiths, with visitors playing a key role. Discussions with children, lessons witnessed and work in children's books demonstrate that Christian teaching and learning is good. Examples include a treasure chest of clues about the meaning and importance of the church for Christians. The various aspects discussed and researched made clear links to Christian values, particularly service and friendship, at the time of the inspection. The children's understanding of these values as exemplified by the friendship and service given by the vicar and other local church members is clear. At the end of a lesson observed, a Year 3 boy demonstrated how important friendship was to him by spontaneously volunteering the prayer, 'Help us to remember the meaning of friendship.' In Year 6 a study of the 'fruits of the Spirit' was exemplary, with excellent and relevant links to the persons having the biggest influences on the children's lives. Deep discussions ensued about the debt we all owe to parents, grandparents and older brothers and sisters. The children clearly understood the link to the influence of the Holy Spirit who empowered the disciples at Pentecost. The biblical basis for the Christian values taught is clearly established through RE. The co-ordinator and her team are extremely able and knowledgeable, providing thorough in-service training, assessment and monitoring and evaluation. The Christian values taught are a benchmark for everyone. Three girls spoke with an impressive depth of understanding of Christian Aid and similar charities showing 'love, kindness and service'.

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

The headteacher, leadership team, staff and governors are united in striving to live out the Christian vision to be 'a successful caring Christian school', as the mission statement puts it. This vision informs and underpins all the school leadership's work, and the headteacher's Christian faith shines out in every aspect of her leadership. She leads through serving, and exemplifies the vision of Christ-like care for all. Staff and children demonstrate this loving care to everyone around them. The academic and personal achievements of the children have improved steadily in recent years. Christian values, such as love, respect and service have been promoted vigorously and with sensitivity, and therefore every child feels secure and empowered. The employment of the learning mentor is aimed specifically to give extra support and care to the vulnerable children and their families. The headteacher and staff have also made significant contributions in supporting not just the children but also the wider families. When appropriate, there is always support in prayer and action for those in need. The mission statement does not fully reflect the excellence of the school's Christian ethos. Collective worship and RE are prominent in planning and are given high priority by the leadership. The overall vision is secured by careful evaluation and thorough strategic planning. The attention to detail demonstrates a striving for constant improvement. Areas for development from the previous report have been fully addressed, by promoting Christian values and embedding them throughout the school's work. Links abroad, such as one with The Gambia, have also been developed so as to broaden children's horizons. Leaders prepare for future leadership in this and other church schools through excellent in-service training, teamwork, delegation and coaching. Partnerships with the local church, two local church schools, diocese and the wider community, including parents, are strong and mutually beneficial. Parents are immensely proud of 'their' school, giving excellent support. They feel part of the school family, and comments include, 'It's great. ALL the children receive praise and encouragement here', and 'The Christian values are really lived here'.