

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Crowton Christ Church CofE Primary School

Kingsley Road, Crowton, Northwich, Cheshire CW8 2RW

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Diocese

Chester

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

Cheshire West and Cheshire

Date of inspection

2 February 2017

Date of last inspection

16 March 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Aided 111336

Headteacher

Heather Harris

Inspector's name and number

Frank Driessen (675)

School context

Crowton CE Primary School is a below average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and disadvantaged pupils is broadly average. There are no pupils who are learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be supported by the pupil premium funding is below average. Pupil mobility is above average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Crowton Christ Church as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The strong and passionate Christian leadership of the head teacher has ensured that distinctively Christian values are deeply embedded in the life and actions of the school. A talented and committed team of staff, governors and the incumbent support the head teacher very effectively.
- A belief in the God-given value of each child inspires excellent pastoral care for them and their families. In response pupils show respect and consideration for others, which results in outstanding relationships, and an enthusiasm for learning throughout the school.
- The strong partnership between the school and parish extends the spiritual experience of pupils, strengthens the church's contact with families and provides a positive and dynamic Christian witness at the heart of the local community.
- The pupils' Christian ethos group is an outstanding support towards the development of the school's distinctive Christian vision.

Areas to improve

- Involve parents and pupils in the evaluation of the school's distinctive Christian character in order to secure its continuing improvement as a church school.
- Enrich experiences provided within religious education (RE), by organising, for example, visits, visitors and links with other communities in order to broaden pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith as well as other religious traditions.

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

Happiness pervades the life of this Christian family-based school. This is because everyone strives to achieve their very best through the outliving of Christian values. Vibrant Christian displays and artwork, Bible texts, crosses and children's prayers repeatedly reinforce its Christ-centredness, as do the exemplary relationships between all members of the community. One parent commented, 'This is a Christian community which embraces everyone.' Another added, 'The school's values are a way of life for the children'. The teaching of these values through outstanding RE and collective worship makes a very significant contribution to the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC). Some parents commented on the transformative effect the school has upon their children. 'He's a different child after coming here,' remarked one parent. The Christian focus continues into the well-maintained school grounds where Bible stories are the subject of superb murals and act as a backdrop to a series of gardens that deepen children's spirituality.

The nurture room and the 'teams across families' worker both make an outstanding contribution to the school's care and guidance programme by nourishing pupils in their social and emotional development. Because of this support, barriers to learning are minimised and children integrate very effectively into school life. Pupil attainment is, therefore, good often from low starting points. The provision for disadvantaged and special needs children is excellent. Pastoral care is outstanding so children show a real sense of happiness and enthusiasm for school life and attendance is above average. Incidents of bullying are very rare and are swiftly and effectively dealt with. One child commented enthusiastically, 'We're a Christian family. We are very kind and welcoming'.

Pupils are becoming aware of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith because of their support for international charities and learning through religious education. School leaders recognise, however, that this is an area for development. Preparation for life in a diverse global society is ensured through a wide range of multi-faith learning activities. As a result, pupils have a clear understanding of the beliefs and practices of other world faiths. The pupils' Christian ethos group is an outstanding example of the highly articulate and dynamic pupil voice that is so much a part of the school's life. Pupils demonstrate excellent aspects of citizenship by assuming roles of increasing responsibility such as becoming buddies to the Reception children. The strong promotion of Christian values impacts very effectively on the way in which the children live out their daily lives. For example, they relate extremely well to the needs of others not only in the school but also in the local community through a good variety of well-planned activities. The school's wide range of charitable works is also well supported with one child pointing out that 'God's told us to do this so we just follow in His footsteps'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The children have a real enthusiasm for and enjoyment of collective worship. They display this not only through active and enjoyable participation but also by demonstrating reverence for and awareness of its spiritual dimension through thoughtful and attentive responses. Worship is a time of great fellowship which is inclusive and valued by all pupils including those of other faiths or of none. Christian values are promoted and explored each week with pupils successfully encouraged to live them out in their own lives. Acts of worship are distinctively Christian in character. They are very well planned by the local churches' team working closely with the headteacher and reflect the teachings of Jesus Christ through Bible stories and scripture, enabling the school to explore and develop its Christian values. This deepens the pupils' SMSC very effectively. One pupil observed that 'Worship gives me a sense of belonging, of being in a big Christian family'. A range of leaders delivers acts of worship. They provide a rich and accessible quality to the school community's worship experience. Children have a developing understanding of the Trinity.

Singing is exuberant and adds a real spiritual element to the occasion. The specially commissioned and well loved 'school song' celebrates the deeply Christian nature of all aspects of the school. The importance of prayer in pupils' spiritual development is clear from their responses. They enjoy opportunities to write prayers throughout the school day and many are displayed prominently around the school. 'Prayer for our children,' observed one parent, 'is as natural and necessary as brushing teeth'. Children have a good understanding of Anglican worship and tradition not only because of the occasions they attend the church for services that include Easter, Harvest and Christmas but also the involvement of the incumbent and other members of the local churches' team. Other well planned church events for the children such as 'Experience Harvest' and following the stations of the Cross for Easter help deepen their spiritual experience. Church services are extremely well attended by parents and enable everyone to celebrate being part of the extended church family.

The very popular and highly effective pupils' Christian ethos group helps to guide the overall development of collective worship using feedback from the children. They lead acts of worship each week and are very confident

when doing so as the observed excellent worship demonstrated. The celebration of children's achievements was very effective as was the prayer time for children absent from school. Pupils comment very favourably on the importance of worship within school and say that it is 'full of joy' and 'shows our faith'.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Pupils enjoy and are inspired by RE and say it is 'good fun' as well as 'exciting, creative and challenging'. It explicitly reinforces the school's core Christian values and enables pupils to ask and reflect on open-ended questions of meaning and purpose. Pupils are very confident in doing this from an early age. A child in the Foundation Stage (FS2) responded to the question 'What makes Jesus a good king?' by answering, 'He looks after everyone even when they are unkind'. A year 2 child observed, 'Jesus died for us so we could be saved.'

The two outstanding lessons observed delivered a wide range of open-ended opportunities for discussion, enquiry and reflection that were instrumental in deepening pupil's understanding of religion and their own responses to what they learned. Pupils' Bible knowledge is exceptional with parents commenting that their children 'quote scripture and Bible stories at home'. Through assessment teachers are aware of the levels children are working at and this informs future planning for all abilities. Effective cross-curricular links allow pupils to apply skills learned within religious education across other areas of the curriculum. The use of key questions ensures a challenging and deep focus upon both teaching and learning. The percentage of pupils working at age related expectations in RE is above national averages for English and mathematics.

The study of faiths other than Christianity is planned effectively and is supported by a highly successful multi-faith week and occasional visits to different faith centres and places of worship. Consequently pupils are becoming more confident in their ability to make comparisons between beliefs, practices and value systems across a range of faiths. These enhance and celebrate diversity and strengthen community cohesion. In a discussion about why they studied other faiths one child observed, 'We learn to respect them'. The newly appointed subject leader has a clear vision for the role of RE in a church school. She is in a very strong position to ensure the continuation and development of RE as an outstanding core subject.

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

'Watch, stand fast in faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love' (1 Corinthians 16:13-14) is the driving force behind the head teacher's inspirational vision which all stakeholders share with equal enthusiasm and commitment. One child described her as being 'all the things the school are'. The impact of this is clearly evident in how easily everyone articulates the school's Christian values not just through words but also deeds and actions. One parent said simply, 'It's all about the child'. Diversity is tremendously valued with disadvantaged and vulnerable groups exceptionally well supported. The influence of Christian values on the personal development and welfare of all is an outstanding feature of the school's Christian character. The recent appointment of the school's 'teaching across families' worker and the establishment of the nurture room demonstrate the school's further commitment to find the best for all their families. Parents are keen to support the strong Christian ethos because of the positive impact it has upon their children's lives. 'The emphasis in our school is on the impact of values,' stated one parent, 'It makes our children into thinking Christians'.

Collective worship and RE are led effectively with an enthusiasm that engages staff and pupils. Both areas support, extend and deepen pupils' understanding of how Christians live their lives by following the teachings of the Bible. Governors recognise this and ensure that RE and worship underpin all aspects of school life by its inclusion in the school improvement planning process. Governors are in a well-informed and knowledgeable position to support senior leadership in the continual development of Crowton CE School's distinctive Christian nature. Successful examples of this are the redevelopment of the school's mission statement and the provision of church school training for all staff. The views of pupils and parents are well valued but, as yet, they have not been systematically consulted concerning the effectiveness of the school as a church school. Since the last inspection, the school has taken the necessary steps to act effectively on areas for development. The vicar provides very strong support for both the spiritual and pastoral life of the school. His effective involvement with RE and collective worship enhances the strengths of each area. The strong partnership between the school and parish extends the spiritual experience of pupils and strengthens the church's contact with families. It provides a positive Christian witness at the heart of the local and extended communities and considerably enriches the school's distinctive Christian identity. Future church school leadership is well-planned and delivered through training and sharing of leadership responsibilities. This is a school very much driven by the outworking of its Christian faith.