

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### Frodsham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

School Lane, Overton, Frodsham, WA6 6AF

**Current SIAMS inspection grade** **Outstanding**

**Diocese** Chester

Previous SIAS inspection grade Outstanding

Local authority Cheshire West and Chester

Date of inspection 5 October 2017

Date of last inspection November 2012

Type of school and unique reference number Controlled 111247

Headteacher Lucy Kirby

Inspector's name and number Tracy Beatty 890

#### School context

Frodsham Church of England Primary is an average sized school. The pupils are of predominantly White British heritage. The proportion of children with special educational needs is well below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding. The school is high achieving and performance indicators are above the national average. The school has achieved the Religious Education (RE) Quality Mark gold. There have been significant changes to staffing since the last inspection, including a new headteacher who is currently on maternity leave. There is an acting head in post until February.

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

- The inspirational and visionary leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, stemming from their own personal faith, has a direct impact on the whole school community.
- There is expert teaching and modelling of Christian values by a dedicated staff who live and breathe a Christian vision.
- This school is rooted in Christian principles and is a beacon of God's love. Every piece of documentation, the website and school environment declare the school is distinctively different with Christian principles and values.
- The supportive and knowledgeable governors are extensively involved in the strategic direction of the school. This means that Christian distinctiveness has a very high profile.
- Leadership of RE and collective worship is outstanding. Monitoring and record keeping are thorough and fully lead to genuine and sustained improvement.

#### Areas to improve

- Having identified the importance of teaching pupils about non-Christian faiths, continue to extend their knowledge and understanding through even more visits and visitors.
- The school has plans to create an outdoor prayer space in its extensive grounds. Prioritising this would further develop opportunities for reflection and the fostering of pupils' spiritual awareness.
- As a school that excels in the teaching of RE and in worship, share outstanding practice with other schools in order to support their development.

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

Frodsham is very proud of its Christian character and makes it evident to all. The school's motto, 'As God's family we love, learn and play together' is central to every policy and piece of documentation. Behaviour is of the highest standard because Christian values are deeply embedded and followed by all pupils. They have a significant impact on achievement in that all children are striving to do their best. Christian values contribute to an atmosphere for learning in which the potential of everyone is fostered. They also inform the school's supportive approach to attendance. The school is decorated with beautiful pieces of artwork displaying the school values, denoting the central place of God in this school. The pupils are fully competent in articulating what the values mean to them and how they live differently as a result. This has a striking influence on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, a Year 4 pupil said, 'We use our values on the playground because we respect people's ideas and show it is not okay to be unkind'. Pupils are familiar with a range of Bible characters and people of faith who exemplify how they should live, which influences their attitudes and behaviour. A Year 6 pupil said, 'Coming to this school teaches us Christian values, and I want to follow Jesus even at home. I'm trying to follow in His footsteps so I don't argue as much as I used to.' Parents stress the way the Christian ethos is 'foundational and central to everything, from every conversation to breadth and depth of the curriculum that caters for every child'. They also tell of the deep care for pupils and the very effective buddy system which helps them settle quickly. One parent shared how pupils have written to her children who transferred from another area, even before they started at the school, to welcome them. It is thus clear the school is committed to the development of pupil self-esteem and sense of worth through encouragement, affirmation and an understanding that each is a child of God. The quality of relationships is also evident in the staff interactions with each other. A governor said, 'The staff are remarkable. The headteacher, who has united everyone, has skillfully crafted a strong team who genuinely live out their faith.'

This is a generous school, responsive to the needs of the community and further afield. For example, the pupils regularly raise money for projects such as the shoebox appeal, Macmillan and the local foodbank. Whilst studying the Christian value of charity this term, every member of staff has visited another class to talk about their personal favourite charity. RE is high quality and has a positive impact on the SMSC development of learners. Pupils at Frodsham have an awareness of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. As members of the school community are predominantly White British, the school has rightly made this a focus and has planned more visits to non-Christian places of worship for the forthcoming year.

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

Collective worship is high quality and valued by all. Elements of the Anglican tradition are incorporated into daily gatherings. For instance, candles are used to signify the start of worship and varied liturgical responses are used. Pupils demonstrate an impressive degree of understanding about the Trinity as a result of the teaching interwoven through collective worship and RE. In the act of worship observed, the care and nurture of the oldest pupils to the youngest was showcased as each Year 6 pupil introduced their 'Little Buddy'. The pupils sang a range of Christian songs enthusiastically which was enjoyed by the many parents that attended. Parents particularly like the fact that special services are held in church and commented on how they regularly go over to church to support RE as well as worship.

The evaluation of worship is clearly a strength of the school. Pupils are confident to plan and lead worship, and regularly participate. They are keen to tell of the effort their teachers put into planning to make it interesting. As well as planning class worship, pupils say 'we evaluate worship so teachers know what we understand and how to make it better. We don't just say what we like about it'. All pupils say their views are valued. Worship is closely linked to RE and the curriculum, ensuring Christian values are woven seamlessly into the daily life of the school. Parents report their children love to praise and often sing worship songs learnt at school when at home. Governors participate in worship and observe RE, giving them a good understanding of the strengths.

Visitors such as Bible Explorers enhance the themes planned for collective worship. The coordinator meets with all visitors to ensure there is a good breadth and challenge in worship, following the Christian calendar and values. The school has a pupil ethos group who enjoy planning the worship. There is also the Looking for God group which provides opportunities for pupils to go deeper in their understanding of the Bible whilst doing crafts. The pupils are given the opportunity to be admitted to communion in order to make the next step in their Christian journey. One parent shared how her child has set up 'a mini Eucharist' at home when playing. In preparation for admission to Holy Communion, the school and church also pays for the whole year group to visit Nodffa to explore prayer on a deeper level and reflect on their faith.

Links with the church are dynamic and inspiring. The committed vicar ensures the pupils have a very deep knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith that influences their own spiritual walk. Parents speak highly of the inclusivity of Father Michael who has created a family environment and a sense of belonging in his services. He talked at length about the synergy between church services and collective worship in school.

Prayer is a regular part of daily life in school. The staff are role models in the way they give prayer a high profile, resulting in the children having confidence to pray aloud in their own voices knowing 'God loves us to talk to Him'. The worship coordinator talked of her passion for the pupils to know God and experience prayer. She explained how opportunities are created constantly for prayer, resulting in it being the natural thing to do. Every classroom has a reflection area with a prayer focus and interactive activity that is changed regularly and is monitored by the ethos team. This provides quality opportunities for pupils to understand the value of prayer for themselves.

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

The headteacher and deputy, (who is currently acting head) lead by example, articulating how their leadership is rooted in their own personal faith. Both stress the central importance of prayer and the Bible in their own lives. Their strong personal faith gives them the resilience to lead others, living out the mission statement personally. Parents spoke warmly about how the relationships in the school stem from the Christian ethos. Parents and staff commended the patience and listening skills of the leadership team, always being available for others. The headteacher states her faith strongly influences the way she conducts all conversations with parents and staff, enabling her to see things from others' points of view. The staff and governors were in agreement that all her actions are consistently grounded in Christian values and compassion sits behind every decision. Her vision for the school is distinctively Christian, including ensuring the high standards are maintained but with a commitment to enrichment and a good breadth in the curriculum. The headteacher claimed, 'Whatever a child's talents and interests, they will be catered for. We want our curriculum to support the spiritual, moral social and cultural development of the children, so they have good self-esteem and confidence.'

The governors are always involved in recruitment of staff and this ensures that the ethos of the school is sustained. All staff are expected to uphold the Christian values and once appointed are supported to do so. The governing body was particularly proactive about employing a specialist RE lead with a strong personal faith. Prayer was central to the process 'to ensure we get the best possible staff that fit in with our Christian ethos'. Continuing professional development and succession planning for leadership of church schools has a positive effect on the school. It opens up opportunities for staff to contribute ideas and insights which enhance their own and the school's Christian character.

Self-evaluation is accurate, robust and collaborative. As a result, it leads to continuing improvement. The leadership team are always seeking ways to improve and sustain the vision for future leaders. Leadership of RE and worship is outstanding. The monitoring is thorough and extensive, revealing the value the school places on it. The link governor for RE meets regularly with the subject lead and feeds back to the governing body. As a consequence, previous strengths have been built upon even further. Governors show their commitment for the church character of the school through their monitoring role. Church school distinctiveness plans are incorporated into the main development plan and discussed at every full governors meeting.

Partnerships with the community and church are very strong. The substantial mutual benefit they enjoy is exemplified by the shared prayer board that moves from church to school throughout the week, shared songs, 'Messy church' and the frequent presence of Father Michael in school. They have developed a common repertoire of songs and planned intergeneration services. This brings together the wider community. The school has also worked on joint projects with the church. An example of this is the Stations of the Cross project that involved a commissioned artist to work with pupils and parishioners to make permanent pieces of art and prose. The statements written by the pupils to accompany the images revealed the deep impact this project had on their understanding of the Bible.

SIAMS report October 2017 Frodsham CE Primary School, School Lane, Overton, Frodsham, WA6 6AF.