

Runcorn All Saints Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

Church Street
Runcorn
Cheshire
WA7 1LD

Diocese: Chester

Local authority: Halton
Dates of inspection: 24th April, 2012
Date of last inspection: 5th February, 2007
School's unique reference number: 8763502
Headteacher: Mrs Elaine Harrison
Inspector's name and number: Georgina Lewis 401

School context

This is a small primary school situated in Runcorn Old Town, in an area of high deprivation. The number of pupils with special educational needs is significantly higher than the national average. Pupils eligible for free school meals is currently 50%. The number of pupils of minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than average for the Halton Local Authority area. There are significant changes in pupil numbers throughout the year. Since the previous inspection all the teaching staff and most of the support staff have changed.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Runcorn All Saints Church of England primary school as a Church of England school are outstanding

The improvement in the distinctiveness and effectiveness of this school as a church school is significant. The Christian commitment of the headteacher has firmly embedded the school's motto, 'Living and Growing together as the Children of God', into all aspects of school life. Pupils have a clear understanding of the Christian faith which underpins its foundation. Its Christian ethos shines through clearly. There is a calm atmosphere which enables pupils to feel safe and secure in the knowledge they are loved and cared for.

Established strengths

- The outstanding quality of collective worship and its impact on pupils' spiritual development
- The Christian witness of the leadership team in promoting the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school as a church school
- The outstanding quality of self evaluation which informs the development of both collective worship and religious education (RE)

Focus for development

- The marking of RE to help pupils develop their subject knowledge and understanding in addition to comments on literacy
- To review the place of prayer in governing body meetings

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

'Living and Growing together as Children of God' is the school's motto, it appears on their website, prospectus and all the policies. It is one of the first things seen when you enter the school, and it is lived out daily by all in the school. The mission statement reinforces the Christian principles and values which underpin all that the school does. The previous inspection judged the school to be outstanding in its 'distinctive Christian character'. The present leadership team and governing body has not only maintained this judgement but it is now securely embedded. Policies and all documentation sent out from the school declare its intention to be a 'caring community based on Christian values'. The school's self evaluation is very detailed and identifies further development to build on the outstanding quality of the school as a church school. There is a calm, harmonious atmosphere in which all are valued.

Pupils are confident and very positive about the school's Christian ethos. 'We know we're loved and cared for because God loves us'. Opportunities are provided for pupils to learn about the Christian faith within a Church of England context. There is a close relationship with local clergy and the members of All Saints church who serve on the governing body, which contributes to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Parents are supportive and all who responded to the questionnaire sent out stated that they 'are happy with the values and attitudes that the school engenders'. As part of its commitment to others the school has been involved in a number of charitable fundraising events both within the local community and with global initiatives.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The impact of collective worship is outstanding, the contribution it makes to pupils' spiritual development is substantial. The Collective Worship policy is clearly understood and implemented by all staff. Planning and preparation are thorough, and pupils are directly involved giving them confidence. There is very good evaluation, which includes both teachers and pupils, and informs future planning. Collective worship is also integrated into the RE teaching which was clearly demonstrated in the lessons observed. The reverence with which pupils entered the hall for the collective worship seen was impressive. The hymn displayed on the large screen was sung by pupils as they entered and the final verse sung as a whole school, this set the tone and the atmosphere for worship. When asked why the candle is being lit at the beginning, the response was immediate, 'Jesus is the light of the world.. Jesus is here with us'. 'How do we love each other' was the topic and when asked pupils across the age range answered confidently, reciting from the New Testament commandments. The headteacher and deputy head led worship with passion and fervour which engaged all present. Lighting the candle signalled the start of collective worship and this was followed by an effective question and answer time which gave pupils the opportunity to demonstrate their very good recall, and reflect on the previous day's worship. The enthusiasm of the leaders is infectious and ensures that the pupils have a firm foundation on which to build their own faith. Each class room has a prayer tree and a cross, and each day the daily prayer is on all the interactive white boards. This is a school where pupils understand the power of prayer and praise, and talk confidently about their relationship with God and Jesus. They will frequently ask the class to pray for a family member or friend. This is not always emulated in governing body meetings, the place of prayer in governors' meetings should be reviewed. The incumbent commented that his collective worship used be 'in the vanguard' and this is no longer the case. The variety of activities, drama, dance, music with actions ensures that pupils are actively engaged, enthusiastic and involved. The pupils are familiar with the traditions of the Church of England from regular visits to the adjacent church and the celebration of the church's festivals. Parents, carers, members of the community and foundation governors often attend these events.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The issue for development from the previous inspection is now fully met. Each term the 'Celebrations Week' provides pupils with the opportunity to study Islam and Hinduism in much more detail, providing a greater awareness of other religions and cultures. Judaism is also studied as part of the RE curriculum. Under the leadership of the deputy head, the teaching of RE has developed and teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and use a wide variety of methods in their teaching. The subject is regularly and effectively monitored and discussed at curriculum meetings. The planning and preparation for the teaching of RE is outstanding and the progress that pupils make as a consequence is very good. Lessons seen at both key stages were outstanding in the quality of both teaching and learning, with pupils very well motivated, actively engaged and impressively knowledgeable using previous learning. In a key stage 1 lesson pupils had a real understanding of what it means to be part of a church, and gave several informed responses about what a church is, 'God is everywhere', 'We are (part of) a family..so we're God's children'. Key stage 2 pupils were studying different perceptions of Jesus and had a mature and confident understanding of how different people or groups might see Him. Pupils have a balanced curriculum which ensures that 'Learning about' and 'Learning from', the two attainment targets in RE, are very effectively taught. Pupils' attainment in RE is good and their progress is outstanding over time. Evaluation of teaching and learning is at present very good, however, more attention to marking RE content is needed in order to provide pupils with more accurate information about

their progress and how to improve. Pupils' self assessment is confirmed by teachers, using the 'I Can' statements, and provides good on-going assessment. In discussion with pupils they see RE as being very important and comment on the wider impact it has on their personal behaviour and attitudes. RE is also well supported by collective worship and pupils were seen to make links during RE lessons without prompting.

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

Since the previous inspection all teaching staff and most of the support staff have changed. As a result of appointments made, the governing body has ensured that the school has a headteacher and deputy who are fully committed to its Christian foundation. The management of the school continues to be truly inspirational, the Christian witness of the leadership team shines through all that is taught and learned. The Chair of the governing body has regular meetings with the head, and governors are actively involved within the school. The detailed self evaluation, the level of support, and the emphasis on Christian values ensures that all staff and pupils feel valued and that their voices are heard. Governors are directly involved in the school's self evaluation and policy making. Both collective worship and RE have prominent places in the school development plan indicating their importance and the commitment to further improvement. Very clear school policies support the Christian ethos and values, and effectively promote the Anglican tradition. The frequently changing pupil population is very well managed and reflects the school's commitment to inclusion. Parents' comments in questionnaires are very supportive of the education provided. All who responded said they were 'happy with the values and attitudes that the school engenders. The school has effective links within the community with the Secondary school and other services provided on site. The 'Let's get cooking' event has made a positive impact on the local community by giving participants the skills to change their diets and eat more healthily.

SIAS report April, 2012 Runcorn All Saints CE Primary school, Church street, Runcorn, WA7 1LD