

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Hurst Knoll St James' Church of England Primary School

Ladbroke Road, Ashton-under-Lyne, OL6 8JS	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Manchester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Tameside
Date of inspection	10 November 2016
Date of last inspection	April 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	VC 106229
Headteacher	Paul Anderson
Inspector's name and number	Gillian Rhodes 657

School context

Hurst Knoll St James' C of E Primary School is a smaller than average primary school. A large proportion of pupils are White British. Minority ethnic groups include pupils of Pakistani heritage and Eastern European origins. Pupil attainment on entry to the school is generally below national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium is above national average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities is in line with the national average. The school has extensive outdoor space. The headteacher has been in post three years.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Hurst Knoll St James' as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The headteacher's vision for the school as a distinctive Church of England school is inspirational and instrumental in bringing about improvement in the life and performance of the whole school.
- Christian values have been re-established and embedded as the foundation for all aspects of school life. Their impact on relationships and the lives and achievements of learners is recognised by all members of the school and community.
- Pupils engage in high quality opportunities for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development across the curriculum. The grounding of these experiences in the Christian values of the school result in excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Effective links between the school, families, partner churches and the local community have significant benefits for all groups, placing the school at the heart of the community.

Areas to improve

- Enhance the spiritual understanding of pupils by providing opportunities for them to plan and lead worship.
- Further develop pupils' understanding of the purpose and nature of prayer so that they are able to contribute confidently to formal and informal worship and reflection experiences, in school and as part of their own spiritual development.
- Develop pupils' awareness of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith in order to broaden their understanding of diversity in local, national and global communities.

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

Distinctively Christian values have been re-established and embedded as the foundation for all aspects of life at Hurst Knoll St James' school. Christian values of trust, hope, forgiveness and justice are the principles on which teaching and learning, behaviour and relationships are based. 'Our Christian values are making a big improvement,' said a pupil. The values are given prominence in all documentation and school publicity. Bible quotations and sayings of key thinkers are displayed throughout the school. Consequently, children and adults recognise that school values are rooted in the Bible, in the teachings of Jesus Christ and in the lives of people of faith. The impact of Christian values on Year 6 pupils is movingly documented in their 'faith journey' accounts.

Attendance is in line with national targets. Excellent attendance is promoted through rewards. However, the Christian values of justice and hope ensure that the needs and circumstances of vulnerable pupils are understood and sympathetically addressed. School performance data shows that from their starting points pupils make good to outstanding progress. They understand that the Christian values of forgiveness and justice nurture them in times of difficulty. As a result they develop positive attitudes to learning and have the confidence to tackle challenges, knowing that their efforts will be encouraged and supported.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is given high priority across the curriculum. It is emphasised in religious education (RE) and collective worship but opportunities for development are also identified across the whole curriculum. Pupils engage in a wide variety of exciting and inspirational activities both in the classroom and beyond. The 'experience charter' opens up possibilities for all pupils to experience the wonders of God's world through visits to, for example, the seaside, a local viewpoint and the zoo.

High priority is given to RE and its importance in the life of the school is clearly understood. Pupils respond well and are able to express their ideas confidently about faith and its impact on believers. They have good knowledge of world faiths such as Islam and Hinduism and are able to make links and comparisons between different faiths. 'The whole school respects other people's stories,' explained a pupil. They do not as yet have many opportunities to learn about the diversity of Christianity locally or in other parts of the world.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is at the heart of Hurst Knoll St James' school. Pupils and staff readily acknowledge its importance. 'It makes school more worshipful,' explained a member of the pupil Faith Leadership Team. The links made between worship themes and the school's Christian values encourage pupils to think beyond themselves and to take part in charity events and appeals. Harvest gifts for the local foodbank, running for The Christie and support for Children in Need illustrate pupils' understanding of God's love in action.

Collective worship regularly includes biblical material. Themes are carefully planned to include seasons of the Church's year and key Christian festivals. Artefacts on the worship table reflect the Trinity and pupils are able to describe how they remind them of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Prayers such as the Lord's Prayer, the school prayer and celebration prayer, graces and blessings are frequently used in worship. As a result, pupils are familiar with Anglican practice and traditions.

Worship is led regularly by local clergy. Key Christian festivals are celebrated in church. Pupils are involved in Cafe Church which broadens their experience of a variety of worship styles and settings. Classroom reflection areas prompt pupils' understanding of prayer as a part of everyday life. Pupils contribute prayers to worship. They enjoy participating in worship through reading and drama. They do not yet have frequent opportunities to plan and lead worship.

Collective worship is monitored regularly through observations by a range of stakeholders, including pupils. The establishment of the Faith Leadership Team of pupils and supporting adults ensures that monitoring and evaluation of worship and its impact on the school community is systematic. As a result, changes and improvements are made.

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

The strong and committed vision of the headteacher for the development of this Church of England school is considerable. He articulates and models the Christian values which he has established as the heart and foundation of the school. The headteacher is ably supported by the deputy headteacher and governors. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance is systematic and thorough. This results in effective plans for improvement. Governors, parents and children express profound recognition of the impact of this Christian vision on the character of the school and its standing in the local community. Expectations for pupils' achievements have also

been raised and the resulting school improvement is recognised by local authority and diocesan advisors. Areas for development from the previous inspection have been successfully addressed.

Community links and partnerships are effective and mutually beneficial. Parents speak of being reassured and welcomed by the visibility and approachability of the headteacher and teachers. The regular presence at school of local clergy reinforces community links. Members of the church congregation are welcomed to school events such as the Christmas lunch. School newsletters are distributed at church. School pupils are involved in uniformed organisations at St James' church. Pupils from Hurst Knoll St James' take part in a range of events in the local community. The school choir sings at local events, in local care homes and the shopping centre. As a result, as a governor explained, 'the school is now on the map' in the local community.

The headteacher is RE subject leader and this ensures RE has high priority in the school's strategic plans. He has a clear vision for the future development of the subject and high expectations for the quality of teaching and learning. Links with the diocese are now strong and give leaders the confidence to develop the Christian character of the school. Governors carry out their role diligently and both challenge and support current school leaders. They recognise the significant improvement driven by the headteacher and are justifiably optimistic for the continuing development and success of this Church of England school.

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