

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Saighton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Saighton Lane
Saighton
Chester
CH3 6EG

Diocese: Chester
Local authority: Cheshire West and Chester
Date of inspection: 6th April 2011
Date of last inspection: 31st January 2008
School's unique reference number: 111350
Headteacher: Mrs Mavis Sellers
Inspector's name and number: Graham H Nuttall 456

School context

This is a smaller than average primary school situated on the Duke of Westminster's estate. Most families are from white British backgrounds with the proportion of children entitled to free school meals being well below average. The number of children with special educational needs/disabilities is also below national norms. After a period of recent instability, the headteacher was appointed to the substantive post in 2009. The school has gained a number of accreditations including the Artsmark, Healthy Schools and Eco (silver) School Award.

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

Saighton is an outstanding church school. It reflects exceptionally well its Christian foundation providing many opportunities for children to develop as individuals within a safe, caring, welcoming and stimulating environment. Links with the church are exceptionally strong. As a result of high quality provision and outstanding practice pupils make very good progress in their personal lives and their spiritual development.

Established strengths

- The Christian vision and inspiring leadership of the senior management team strongly supported by all staff and governors.
- Outstanding standards of provision and outcome for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school's strong links with the church and community and the caring and welcoming ethos of the school.
- The exemplary behaviour of the children and the warm relationships within the school family.

Focus for development

- Develop opportunities to use Bible themes when designing topics within the school's Creative Curriculum.

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

The Christian ethos of the school has a positive impact on children's personal development. Parents speak openly about the school being 'a happy family school'. All children know they are valued and special; they are confident, caring and respectful. Saughton is proud to be a Church of England school and its purpose is expressed boldly in its mission statement, 'Nurturing children in a Christian environment'. These values are exemplified in practice and children experience a high quality of Christian care in a welcoming, friendly and supportive atmosphere. They are in no doubt that their views are respected and valued with dedicated teachers prepared to go that extra mile for the children, community and parents. As a result, relationships with all school partners are of a very high order. Many opportunities are

provided in and beyond the curriculum to enable individuals to assume responsibility successfully and develop their full potential. The school council plays an important part in evaluating different options. Pupils display a growing maturity and initiate fund raising activities such as 'Hats for Haiti' and 'Cakes and Cookies' which raised funds for the outdoor play area currently under construction. Community cohesion within the local area is a strength of the school. The school enjoys good relationships with village organisations and the Grosvenor Estate. Links with a school in Borneo and visits from a German primary school helps to give children an understanding of world perspectives and broaden their cultural awareness. There is much laughter within school. Children commented, 'lessons here are energetic and full of fun'. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong because of the positive impact made by the outstanding provision for extra curricular activities. Many areas of the school are used well to encourage spiritual development. Children are immensely proud of their school and this is amplified by bright interactive displays often with Religious Education and worship as their theme.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The daily period of collective worship is a very special part of the school day. It is based on firm Christian principles and is exceptionally well led. The highly effective use of music, singing and Information Technology enables each child to take part and enjoy the experience of worshipping God. Children are confident and talk openly about how they enjoy taking part, particularly in class led worship and services held in church. A pupil remarked, 'Worship is important because Jesus is the light of the world.' Positive role models from all staff ensure a very high standard of involvement. Children develop an awareness of Anglican traditions through their responses and in the use of prayer. The sensitive leadership of the headteacher during the observed act of worship included some delightful interaction with the children. The sincerity and reverence of the occasion ensured that both pupils and staff gained inspiration, were encouraged to grow spiritually and be personally affirmed. Children, parents and staff have opportunities to write their own prayers which are placed in a 'Family Prayer Book'. All partners in school regard these as very special prayers when everyone can pray together for those within the school community who may have enjoyed recent celebrations or for those with particular needs. Many parents attend the worship led by pupils or when worship takes place in church. Effective planning, with themes related to Christian values and teaching, aid children's understanding and appreciation of the Christian faith within their lives. Detailed records are kept of themes covered in worship and effective monitoring and evaluation with all partners helps to inform planning and ensure worship is of a high quality. Worship at Saighton is clearly central to the life of the school and underpins its Christian ethos.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious Education (RE) is well planned, effectively resourced and delivered by means of some good teaching. As a result the children respond enthusiastically. The quality of both teaching and learning is good overall, with a welcome emphasis on the impact of the faith of a believer, not just the facts about faith. Children clearly have the ability to think through situations, relating what is covered in lessons to their circumstances in daily life. This was evident in a Year 5/6 lesson in which children were asked to compare and contrast the similarities and differences within Hindu and Christian worship. Their understanding grows because they are given plenty of opportunities to reflect on and discuss issues. A lesson in Key Stage 1 utilised video clips well to convey the events of Palm Sunday with children being asked to interpret the feelings of Jesus for a TV news presentation. Pupils are very positive about RE and are not afraid to discuss their own beliefs and faiths. They express wonder at the discovery of the gospel message and this impacts tremendously on their social, moral, cultural and spiritual development. The school devised a detailed and robust 'action plan' in order to rectify the deficiencies highlighted by the last inspection. The unstinting work of the headteacher, who co-ordinates the subject, together with her staff has ensured that all the points raised for development in the last report have been addressed very successfully. Effective monitoring and assessment of the subject now informs planning. The school has developed the 'creative curriculum' exceptionally well, but there are missed opportunities to include Biblical themes within this aspect of the school's work.

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

The headteacher, governors and management team provide outstanding leadership in promoting the Christian character of the school. The magnitude and achievement of the whole staff team in creating a unified school and Christian family cannot be overstated. The principle of corporate leadership is an important feature of the school, with all partners included and their views taken into account and put into practice accordingly. There is an atmosphere of trust, support and corporate responsibility. All work exceptionally hard to successfully sustain school improvement, raise levels of self-esteem amongst children and support families within the community. The close-knit relationship between the clergy team, foundation governors and leadership team helps to communicate the clear Christian vision of the school to all members of staff and parents. There is a clear sense that the school is run by a team rather than one individual. Governors now have a very good understanding of the school's strengths, and are very supportive, yet challenging. Staff and governors regularly attend in-service training which helps to encourage potential church school leaders. Parents and pupils speak openly about the way the school seeks and values their views, through regular questionnaires and parental evaluation sheets. As a result, parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and its work. They are encouraged to be partners in their children's education and the family workshops in literacy and numeracy are good examples of how they are provided with ideas to help support learning at home. Accurate and effective self-evaluation has ensured that the school now has a good understanding of its future needs as a church school community. Many families make a conscious decision to send their children to Saughton because they wish them to experience the Christian values it promotes. Typical comments from parents include, 'It's like one big, happy family where children of all ages know and help each other' and 'The children here receive a balanced education within a supporting and caring environment – the headteacher and staff are super!'

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