

St Nicholas Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

Chillington Drive,
Belvide Gardens
Codsall.
Wolverhampton.
WV8 1AN

Diocese: Lichfield

Local authority: Staffordshire

Dates of inspection: 6th February 2013

Date of last inspection: 11th May 2009

School's unique reference number: 124243

Headteacher: Mr T Moule

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Rachael Brownhill 656

School context

St. Nicholas' First School is a thriving school which serves the popular village of Codsall and its surrounding area. The vast majority of learners are White British, with a small number of pupils being from ethnic groups. The number on roll has risen since the last inspection and is now 360.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. Nicholas' First School as a Church of England school are outstanding

St. Nicholas' First School is an outstanding church school where the pupils make exceptional spiritual and social progress in a school where they are made to feel special. The progress made is derived from the strong Christian ethos which is immediately apparent. The leadership of the school has created a highly distinctive and effective learning environment where Christian values and teaching are expertly planned and attainment is consistently high.

Established strengths

- A distinctive and highly effective Christian ethos exists where pupils feel valued and special.
- The effectiveness of Collective Worship through very strong links between the church, the school and the community.
- The cohesive engagement of all stakeholders to uphold and further the school's Christian foundation.
- The quality and variety of display that promote Christian values.

Focus for development

- Embrace the planned opportunity to enhance cultural diversity by forming new links locally, nationally and internationally and to improve knowledge of the worldwide Christian church by linking with a school in Kenya.
- To extend pupils knowledge of other religions studied, by visiting other places of worship.

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

St. Nicholas' First School is an outstanding church school where Christian values and character are clearly lived out in the life of the school. The school motto "Pathways to learning.. Steps to success" successfully motivates pupils to do their best. There is a very clear and strong commitment to both the care of the children through living out the Christian values of mutual respect, trust and love, and the standards that the pupils achieve. The children in turn value their school, saying that they feel very safe and know who to go to if they have a problem. As a result behaviour is excellent throughout the school with the children recognising the difference between right and wrong and the school working with the support of parents. The school is committed to being 'inclusive' by working towards the

Dyslexia Friendly status. Superb displays contribute to a vibrant school environment that strongly encourages spiritual development. Effective links with the community enhance Community Cohesion and promote responsible citizenship. A colourful display depicting contrasting environments and entitled "God's Wonderful World" includes contributions from most of the children. As an example of the inclusion that exists within this school, an impressive woven wall feature of St. Nicholas' Church forms a focus centrepiece in the hall, with a peg doll made by each child and member of staff around the picture too. The school has established links in the community, for example with joint fundraising events between the school and the church. Other fund-raising activities are often pupil-initiated for a local cause or a global disaster. Exemplar practice exists in each classroom with a focus area providing high quality artefacts which act as a stimulus for reflection. This begins in the Nursery and Reception with a focus on friends and prayer. The Vicar, who is also the Rural Dean, explained his role in "*helping the children to get in touch with Christ*" and "*using an array of resources to foster their spirituality*". A Christian focus worship and craft session takes place regularly involving the school and the church. This is known as 'St. Nich's @St. Nich's' and reflects the very close relationship of the school and the church. When asked "What is special about a church school?", one pupil said "*It feels like Jesus is always there. He never gives up on you.*" Christian beliefs, as well as a recognition of other faiths, are evident throughout the school. Discussion with older pupils showed that they understand that not everyone in the world is a Christian, but that others within the school may have their own faith, which is to be respected. An especially meaningful feature is the phrase, "Jesus is here. His spirit is with us," which is expertly sign written in the entrance leading into the school. This provides a very positive Christian message on entering the building.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is vitally important to the life of the school. It is an area that has greatly improved since the last inspection, reflecting and promoting key Christian beliefs at a level that is meaningful to the children. The children know that worship time is special and say it makes them feel calm. Worship impacts positively on the children. They talk with enthusiasm about their involvement in worship. One pupil said worship can "*.. affect your behaviour and how you feel*". Themes for worship are well-planned and include personal development and character building using the SEAL(social,emotional aspects of learning) materials, whilst also engaging with the events in the Christian calendar. Pupils take part enthusiastically in worship. They understand how prayer can help them in their own lives and refer to the Lord's Prayer, which they recite beautifully. The very good Collective Worship observed had the theme, 'don't judge a book by the cover' and linked with the story of 'The Good Samaritan.' Praise in the form of singing has a very high profile within the school and the children sang a moving rendition of 'Sing' which included talented soloists, which made the performance very powerful. Anglican tradition was demonstrated by the vicar in his explanation of the significance of the Eucharist. Older pupils sit with parishioners in church to experience a Eucharist Service, which is excellent practice. A quiet area with seating forms a popular focal area and provides a place of quietness for reflection which is significant to all. The school benefits from strong links with St. Nicholas' Church which is close by. Local clergy and invited visitors take collective worship in school regularly which strengthens pupils' spiritual development. Pupils show remarkable empathy with Christianity, with Reception and Year 1 children explaining a variety of Bible Stories and recalling the school Nativity as well as talking knowledgeably about Jesus on the cross.

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

The very strong leadership of the Headteacher together with the commitment and dedication of the Worship Coordinator, staff and governors, ensures that the distinctive Christian ethos pervades school life. There is an established clear vision for the school which is inclusive and cohesive, shared by all stakeholders. The headteacher knows the school community well and responds appropriately, providing a high standard of support for and effective communication with families. The Foundation governors are fully aware of their role in school self-evaluation. A great sense of team work and unity of purpose exists amongst the staff and clergy. Members of the School Council speak proudly of their important role. They have contributed to the improvement of the environment and they know that any minor disputes amongst pupils will be dealt with effectively. The school is held in very high esteem by parents and the local community who value the Christian status of the school and recognise that the school

offers a spiritual dimension to their children's growth and development. To encapsulate this a parent said "*..It (the school) is like an extended family here. You are made to feel welcome.*" As the chair of Governors confirmed, "*It is an overtly Christian environment.*" St. Nicholas' is a popular first school that is very well respected within its community and deserves to have its work recognised as being outstanding.

SIAS Report February 2013 St. Nicholas' CE (C) First School Codsall Wolverhampton WV8 1NA