



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Lostock Gralam Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	School Lane Lostock Gralam Northwich Cheshire CW9 7PT
Current SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Chester
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Date/s of inspection	13 October 2016
Date of last inspection	November 2011
School's unique reference number	111289
Headteacher	Gill Barker
Inspector's name and number	Frank Driessen (675)

School context

Lostock Gralam Church of England School is a smaller than average-sized primary school. It serves a semi-urban area on the outskirts of Northwich. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below the national average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is higher than the national average. A below average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language. The school recently won a national award for consistently high achievement of children in receipt of Pupil Premium and was recently awarded the Gold RE Quality Mark. The head teacher supports the local diocese in delivering training and support to other church schools.

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

- The strong Christian leadership and vision of both the head teacher and deputy, with the support of the governors, vicar and a talented and committed school staff, has ensured that distinctively Christian values remain deeply embedded in the life and actions of the school.
- Because of its distinctive, open, welcoming and affirming ethos as a Christian family, the school has a clear awareness of its central role at the heart of the parish and community.
- Excellent care and support for all children and families are underpinned by the school's Christian belief that every person is welcome and precious in the eyes of God.
- The links between school, church and families are particularly harmonious, creating an impressive sense of community.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that the school's distinctive Christian vision and character is effectively communicated to all stakeholders so that its outstanding distinctiveness can be more widely celebrated.

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

A huge sense of community, a deep love of children and a passion for learning are at the heart of this aspirational and inclusive Christian family. Clear and explicit Christian values underpin the strong, supportive relationships between all its members. Pastoral care is outstanding. The children's behaviour is of the highest standard and is driven by the embedded values of love, compassion and forgiveness. Pupils love coming to school and their attendance is above the national average. One parent commented how the school has had a positive and transformational effect upon the whole family. The vibrant Christian environment adds to the richness of the ethos and continually affirms the school's distinctive character. Explicit, high quality focus areas in each classroom and the 'Serenity Garden' give children the opportunity for prayerful reflection each day. This supports the strong emphasis on prayer throughout the school. It encourages the spiritual development of all members of the school community.

The aspirational drive to raise achievement has led to a culture of high expectations and an outstanding curriculum. Excellent pupil progress and attainment demonstrate the great love of learning that has been cultivated through the school's supportive Christian ethos. One child said, 'Our teachers make us think in exciting ways'. Vulnerable children and those with special needs are very effectively supported through focused teaching so they make excellent progress and achieve well. Their results are typically better than similar pupils nationally.

Exciting, innovative and challenging religious education (RE) and well-integrated and reflective collective worship both make an outstanding contribution to the school's Christian character. They enable pupils to understand Christian belief and practice. As one child explained, they interpret the school's Christian values in 'a way that Jesus would want us to do'. A direct result of this working out of the values is seen in the way children support an extensive range of charities locally, nationally and internationally. One child said, 'We need to remember those who have less than us in their lives'.

Through RE and the school's support for international charities, the pupils become very aware of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. A wide range of multi-faith learning activities ensures pupils have a clear understanding of the beliefs and practices of other world faiths. This prepares them well for life in a diverse global society.

The 'pupil voice' within the school is particularly powerful. The dynamic work of the school council, pupils' ethos group and head boy and head girl results in much beneficial change.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is a time of deep fellowship that plays a significant part in nurturing pupils' spirituality and on-going faith development. It is central to the life of the school. Acts of worship are inclusive and valued by all pupils including those of other faiths or of none. Pupils are enthusiastic, thoughtful, attentive and responsive. One child said, 'It's a great time to talk to God'. Christian values are promoted and explored over a period of time, along with a concentration on the impact each value has on the lives of those in the school community. A child said, 'It helps us to be more like Jesus and be the best we can.' Acts of worship are Bible-based and distinctively Christian in character. They are exceptionally well planned and delivered by a wide range of stakeholders, including children and the 'Open the Book' team from local churches, using a rich mix of themes. Planning has a strong focus on enabling participants to develop a very firm understanding of Jesus Christ and that of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pupils have extensive experience in its planning and leadership.

Collective worship is highly imaginative and pupils display a strong spiritual awareness, valuing opportunities for prayer, silence and reflection time. Pupils understand the purpose of prayer and the impact it has on their lives. They see it as an important part of their life and enjoy writing and reading their own prayers not just in school but at home also. Interactive reflection areas and well-utilised prayer boxes support spiritual development effectively.

The worship focus is effectively aided by the use of Christian displays at the front of the hall, with candles, crosses, and a Bible on the 'Worship Chest'. The children sing and sign with joyful exuberance and there is a real sense of being immersed in the worship experience.

Pupils develop a very good understanding of Anglican traditions and practices through daily worship and attendance at major festivals in church. Multi-faith weeks and the celebration of festivals from other faiths offer a richer experience of different worship. These considerably enhance pupils' understanding of other people's faiths.

The involvement of the pupil ethos group in writing, delivering and evaluating the impact of the worship is excellent. Changes to its format and content have come about as a consequence of their feedback. 'Worship,' said one child with a huge smile 'makes me feel special and next to God'.

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

The experience of entering a busy school that is a living and worshipping faith community greets all who enter the building. It is the direct result of the powerful Christian vision of the inspirational head teacher. Her personal commitment and clear-sighted leadership contribute significantly to the overwhelming success of Lostock Gralam as a highly distinctive church school. She is well supported by governors, staff and parents, all of whom articulate the school's Christian values. Outstandingly positive relationships throughout the school demonstrate the key role that Christian values play in the community.

Collective worship and RE are both led inspirationally and creatively with an enthusiasm that engages and inspires both staff and children. Both areas support, extend and deepen children's understanding and awareness of how Christians live their lives by following the teachings of the Bible. Governor scrutiny ensures that RE and worship underpin all aspects of school life.

All governors are highly supportive of the strategic drive to improve academic performance. They view the further development of the school's distinctive Christian nature as essential to this and act as well-informed critical friends who set the school's strategic direction. The wholly inclusive curriculum is outstanding because it is underpinned by Christian principles that inspire and engage the pupils and lead directly to improvement. As a result, support for the development of the pupils' social, morals, spiritual and cultural education is outstanding. Effective training for both staff and governors ensures that future leaders' needs are met. All areas for development from the previous inspection have been fully addressed.

The mutually close working partnership between church and school is enhanced by the excellent work of the vicar and foundation governors. This ensures that prayer and pastoral care are closely interlinked, extending the influence of school life into the wider community. This highly effective partnership has placed the school at the heart of its local community. 'This is a school,' remarked one parent, 'in which everyone works for each other in absolute harmony.'

SIAMS report October 2016 Lostock Gralam CofE School, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 7PT