

**Abram Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Simpkin Street  
Abram  
Wigan  
WN2 5QE

<b>Diocese:</b>	<b>Liverpool</b>
Local authority:	Wigan
Date of inspection:	1 <sup>st</sup> March 2012
Date of last inspection:	10th/11 <sup>th</sup> December 2008
School's unique reference number:	106469
Headteacher:	Mr Peter Freeman
Inspector's name and number:	Mr Mike Graham (286)

**School context**

Abram CE School serves an urban area on the south-east fringes of Wigan. Most children are local and almost all are of white British heritage. The percentage of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Several staff changes have occurred since the last report but the situation is now stable.

**The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Abram Primary as a Church of England school are good**

The school shines in demonstrating Christian care and love. Together with the local church, it plays a key role in the community. Great care is taken of each child and adult. The links with the parish church are strong and the recently appointed vicar is determined to strengthen them even further. Christian values are explicitly placed at the centre of school life. Worship is excellent and makes a significant impact on the children's spiritual growth.

**Established strengths**

- The loving Christian relationships within the family of the school
- The Christian vision and leadership of all school leaders, supported fully by all members of staff
- The excellence of the worship and its impact on the children's spiritual development

**Focus for development**

- Include prayers written and spoken by the children in worship in school and church
- Involve the whole school community in a review of the mission statement
- Include visits from members of other faiths in RE

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

The school's Christian values make a significant impact on the children's personal development. Love and care for one another are natural characteristics of the school community. Other Christian values such as respect, service and hope are demonstrated as well as taught. The chair of governors said that the usually unspoken question 'What would Jesus do?' is seen as the best possible guide to Christian behaviour and relationships in school. Individual children mature and develop through serving others as monitors, helpers, members of the school council and of the 'Pupil Voice'. The latter is a group of children from Y1 through to Y6 who evaluate collective worship each half term. The school's promotion of community cohesion is strong, and is helped considerably by the close relationship with the church. Exchange visits to and from Alma Park school in Levenshulme widen the cultural and social awareness of the children effectively. Innumerable acts of kindness make this school a special place. A good example was the 'Sorry Ruby!' from the class teacher to a Y2 girl when her contribution to discussion had been interrupted by the teacher herself. Outreach work with families is good, with excellent co-operative work led by the learning mentor with the rest of the

school staff and outside agencies. The school environment promotes spiritual development through bright and interactive posters and displays. Many of these relate directly to RE and worship. The prayer tree and prayer boxes outside classrooms are used enthusiastically and effectively by the children. The whole school family takes pride in helping the care-taking staff to keep the grounds and building tidy and clean, and this supports a deep appreciation of God's provision. The school garden is particularly striking, with winter vegetables to the fore at present.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

The children value worship highly. They speak freely about the impact made by the songs, bible stories, drama, reflection times and prayer. All staff and the clergy assist in leading worship regularly. They offer diverse approaches that support children's spiritual development and give a focus for each day. Children and staff are thus reminded that God loves them and they are special to Him. The worship on the day of the inspection was most effective. It was relaxed yet reverent and the theme was hope, the Christian value chosen as the focus for this half term. It was led with great skill and sensitivity by the headteacher. The children and adults were clearly well prepared for worship. Singing, with actions including signing, was exciting and relevant. Humour, participation by children and excellent rapport between leader and children were evident throughout. A helium balloon was given to Y6 to release at lunchtime, to symbolise the sending of children's prayers to God. The children were spellbound. Prayer is a frequent feature of school life but prayers written by children are rarely read by the children themselves. The sincerity and relevance of worship ensures that children and staff gain inspiration, are enabled to grow spiritually and are personally affirmed. Anglican greetings and responses and the Lord's Prayer are regularly used and children take part with understanding and enthusiasm. The clergy lead worship every fortnight at the school, and on special occasions in church. A child commented 'Rev Ann taught us the Our Father in sign language, that was cool!' Worship is evaluated regularly with the children fully involved through the pupil voice group. They also plan and lead regularly.

### **The effectiveness of religious education is good**

Standards and achievement in religious education (RE) are good and improving. Teaching is inventive and of high quality and this is having a positive effect on the spiritual development of the children. There is a welcome emphasis on the impact of faith on a believer, not just on the facts about religion. In lessons, children's understanding grows because they actively participate in the many opportunities to reflect on and discuss issues. Independent learning and creative use of the internet feature significantly. Teaching in RE is good overall although some outstanding teaching was observed. Excellent practice was evident, including the staff working as a team to encourage full involvement by all children. There was good use of ICT, lively role-play, a range of activities to suit all abilities, sensitive encouragement of good behaviour and a high quality of interaction and discussion within groups. A Y6 boy explained the significance of the breaking of bread during the Eucharist thus, 'His body was broken. He was whipped and had a spear stuck in Him'. During a discussion about Easter celebrations a Y2 girl said 'Jesus did special things showing He was God's Son'. The progression in spiritual and moral development is significant. The vicar makes invaluable contributions to lessons, including the 'baptism' of a doll with children as 'parents and godparents'. Study of non-Christian faiths is thorough and well resourced though visits to places of worship or from members of these faith groups are rare. A Hindu member of staff has however made a valuable contribution by sharing her faith and culture with reception children through a lesson on Diwali.

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

The headteacher, leadership team and governors promote a distinctive school vision based on Christian values with enthusiasm and commitment. The mission statement does not embody the vision very well however. The headteacher's own faith is a living example of Christianity in action. He has brought inspiration and drive to the school and his hallmark is the distinctly Christian and caring approach taken in all aspects of school life. Parents, staff and children are clear about the significance of the Christian basis for the school's life. The staff are excellent role models for the children, and in fact the children themselves are living the vision in a powerful way. Areas for development from the previous report have been addressed thoroughly. Wholehearted support for in-service training, teamwork, coaching and good delegation encourages potential church school leaders. The relationships between school, church, parents and the local community are excellent. Parents are delighted with and very proud of their school and are given regular opportunities for feedback. Comments included, 'He (My son in Y2) teaches me about RE!', 'She often sings the songs from assembly at home' and 'The services in church are wonderful'.

SIAS report March 2012, Abram CE Primary School, Wigan, WN2 5QE