



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### Lowton Church of England High School

Newton Road  
Lowton  
Wigan WA3 1DU

**Previous SIAMS grade: N/a    Current inspection: Good**

**Diocese: Liverpool**

Local authority: Wigan

Date of inspection: 19 March 2015

Date of last inspection: N/a

School's unique reference number: 137783

Headteacher: Julian Pollard

Inspector's name and number: Robert Haigh 660

### School context

The school is smaller than most secondary schools. Admission numbers are increasing. Most students are of White British heritage with English as their first language. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is average, as is the proportion of disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium. The school, formerly a sports college, became a Foundation Church of England school in 2012. The headteacher took up his post in September 2014.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Lowton as a Church of England school are good

- The visionary and dynamic leadership of the headteacher and his senior colleagues, supported by governors, staff and the chaplain ensure that the school's Christian ethos has a growing impact on students' achievement and spiritual development.
- Strong relationships based on the Christian values of trust, compassion and respect are reflected in the good behaviour of students and their high degree of care and concern for others.
- Students are valued as God's children so they feel accepted and are eager to learn.
- The growing links with churches and the community are mutually beneficial.

### Areas to improve

- Ensure that Christian values are fully embedded so all students can articulate their distinctively Christian characteristics and their influence on daily life and learning.
- Enable students to have a greater role in planning and leading worship.

- Engage all stakeholders in an evaluation of church school development to identify, celebrate and strengthen Christian distinctiveness.

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

This recently-established church school promotes core Christian values which are making an impact on its life and learning. They are clearly expressed daily. The school's growing Christian distinctiveness and inclusivity show in the attitudes and actions of all. A Year 8 boy said 'The Christian atmosphere in the school helps us to bond like a caring family' and a Year 11 girl referred to a 'growing sense of Christian togetherness'. A belief in the God-given value of each child is paramount. Students are known well and feel safe. Their attendance has improved rapidly and is now broadly average. They are confident about the caring support they receive and speak openly about the Christian values and high expectations behind it. Consequently, students display good attitudes to learning. The school's Christian character shapes choices about curriculum design and the courses offered meet students' academic and personal needs. Data confirms that the teaching and achievement in most subjects are consistently good. The aspects of provision in mathematics which have limited students' progress and attainment are being rigorously addressed. Living out the Christian values of endurance and service means that staff support with diligence and sensitivity those for whom learning is more difficult. As a result, the progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is good. The success of measures to raise attainment across the board can be seen in the improved 2014 GCSE outcomes. Effective strategies to improve the attainment of disadvantaged students are having impact. Successful use is made of Year 7 catch-up funding. However, the investment of pupil premium is not closing the attainment gap between eligible pupils and others rapidly enough. Students behave well and look after each other because they understand the values of respect and friendship. A Year 9 girl commented 'My aim is to care and help because the teachings of Jesus tell us to'. This is typical of many students' comments in linking their behaviour with the core values, although not all are able to explain their distinctively Christian basis. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) is promoted well across the curriculum. In addition, support for a school in Uganda fosters cultural understanding and innovative community projects enhance social development. The Christian values of thankfulness and compassion prompt students to organise and lead much charity fund-raising. Religious education (RE) is one of the top performing subjects at GCSE and students' attainment is above the national average. It also contributes to the school's Christian character by helping students to value Christian tradition, belief and practice as well as understand diversity in modern society.

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

Collective worship is increasingly at the centre of the school's life. It is inclusive and valued by all. It develops pupils' spiritual awareness and provides opportunities for them to discover the relevance of the Christian faith and express their own faith through action. A Year 10 girl stated 'It helps us to explore the meaning of Christian values in our daily lives'. A Year 7 boy remarked, 'Worship helps us think about God and Jesus and each other. It helps us think about the big questions of life'. Worship extends beyond the daily act in forms and larger gatherings to church celebrations for Christian festivals. Greater clarity is being developed at the planning stage to create acts of worship rather than teaching assemblies. Christian values, the life and ministry of Jesus, Bible stories and moral issues have a prominent place in worship. As a result pupils talk knowledgeably about Christian belief, Bible teachings and faith in action. There is an appreciation of the Christian concept of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, although students' understanding of the Holy Spirit lacks breadth and depth. Students value form worship, although report that it is variable in quality. They appreciate the opportunities for prayer, reflection and discussion using the interactive 'worship walls' in form rooms for creative responses to the Christian values themes. They say these increase their awareness of God's presence as well as helping them to become more confident in their exploration and expression of faith. Students also value saying the Lord's Prayer and the school prayer because they provide models of prayer which help them in writing their own. The monitoring and evaluation of worship by the worship committee to identify impact and inform future priorities are at an early stage and starting to address recognised areas for

development. The ministry of the recently-appointed chaplain is greatly appreciated because it strengthens planning, resourcing and Christian leadership. The participation of students in worship enhances their understanding of it and their leadership skills. They would like to do more of this. Students know the significance of the Christian festivals and are becoming familiar with Anglican liturgy and practice, especially in Key Stage 3. They also appreciate the occasions of focus on world religions because this extends their understanding of other faiths and cultures.

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

The authentic, determined and sensitive leadership of the headteacher is providing impetus and clear direction for the continuing development of the school's Christian character and ethos to secure the well-being and achievement of all. This is happening with the strong support of senior colleagues, other staff and governors. The impact of leadership and management is also seen in the improving academic outcomes. Students have leadership and support roles which enhance their self-assurance and Christian service. RE and worship are well led, have a high profile and legal requirements regarding their provision are met. The school knows itself well. Its evaluation of performance is both reflective and rigorous. Feedback from students, for example, is bringing about improvements in collective worship. The school development plan is ambitious and increasingly effective in addressing church school priorities. Governors are proud of the school and vigilant in providing challenge and support to improve its performance and enhance its Christian character. They speak confidently about church school issues including the development of future leaders and the importance of all staff understanding church school effectiveness. The school draws on diocesan and local authority support which is improving the expertise of governors, leaders and teachers. Collaboration with the community is mutually beneficial. Links with churches and liaison with partner primary schools are effective. They enhance the school's Christian identity, service and learning, strengthen the church's connection with families and facilitate student transition. Parents strongly support the school. They say its Christian ethos and 'subtle but powerful' encouragement to engage with matters of faith enable students to grow in confidence, self-esteem and spiritual understanding. Various stakeholders have expressed an interest in helping the school develop its vision for Christian distinctiveness. The school is outward looking and supportive of a variety of local, national and international projects, including through the Lowton Charity Award. These help develop students' wider Christian service beyond home, school and parish.

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