

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### St Mary Magdalen's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Devonshire Street, Accrington, Lancashire, BB5 1DW

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Blackburn</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Lancashire
Date of inspection	26 January 2017
Date of last inspection	March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided Primary 119446
Headteacher	Karen Hardman
Inspector's name and number	Jo Williams 863

#### School context

St Mary Magdalen's Church of England School has 199 pupils on roll and is an average sized primary school. There has been a rise in pupil numbers since the last inspection. The school is located in an area of deprivation and English is an additional language for approximately a fifth of all pupils. The headteacher has been in post for six years and is supported by two deputy headteachers. There have been significant changes to the school building since the last inspection as well as the development of the outdoor space. The recent Ofsted inspection judged the school to be good.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary Magdalen's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The school's strong Christian leadership is aspirational for all pupils, underpinned by a set of Christian values that have a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing.
- Prayer is a prominent feature in the daily life of the school and is a key element in supporting pupils' development.
- Religious education (RE) is exceptionally well led and delivered in such a way that ensures both pupils' enjoyment and engagement in the subject.
- Christian values and Jesus' example provide an effective Christian framework for pupils to follow in their daily lives. As a result, pupils' behaviour is of a high standard and children demonstrate genuine care for one another.

#### Areas to improve

- Enhance pupils' engagement in collective worship by involving a wider range of pupils of different ages in planning, leading and evaluating worship.
- Increase the diversity of those from Christian backgrounds in leading worship to support pupils' spiritual development.

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

The highly distinctive Christian character of the school is modelled by all staff and has a positive impact on the daily lives of pupils, irrespective of background or ability. Pupils come from a wide variety of backgrounds including pupils with English as an additional language. Recognising the pupils' different lives, the headteacher highlights the importance of the school's distinctively Christian values in providing the pupils with tolerance and resilience. This is lived out through the school's mission statement of 'inspire, love, educate, reaching our potential together through Christ.' Although pupils come from different starting points, this has a significant impact on pupil wellbeing and their social, emotional, spiritual and moral development. Parents speak of their children being valued at school resulting in the children's desire to do their best. This is because distinctively Christian values greatly support both pupils' wellbeing and academic achievements. One pupil described the school as 'we're all a family' whilst an older child talked of the 'power of yet' in terms of persevering to achieve one's goal. Relationships across the school are highly effective in encouraging commendable excellent behaviour. Governors describe the school's atmosphere as one in which Christ is the lynchpin and consequently 'What Jesus Would Do (WJWD)' permeates everything. Likewise the school's Christian character is vital in developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, world faith days and visitors contribute to pupils' thorough and respectful understanding of diversity. There is also a meaningful link with the Bethany Project in Tanzania which has visited the school and enhanced pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. Parents speak of how their children learn to respect through knowledge. A pupil commented that 'everyone's different but we're all the same'. The Christian character of the school is fully reflected in the teaching of RE. In lessons pupils are challenged to apply Bible story themes and relevant Christian values to their own lives. Christian values such as empathy and compassion are lived out. For example, a parent shared that their six year old child said, 'If someone else feels sad, you can feel that they are sad and then go and help them'.

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

Collective worship has a highly prized place in the school which continually and consistently impacts on pupils' daily lives. For example, one child recounted a recent exemplary worship about Joseph in prison and how it had later reminded him that even if he was upset he needed to keep trying, believing that God is with him, in his heart. Pupils engage in worship with enthusiasm which greatly enhances their spiritual development. This is seen in singing with joy, reading a personal prayer or engaging in discussions, whilst 'providing a sense of peace'. Worship welcomes the wider school community to a variety of worship both in church and school. Parents express the welcome they felt to school services in the church whatever their own faith background. During the daily worship in school pupils are asked to match Christian values to the day's theme and then are challenged to apply it into their own life that day. Collective worship is at the core of pupils' spiritual development and prayer is a frequent activity. Links with the local church are particularly strong with regular visits to celebrate key festivals in the church calendar as well as 'class masses' throughout the year. There are reflection areas across the school, both indoors and outdoors. As a result these are well used and pupils frequently write prayers and some are shared in daily worship. Pupils enjoy time to reflect and Bible stories are read to pupils at playtimes in an outdoor quiet area. Pupils' deepening understanding of Anglican traditions is supported by regular services in the local church and worship in school. An excellent example is that pupils delight in sharing the peace with both adults and peers whilst passing in the corridor. Three candles are lit as part of the daily worship routine this results in pupils' confident explanation of the different aspects of The Holy Trinity, comparing it to an egg, as three different parts but all one God. Worship is planned thoroughly by the headteacher and embraces the Christian calendar and key themes linked to Christian values. Support is provided by the local vicar for both school worship and services held in church. Lunchtime worship is led by older pupils who have been chosen to be 'school chaplains'. Feedback on worship is regularly sought by the headteacher. Worship is evaluated by staff and by some pupils which influences future ideas. This results in a constant review of worship by the headteacher to deepen pupils' spiritual experiences. The school has correctly identified the need for pupils to plan, lead and evaluate worship more frequently. This ensures that worship is constantly evolving and pupils have ownership of worship. In addition, the school acknowledges the need to ensure there is a diverse range of worship leaders from different Christian backgrounds to enhance the spiritual lives of all pupils.

## **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding**

There has been rapid progress and high attainment in religious education (RE), which compares well with other core areas of the curriculum. Pupils exude excitement and enjoyment for the subject. For example, one older girl commented that, 'I really enjoy RE and I put in as much effort as other subjects.' Classroom displays reflect current

RE topics and challenge pupils' thinking by including key questions for pupils to explore. Floor books give many excellent examples of a wide range of activities that ensure RE is engaging for all pupils. This is because there is a creative approach to RE. For example, a 'before and after' activity on Jesus' encounter with lepers and Zacchaeus challenged pupils to consider the different ways in which Jesus helped people to change. RE books demonstrate high levels of pupil understanding and the pride taken in completing tasks. Feedback and marking provide pupils with further RE specific questions upon which to reflect. The curriculum is predominantly Christian, covering a wide range of different topics whilst making pertinent links to the school's Christian values. As a result, Year 2 children used a blindfold to undertake tasks thus developing the value of empathy for blind people linked to the story of Bartimaeus. Pupils have an impressive knowledge of other world faiths, demonstrating a respect for different beliefs through knowledge and experiences. Pupils had enjoyed a recent visit from 'Judaism with Jeremy', which deepened their understanding of the Jewish faith through practical activities. Leadership of RE is highly effective. Rigour and support by the subject leader has ensured a keen focus on both the quality of delivery and progress and standards in RE. Meetings to review the quality of pupils' work has included governors and input from the diocese. Monitoring of the subject is routinely thorough. Staff value feedback from the subject leader to maintain the high quality of teaching and learning in the subject.

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

The school's excellent leadership team has been very proactive in addressing areas for development from the previous inspection. As a result, the RE subject leader has had a significant impact in developing this key area. In addition, the foundation governors now have much greater involvement in evaluating the school's Christian character. The distinctively Christian vision, being 'the embodiment of the school's Christian values' is clearly shared with everyone by the school's leadership. Through implicit and explicit means the school's vision enables pupils to 'live splendidly' reflecting a Bible verse from John's gospel. This vision is embraced by the whole staff team and therefore it has a positive influence on all areas of school life. Staff explained that they 'bought into the values and ethos' and become the example for the children. This results in the pupils building resilience and developing self-worth, taking pride in their academic achievement. The headteacher describes the Christian vision as 'the embodiment of Christian values threading through everything'. Governors recognise the vision's impact on pupil wellbeing through children's comfortable eye contact and smiles which they observe on visits to the school. The Christian vision is clear in wanting the best for every child and therefore the leadership ensures an in-depth knowledge of the school's performance. This results in a tactical approach to strategic planning. Action plans are working documents with governors working alongside the school staff to secure improvement in line with the vision. RE and collective worship are very well led, resourced and managed. As a result, both have a high profile in the school and, indeed, meet statutory requirements. The school's leadership is proactive in promoting staff development. Specific training has been provided for staff at different stages of their careers including preparation for future leadership. This also provides benefits for the school through different responsibilities undertaken by the staff such as the two deputy headteachers. The school enjoys a wide variety of reciprocally advantageous partnerships. An example of this is the school choir performing in a local supermarket that in turn donates books to the school and raffle prizes for good attendance. The local vicar is a regular visitor to the school and describes the significance of the distinctively Christian character of the school, 'God's love is shared at all levels but the main beneficiaries are the children'.

SIAMS report January 2017 St Mary Magdalen's Church of England Primary School, Accrington BB5 1DW