



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Rectory Lane
Prestwich
Manchester
M25 1BP

Previous SIAMS grade: Good. Current Inspection: Outstanding

Diocese: Manchester

Local authority: Bury

Date of inspection: 24 June 2015

Date of last inspection: 22 March 2010

School's unique reference number: 105342

Headteacher: Jonathan Fish

Inspector's name and number: Robert Haigh 660

School context

St Mary's is an average-sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage with English as their first language. The proportion of children supported by pupil premium funding is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is above average. The school currently holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark (2013) and provides leadership support for partner schools.

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

- Christian values underpin and inspire all the school does. The vision and commitment of the head teacher, supported by staff and governors, ensure they are made explicit daily and make a significant impact on children's development.
- Outstanding relationships amongst all members of the school community are based on trust, respect and Christian love. Children's excellent behaviour and their high level of care for each other clearly reflect this.
- The God-given value of the children is consistently affirmed. As a result they are confident and keen learners who contribute much to the life of the school.
- Strong links with the parish unite school, families and church in joint accord.

Area to improve

- Enable children to have a greater role and responsibility in leading worship.

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

Love for children is at the heart of this happy school. Its life is rooted in Christian values and beliefs which inspire and inform its distinctive vision and mission. The school's motto 'Love learning. Love each other' and Christian character show in the kindness, respect, care and thoughtfulness of adults and children alike. A Year 4 boy said 'We are a joyful, friendly, caring school.' A belief in the God-given uniqueness of each child is paramount. Their views are listened to and acted upon. As a result, they respond well to the good opportunities they have to shape the life of their school. The inclusive ethos and welcoming family atmosphere ensure that children feel accepted and safe, have high levels of attendance and are enthusiastic learners. Children trust those who teach, aim high and are excited by the teaching which promotes curiosity and enquiry. A Year 6 girl stated that 'Teachers help us in our learning, challenge and stretch our thinking and push us beyond our limits'. There is a passionate commitment to ensuring the progress of the vulnerable. Living out the Christian values of endurance and service means staff support with diligence and sensitivity the troubled and potentially troublesome, the disadvantaged and those for whom learning is more difficult. As a result, from the moment they enter the school children make excellent year-on-year progress. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are high compared to national levels. Pupil premium interventions have closed the attainment gap and improved children's social and language skills. Academic progress data is monitored rigorously. Staff, governors and parents affirm, however, that the children's excellent personal and social development also demonstrate effective learning. Children's behaviour is exemplary. They help each other as play leaders, buddies and reading assistants because they understand the values of respect and friendship. A Year 5 boy said, 'We care and help because Jesus teaches us to.' This is typical of children's comments in linking their conduct to Christian values. Anti-social behaviour is rare and problems are resolved speedily by very effective staff. There are no exclusions. The school's Christian character makes a strong impact on children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. The quiet areas are valued as places where 'we can be calm to think and pray' as a Year 6 boy said. The values of thankfulness and compassion prompt children to support charitable causes recognising this as their Christian responsibility rather than simply being a good thing to do. This was summed up by a Year 4 boy who said, 'We like to be kind to those in need because Jesus wants us to be.' The links with schools in Uganda and the Dominican Republic foster cultural understanding. Children understand stewardship and have a sense of caring for God's creation 'because', in the words of a Year 1 boy, 'God made everything for a special reason'. Children's spiritual awareness is developed and expressed through music, art and creative writing. Religious education (RE) contributes to the school's Christian character by helping children to understand Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith as well as appreciate diversity in modern society.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Great importance is attached to collective worship and a strong tradition of distinctively Christian worship exists in the school. It is highly valued and enjoyed by all members of the school community. During the daily whole school worship observed children engaged positively, listened attentively, responded thoughtfully, sang with enthusiasm and spoke movingly about their faith and its impact on their everyday experience. Worship is rich and varied and includes weekly Eucharist, Sunday services and church celebrations at Christian festivals. It is resourced, planned and coordinated well. Monitoring and evaluation inform future planning. The school's values, the Bible and the person of Jesus are accorded a prominent place in worship. As a result children demonstrate significant levels of spiritual understanding. They talk confidently about Christian belief in practice, their knowledge of Bible stories, the life, teaching and example of Jesus and the inspiration they draw from worship. Their awareness of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is developed by the use of symbols, the language of prayers and the choice of worship songs. Children are confident with Anglican liturgy in both school and church worship.

They take seriously the opportunities for daily prayer and silence which nurture their spiritual development. A Year 6 boy commented 'When we worship we relax in the presence of God. It's a time to talk to God and a chance to reflect and pray.' Children write their own prayers for use in worship. They know the Lord's Prayer and understand its meaning and significance. Children plan worship and participate regularly which enhances their knowledge, understanding and confidence. They would like more frequent opportunities to lead worship in their classes as well as at larger gatherings. The leadership and ministry of the vicar are greatly appreciated and strengthen the school's links with the church. As a Year 6 girl put it 'He brings the teaching of Jesus to life in a thought-provoking way which helps to deepen my faith.' Parents value how the school encourages children's confidence to talk about matters of faith without embarrassment and their enthusiasm for church attendance which, in the case of Year 6, includes preparation for confirmation.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE is well-led and enjoys a high profile at St Mary's. The subject has a proven track record of academic success and makes a significant contribution to children's SMSC development and the school's Christian character. Standards of achievement in RE are above national figures. Effective monitoring and evaluation, including scrutiny by the subject leader and governors influences teachers' planning. Systems to track the progress made by children through all phases are effective. The curriculum is based on the Manchester Diocesan Board of Education scheme. There is an emphasis on Christianity throughout and other world faiths from Key Stage 1, links to collective worship and thematic, concept-based learning in keeping with the new primary curriculum. As a result, children have a secure knowledge of a variety of Bible stories from both the Old and New Testaments and can relate Christian belief to their own lives. They demonstrate an understanding of other world religions, as witnessed in a Year 2 lesson about the Jewish custom of Shabbat. The quality of teaching is outstanding. Expert subject knowledge, creative and well-targeted teaching strategies, skillful use of interactive whiteboards, visits to places of worship and challenging questioning all contribute to children's learning. The children are improving their extended writing as the practice of next-steps marking becomes embedded. There are many opportunities for independent enquiry, group discussion and peer evaluation. These improve children's ability to question and listen, their awareness of the views of others and their confidence in the use of religious vocabulary. In an observed Year 4 lesson children were able to link Christian values to daily life and explain the challenge and learning from doing so. Children eagerly share their knowledge of Christianity and other faiths. They ask searching spiritual and ethical questions and value the opportunity in lessons to 'talk things through.' (Year 6 girl). The strong link with the parish enables children to have positive views of the Christian church in the community and through discussions in RE there is a growing understanding of the church's global dimension. The subject leader is well-informed, with a strong commitment to high academic standards and an excellent understanding of the role of RE in a church school, all of which enhances the effectiveness of the subject.

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

St Mary's is a vibrant community of learning, worship and service. It is effective in fulfilling potential, influencing values and enriching lives within and beyond the school. The head teacher's spiritual, moral, academic and pastoral leadership is outstanding and he enjoys the strong support of staff, governors, pupils and parents. The creation of the mission statement was a collaborative effort and the shared Christian vision is effective in securing the well-being and achievement of all children. Attention is also given to the nurture of adults in their roles and the valuing of all members of staff and their professional development. RE and collective worship hold a central place in the curriculum, are very effectively led and statutory requirements regarding their provision are met.

This is a school which knows itself well. Self-evaluation processes have become more robust and effective since the last inspection and involve representatives of the whole school community, including the children. The impact of governance on strategic planning, data analysis and evaluation of what the school offers is strong. Church school development priorities are incorporated in the school improvement plan. Improvement priorities identified at the last inspection have been successfully addressed. Governors speak confidently about church school issues including the development of future leaders and the importance of all staff understanding church school distinctiveness. They are vigilant in offering challenge and support and participate in training which enhances their knowledge and effectiveness. The school's collaboration with the church and diocese, partner schools, the local authority and wider community is wholehearted and mutually beneficial. There is strong parental support for what the school is achieving. The links with St Mary's church and families are harmonious and contribute to an impressive sense of community. The school is outward looking and supportive of a variety of national and international projects. These help develop the children's wider perspective for Christian service beyond home, school and parish.

SIAMS report June 2015 St Mary's Church of England VA Primary School Prestwich M25 IBP