

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

### Eccleston St Mary's Church of England Primary School

The Green, Eccleston, Lancashire, PR7 5TE

**Current SIAMS inspection grade**

**Outstanding**

**Diocese**

**Blackburn**

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Local authority

Lancashire

Date/s of inspection

2 February 2017

Date of last inspection

October 2011

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Aided 119472

Headteacher

William Mann

Inspector's name and number

Gail Fullbrook 530

#### School context

St Mary's is a smaller than average sized school in the village of Eccleston near Chorley. The majority of pupils are of White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals or identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average. The vast majority of pupils speak English as their first language. The church is just under a mile away from the school at the opposite end of the village.

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

- The clarity of the Christian vision of the headteacher ensures that Christian values are embedded within every aspect of the life of the school.
- Outstanding collective worship, together with excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development has a significant impact on the pupils' well-being and personal development.
- Partnerships with the local church and diocese make an outstanding contribution to the distinctiveness of the school as a church school.

#### Areas to improve

- Review the school's approach to teaching about other faiths in order to widen the pupils' understanding of the ways in which faith has impact on the lives of believers.

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

The distinctive Christian character of this outstanding church school is immediately evident upon entering through the stained glass entrance door. It was designed by the pupils and proclaims the school's motto, 'Believe and Achieve'. Pupils say that this motto and the school's mission statement, 'Through Jesus we Love, Learn and Grow', are very important to them. Overtime they develop very good attitudes to learning, achieve well and make strong progress.

Pupils readily make links between Christian values and their relationships with each other. Consequently, behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good. Pupils comment that their values guide the way they think about things and help them to live good and kind lives. They have a secure knowledge of the Biblical stories that underpin the Christian values.

The wide range of opportunities offered, both within the curriculum and through additional school activities, support pupils' SMSC development to excellent effect. This is recognised in awards such as National Fairtrade Status, Active Mark and the Chester Diocese Bishop's award for Spirituality across the Arts. Pupils take responsibility for key areas of school life. For example, the eco council were pro-active in gathering evidence for the Fairtrade Status award.

Relationships amongst the school family are strong and purposeful. Parents say that staff, and particularly the headteacher, are 'very visible' and that any issues that occur are quickly smoothed out. Parents and pupils say that the staff are fair. Pupils know that when behavioural issues arise, they will be promptly and effectively dealt with. Parents value the community feel of the school and attribute it to the school's Christian foundation. One parent commented that he felt, 'very lucky to live close to such a wonderful church school'.

Pupils have some contact with those of other faiths and are respectful when talking about their peers from other cultures. They understand that Christians worship in different ways both in the UK and around the world, but know that all Christians follow the teaching of Jesus.

Through interesting religious education (RE) lessons and teaching within worship, pupils learn about the ways in which the school's Christian vision and values affect daily life. In this way the pupils' SMSC development is nurtured and their understanding of, and respect for, the beliefs of others is developed.

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

Worship and prayer are highly valued parts of the school day. Pupils enjoy the opportunities offered within worship for them to sing and praise the Lord with all their friends, and to pray. They share stories of worship that have made a difference to their lives. For example, after learning of the ways in which Jesus forgave his followers, a boy talked of realising why it was important for him to forgive his friends.

Worship is Biblically based, offers time for silent prayer and includes singing that is both joyful and encourages reflection. Beautiful seasonal cloths, made as part of a church in the community project, reflect the seasons of the church year. Pupils are knowledgeable about the teaching behind key Christian festivals and are familiar with a range of Anglican traditions. They have a good understanding of the importance of Eucharistic worship to Christians and older pupils are given the opportunity to be admitted to communion.

Pupils are appreciative of times given, both within worship and in the classroom, for reflection and quiet prayer. One boy spoke of it as being a time when he could get things off his chest. Another pupil said that prayer was a time when she could speak to God about things that were happening in her life. All classrooms include interactive reflection areas which provide a focus for class worship and support pupils when they want to pray on their own. Termly early morning interactive prayer walks, where prayer stations are set up around the school, provide a time when parents and pupils can pray together. These are highly valued and one pupil spoke of it as being a time when the school is covered in prayers. Younger pupils are enthusiastic about 'bears and prayers time' which is their special time of worship.

Pupils have an age appropriate understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are familiar with many concepts of Christian teaching, for example, hope and forgiveness, and discuss complex ideas such as the Eucharist thoughtfully.

Worship is carefully planned and is led by a number of different staff within the school, the local Methodist minister, the Rector and occasional visitors. The pupils' Ichthus group also lead worship regularly. This diversity of leadership contributes to pupils' spiritual development and provides a rich and varied experience of worship.

Worship planning takes account of the church year and ensures that pupils develop an understanding of Biblical stories that teach about Christian values. Monitoring and evaluation takes a number of forms and provides useful information that supports future plans. Pupils enjoy times of worship in church and value the sense of belonging, to both the church and the church family, that it brings. Parents are appreciative of the opportunities given for them to worship alongside their children, both in school and at church.

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

Creative and exciting opportunities offered within RE ensure that it is an enjoyable and stimulating subject for the pupils. By the end of KS2 achievement is at least in line with national expectations with many pupils' achievements exceeding them. All pupils make at least good progress. Teaching is thorough and carefully planned in ways that interest pupils. Key skills such as enquiry, analysis and reflection are systematically taught and practised. There is a good balance between learning about and learning from Christianity. However, pupils' learning about other faiths tends to focus solely on increasing knowledge.

Favourite lessons with younger pupils focus on Bible stories. Older pupils welcome opportunities to share their views and discuss difficult concepts. In Year 1 pupils sat entranced as figures depicted the story of the feeding of the 5,000 in a Godly Play session. Comments expressed by pupils such as 'we love one another so we share our food' and 'there was joy because there was enough food for everyone' demonstrate their insightful responses. A Year 6 pupil, reflecting on Jesus as the light of the world, wrote about the way in which light can transform his viewpoint and his mood. Marking predominantly focuses on deepening understanding and supporting further learning. This ensures that pupils whose spiritual development is strong make good progress. Pupils' understanding of Christian values is developed within RE through the retelling of Biblical stories and links made with Christian teaching.

The syllabus reflects the National Society Statement of Entitlement for RE and leads to achievement which is in line with that of core subject areas such as English. RE is effectively led and managed. Through regular book scrutinies and discussions with staff, the coordinator gains a good awareness of current strengths in RE and areas for development. Staff say that they are well supported both when developing subject knowledge and learning about new ways of teaching and learning in RE. The coordinator works alongside teachers new to teaching RE in a church school and gives guidance and support as appropriate. Regular attendance at diocesan training ensures that the school's awareness and knowledge of current best practice in RE is up to date. Assessment procedures are robust and inform future planning. Whenever possible teaching and learning in RE is reinforced across the curriculum.

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

An explicit and well-illustrated Christian vision threads across all aspects of the life of this happy and caring church school. The headteacher's belief that it is the SMSC aspects of education that bring quality to pupils' lives results in a school where arts, sport and academic achievement are celebrated in equal measure. The individual needs of pupils lie at the heart of the school's provision. Parents and pupils know that where support is needed, academically or socially, it is quickly and effectively given. As a result pupils are happy, enjoy their learning and recognise that their skills and gifts are valued. Procedures to support the school in evaluating itself as a church school are robust and accurate. The school invites parental comments through occasional surveys and is responsive to suggestions raised. The viewpoint of pupils on the distinctiveness of the school as a church school is gained through discussion with the Ichthus group. Additional feedback is gained through informal discussions with pupils and staff.

Governors are well informed about the life of the school as a church school. Following the previous inspection a distinctiveness committee was formed. Members of the committee are involved in reviewing worship planning and are up to date with current RE curriculum developments. They monitor the ways in which Christian values are being taught and developed and report back to the full governing body. As a result governors have an accurate understanding of the ways in which the school, as one governor put it, 'shouts out its distinctiveness and lives it'. The focuses for development at the last inspection have been fully addressed.

Governors support the professional development of staff for their roles within a church school and identify and nurture future church school leaders. They encourage purposeful links with the diocese and support staff who seek to develop understanding and skills relating to their work in a church school.

The partnership between the local church community and the school is strong and the Rector is a regular and welcome visitor to the school. Links with the diocese are productive and support the school in its ongoing development as a church school.

Parents are highly supportive of the school because they know that their children are given a high quality education within a nurturing, caring and distinctively Christian environment.

SIAMS report February 2017 Eccleston St Mary's CE VA Primary School PR7 5TE