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The **Methodist Church**



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Preston Road

Grimsargh

Preston

Lancashire

PR2 5SD

Diocese: **Blackburn**

Local authority: Lancashire

Dates of inspection: July 3rd 2014

Date of last inspection: May 1st 2009

School's unique reference number: 119565

Headteacher: Mrs Kathryn Ward

Inspector's name and number: Mr Mike Graham 286

School context

St Michael's serves the village of Grimsargh and the surrounding area. The village is rural, and is situated west of Preston. It is of below average size, and the proportion of children from minority ethnic groups is well below average. The percentage of children given support for special needs and/or disabilities is also lower than the national average. The school is oversubscribed.

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

- The clear and distinctive Christian values, which guide all aspects of school life, enable every child to feel secure and loved, and to prosper academically, spiritually and socially.
- The headteacher and leadership team, supported well by the governors, use an effective and thorough system of self evaluation that is based around a distinctive Christian vision. This leads directly to effective planning and school improvement.
- In both worship and Religious Education (RE) the children are fully engaged. Highly effective teaching leads to outstanding levels of spiritual development.
- Relationships in school reflect the school's Christian values such as love and friendship. These values are lived out by all members of the school family



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Areas to improve

- Develop children's understanding and experience of the immense variety of worship in the world-wide Christian church, so as to enrich their spiritual development.
- Involve the children in devising a school 'motto', to encapsulate the strongly Christ-centred ethos of the school in a child-friendly way.

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

Before their first day at school, every child is welcomed as a valued and special member of the school family. A welcome card is given or sent to each new member from a Year 4 child, who then becomes their 'Buddy' throughout their first two years at school. The impact made by the emphasis on Christian values is exemplary. The love, care and security associated with these values enable the children to excel in academic achievement and in their overall development. The recent Ofsted report (March 2014) said that the children 'make outstanding progress across the school' and 'at the end of Y6 attainment is well above average'. The school's own data is carefully and frequently updated and shows that this excellent progress is being maintained and improvement is constantly sought. Children with special educational needs are tracked diligently and supported with love and respect by well organised and sensitive staff. As a result their progress is also well above national expectations. All the children are confident in the caring support they receive and speak with depth and understanding about the Christian values that underpin it. Relationships in school are excellent and demonstrate Christian trust and care. The small number of non-Christian faiths and cultures is seen as an asset. Everyone in school embraces opportunities to learn from and with each other. Christian forgiveness is key in behaviour management, and Ofsted graded behaviour as outstanding. A Y5 boy said, 'Without Jesus everyone would be falling out. The world would be a different place'. Sensitively led RE lessons focus well on the aspects of learning from religion, not just about it, and the cultural, social and spiritual development of the children is deepened significantly. The outstanding teaching and learning in RE makes a strong impact on the Christian character of the school as a whole and on individual children. The whole school environment is enriched by a wide range of colourful, expertly mounted and often interactive displays illustrating the wonder of God's world. Prayer and RE areas with excellent examples of children's responses to various themes, including prayers composed for specific circumstances, shine out around the school and in every classroom. Areas for quiet reflection and prayer in the grounds are valued and well used, and the whole site is cared for by staff and children with pride.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship at St Michael's is rich, sensitive and varied. It therefore captures the whole school community and makes valuable contributions to their spiritual development. It guides them into an understanding of the life and teachings of Jesus. The worship, whether in church, school or classroom, is distinctly Christian and includes many aspects of Anglican tradition such as The Lord's Prayer, liturgical colours, and greetings with responses. The vicar, governors and



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staff, and often the children, share the planning and leadership of worship. Classes led two acts of worship on inspection day, both of which were outstanding. They included dramatised bible readings, humour, exceptional singing, interaction between leaders and the worshipping community and children's prayers. The impact on the children and adults present was significant. One child, responding to a question about doubting Thomas, commented, 'If you're in doubt, look for support and then spread your faith about!' Monitoring and evaluation by children and staff, notably within the recently established 'Worship Group', is rigorous and well structured, leading to important adjustments to keep the worship fresh and stimulating. The children talk about their worship in school with confidence and enthusiasm, and they recognise times of reflection and their prayer lives as being important. A Y6 boy said that prayer was 'Thinking to God'. Christian values are woven into the fabric of worship. Children's understanding of Christianity as a worldwide faith and of the variety of Anglican/Christian styles of worship lacks depth. There is however a good understanding of the Christian concept of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When asked about God sending something to help us, a Reception boy said He sent 'The Holy Spirit'. Year 6 children were clear about the Pentecost story, when, as one of them put it, 'God sent Him down after the resurrection'.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The achievement of the children in RE is outstanding. Their progress is clear from analysis of their work and many children are reaching levels above those expected for their age. Discussions with them revealed a considerable depth of understanding. A Y5 boy said that the Old Testament story of the men in the fiery furnace '...gave me more faith in God'. Y6 children agreed that the teaching on the Eucharist by the vicar had been inspiring, one saying that in the Communion service we are 'Re-living the Last Supper'. This excellent progress and spiritual development is due to outstanding teaching and learning. The curriculum is effective, especially the teaching on Christianity, and is approached with inventiveness, sincerity and verve. The two lessons observed were outstanding, with gentle yet firm control, mutual respect throughout and lively humour. Differentiation and teamwork between staff was exemplary, resulting in an exceptional learning experience for each child. The questioning was open yet probing, and the children responded well. In a lesson in Reception about The Lost Sheep, the teacher asked why the shepherd would be sad, since he had only lost one sheep. The response from a child was, 'Because he really cares about them'. Y5 children demonstrated empathy and understanding for Jochebed, Moses' mother, when saying that she would have been 'torn', and 'broken-hearted', and perhaps would have 'prayed to have a girl instead!' during a discussion about her trusting God when casting baby Moses into the river in the basket. Leadership and management of RE is outstanding. The assessment and planning are thorough and are regularly discussed with the whole staff team, addressing the focus from the last inspection. The experienced and enthusiastic coordinator brings depth and joy to the work.

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

The explicit Christian vision that is articulated so well by the leadership team, including governors, is demonstrated to excellent effect by the headteacher. Her Christian commitment



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and love shine out in every facet of her leadership. The leadership team, the governors, the whole staff team and the children aim to live the Christian values which are crucial in establishing a Christ-centred ethos. This approach is demonstrated well by the loving care shown to all members of the school family, in school and beyond. Honesty and openness are evident throughout the school community. The impact of the vision is secured through excellent evaluation and careful and strategic planning, which is consistently aimed at continuous improvement. Worship, RE and the explicit Christian vision are prominent in the school's improvement plan. There is a 'Vision and Values' committee of governors dedicated to this area of the school's work, which makes a strong statement about the governors' priorities. They make informed and supportive yet challenging contributions to the school's development. The mission statement is good but is not child-friendly. Teamwork, coaching and excellent in-service training prepare staff well for current and future leadership roles. The areas for improvement from the last report have been addressed thoroughly. Partnerships with the church family, parents and the local and wider communities are strong, vibrant and open. The children are keenly aware of the strength of these co-operative relationships and spoke of the vicar's impact, especially in areas such as teaching on Baptism and the Eucharist. Concerns for the safety of the children and the need to build on the already strong links between church and school has led to the construction of a secure and safe pathway from the church to the school. A recent church initiative called 'Jigsaw' is providing enjoyable Christian teaching for primary aged children, most of whom attend St Michael's school, on alternate Sundays. The infant nativity in church on a December Sunday is a highlight of the year, bringing the two communities together in a Christmas celebration. The school council has organised giving to national and international charities, and also the carving into a 'friendship bench' of three Christian values. 'Love, hope and peace' were the ones chosen, demonstrating a striking depth of thinking by the council. Parents are fully involved, appreciating the openness that is so evident at St. Michael's. Comments included, 'The church side is invaluable. It gives them an excellent basis so that they can make their own informed decisions when they grow up', 'They're so good with the children' and 'It's an excellent school'.

SIAMS report July 2014, St Michael's C of E, Grimsargh, Preston, PR2 5SD