



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

John Cross CE Primary School

Garstang Road
Bilsborrow
Preston
PR3 0RE

Previous SIAMS grade: Satisfactory

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Blackburn

Local authority: Lancashire

Dates of inspection: 19 May 2016

Date of last inspection: 5 May 2012

School's unique reference number: 119519

Headteacher: Liam Reynolds

Inspector's name and number: Jo Williams 863

School context

John Cross is a small school in a semi-rural village. The majority of pupils are white British and there is a small number of children with special educational needs. Only a few pupils are eligible for additional funding for free school meals. The school governors chose to dissolve the school's collaboration on the recent retirement of the headteacher. At the same time as a new vicar took up his post in the parish in September 2015, a new headteacher was appointed solely for John Cross School. Over the last year a new senior teacher has also joined the staff team.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of John Cross CE Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Distinctively Christian values are lived out by the whole school community and this has a significant impact on pupils' behaviour and attitudes
- There has been a considerable increase in the number of mutually beneficial relationships with the wider community since the last inspection, many of which impact directly on the Christian character of the school.
- Collective worship plays a key role in supporting pupils' spiritual development and in particular nurturing children's experiences of prayer
- The headteacher champions the school's Christian vision viewing the school as a vehicle for sharing the gospel message with the wider community

Areas to improve

- To extend the current monitoring of teaching and learning in religious education (RE) enabling rigorous evaluation to enhance pupil progress in the subject
- To enhance pupils' experience of collective worship by providing pupils of all ages with more frequent opportunities to engage in child-led worship

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

The school's overt Christian character impacts directly on pupils' high levels of academic progress. The school motto of 'Believe and Achieve' underpins pupils' approach to learning, ensuring sustained high levels of attainment. Christian values are deeply embedded in the school's approach and as a result pupils demonstrate high levels of perseverance and courage when tackling academic challenges. The breadth of the school's Christian values also supports pupil well-being and personal development with parents noticing the children regularly 'look out for one another and help each other'. Pupils are caring of one another and when asked about bullying, one boy simply stated, 'God doesn't want us to upset people.' Christian values permeate the school's daily life, for example, pupils agreed when winning 18 -1 in an inter schools rounders competition that the John Cross team should use their left hand as it would be kinder to the other team and make for a fairer match all round. The headteacher emphasised how the school's Christian character is lived out by the staff 'going that extra mile' to ensure that each individual child is nurtured and cared for. Pupils feel accepted for who they are and demonstrate high levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development whatever their ability. Pupils are confident in stating that 'God is always watching over us'. One mum also recounted that on a journey to the supermarket her child had led an eye spy game with no one guessing the right answer of God who was both inside and outside the car. Staff commented that pupils in the school found it 'cool to be Christian'. Mutually beneficial relationships extend into the wider community and have increased significantly in recent times. One example is the practical and positive links that have been forged regarding the new church rooms and local college. Pupils now have additional facilities and resources upon which to draw for learning as well as direct experience of effective community partnerships. Visits to a mosque and Sikh Gurdwara have enhanced pupils' understanding of diversity and addressed any misconceptions the pupils may have held. The Imam at the mosque, liking football, proved a lightbulb moment for some pupils helping them to recognise similarities in different people's lives but also to respect the differences. Meaningful links with the Mercy Trust in Kenya have aided pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multicultural world faith. Religious education is a prominent feature of the school curriculum. Relevant links to learning from the Bible and a reflective approach to real life situations ensure that Christian values underpin RE teaching and feed into the Christian character of the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is a Christian focal point for the whole school community. The staff and pupils value collective worship as a 'starting point for the day' which is viewed as 'setting the tone' for the day ahead. Key elements such as a well-planned Christian focus, a themed worship table, Christian greetings and prayer are in place to ensure that collective worship is a deeply spiritual experience. Pupils enter the hall respectfully to reflective music chosen by the children and have a time of quiet before the worship begins. The wider community are welcomed to share in worship including celebrating the end of each term in church. Pupils particularly value the church community sharing in worship such as the church's recent Ash Wednesday service held in school. A balance of Christian values, visitors, the Christian calendar and global issues are central to the planning of worship and they impact on the daily life of the school community. During a worship about Pentecost older pupils shared examples of how the fruit of the spirit help them, such as finding self-control 'when you feel like having a paddy'. The rolling programme of Christian values is reiterated in classroom displays and linked to relevant Bible quotes on the school's newsletter. Prayer is a key element of collective worship and pupils value quiet reflection time and personal prayer alongside sharing in traditional prayers. A central prayer tree is regularly refreshed with prayers written by pupils and children explained that prayer helped them think about what God does. The Christian character of the school is reflected in prayer, for example the sports display states 'the team that prays together, plays together' and there is a prayer that is shared before each game. Quiet prayer spaces around the school support pupils' spiritual development and responds to their desire to 'talk to God' independently. Lighting three candles and a focus on the fruit of the spirit exemplified how collective worship effectively supports pupils' growing understanding of the Trinity. Results of pupil questionnaires are fed back to staff to support future planning. Likewise staff and clergy provide formal feedback to those delivering worship to support future developments. Clergy support in planning worship and a wealth of visitors leading worship ensure rich and varied experiences for pupils. Pupils

enjoy the interactive and spontaneous nature of worship, such as undertaking readings and sharing in drama. Pupils expressed how much they valued opportunities for child-led worship however these opportunities are too few in number at present and involve only the oldest pupils.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards in religious education have improved since the last inspection. Teaching of RE is planned to ensure that pupils experience a good balance of learning about religion alongside learning from religion. The attainment in RE is good and in line with that of other areas of the curriculum and pupils make good progress. RE walls around the school celebrate pupils' work and the quantity and quality of work in pupils' books demonstrate the school's commitment to the subject. As a result RE has a high profile within the school. RE weeks enable pupils to immerse themselves in key themes such as linking a history topic on WWI to a local project demonstrating Sikh's contribution to the war. They articulate their deepening spiritual understanding of the subject, for example, their growing respect for diversity following a topic on Islam which included a meaningful visit to a mosque and discussions with the Imam. Teachers' marking uses additional questions to deepen understanding of key learning points and to extend pupils' subject knowledge. The teaching of RE is at least good. Teachers' good subject knowledge is reflected in well-planned lessons with activities that pupils find both engaging and enjoyable. The school's use of the Blackburn diocese syllabus ensures the curriculum content is predominantly Christian. Teachers use empathy to support pupils' understanding in lessons such as asking younger pupils how they feel when re-enacting the story of the disciples on a boat in a storm whilst Jesus slept. Likewise older pupils were challenged to think deeply about the difficulties faced by some Christians around the world, for example, where the Bible is not translated into people's native tongue. Time is also set aside in lessons to enable pupils to reflect. A poignant video clip of a modern version of Psalm 23 aided pupils' contemplation before writing their own psalms. This also supported pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multicultural world faith. Leadership and management of RE is good with leaders undertaking a variety of routine monitoring activities to ensure standards are maintained in the subject. There is documented evidence of specific lesson observations of RE undertaken by the school's leadership. The headteacher undertakes regular learning walks to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in RE and provides feedback that impacts on future improvements.

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

The school's Christian vision is highly visible from the moment you enter the building. Governors have been proactive in rebranding the school's website and prospectus which clearly outline the Christian character of the school. The 'believe and achieve' message is thoroughly understood by all members of the school community. The governors and headteacher are highly effective in reinforcing the school's Christian vision through rigorous strategic planning. As a result the wider school community recognises that the distinctively Christian character of the school impacts on pupils' wellbeing and academic standards. This also ensures that the school maintains high expectations for both pupil behaviour and academic achievement. The school meets the statutory requirements for the provision of RE and collective worship. The school's leadership is proactive in growing future school leaders with a senior teacher having been promoted to headship in another church school. If appropriate, current staff are being provided with church school leadership opportunities and targeted training. The school benefits from many effective local partnerships. St Hilda's Church project for new church rooms was developed with the school use in mind. Myerscough College works closely with the school's leadership and directly with the pupils. As a result pupils have first-hand experience of meaningful partnerships that make a real difference to the immediate community. This is also reflected in the church community's commitment to school governance with Christian governors enhancing meaningful links with the local parish. The school has increased its links with the local church with the headteacher attending the parish's worship committee and the school providing greater contributions to church services. Parents commented on their children's enjoyment of the new church choir and how much their children enjoyed the special services held at the church. Pupils also spoke fondly of visitors from the community that helped them with projects and clubs. On the day of the inspection the Christian lunchtime club, 'Glow Club', shared God's love with the whole school community by giving out cupcakes they had decorated with a Christian message, 'You matter to God'.