



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### **Baxenden St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Church Avenue  
Baxenden  
Accrington  
Lancs  
BB5 2RQ

**Previous SIAMS grade:** Satisfactory

**Current inspection grade:** Outstanding

**Diocese:** Blackburn

Local authority: Lancashire

Dates of inspection: 10 March 2016

Date of last inspection: 2 May 2012

School's unique reference number: 119440

Headteacher: Christina Regan

Inspector's name and number: Tracy Heys 831

#### **School context**

Baxenden St John's is an average size primary school with 199 pupils on role. The majority of pupils come from the local area and most are white British. The number of pupils receiving extra funding via the pupil premium is low. The number of pupils with a statement or education and health care plan is below the national average. There have been a number of staff changes in the last twelve months and the governors are currently recruiting for two permanent teachers.

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

- Outstanding Christian leadership by the head teacher has galvanised the school community towards a common goal of high aspirations, rooted in a clear Christian vision.
- The worshipping life of the school, where music, prayer and reflection are important, nurtures the daily lives and spiritual journeys of everyone.
- Relationships within and across the school community are outstanding and firmly embedded in the school's Christian ethos.

#### **Areas to improve**

- Develop the pupils understanding of the diversity by providing teaching which explores the multicultural aspects of the Christian church.
- Provide appropriate staff training in order to equip future leaders of church schools with the skills needed to develop the Christian character of a school.

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

Baxenden St John's strong Christian character shines through and is at the heart of all school life. It permeates every aspect of school from documentation and displays through to classroom practice. The outstanding behaviour of the pupils is underpinned by Christian teaching. They are able to articulate that when things go wrong they have to go through a process of forgiveness and reconciliation, 'just as Jesus would do'. Data indicates that pupils achieve above national standards. The school attributes this to the focus they give to each individual pupil who they see as unique and created in the image of God. The school's mission statement of 'walk together, with Jesus, to be the best that we can be' is applied to all aspects of school life. As a result of the provision of an effective Christian learning environment the progress for all groups of pupils is now good. Attendance is well above average as pupils want to be part of this distinctively Christian school family where they are individually valued as children of God, 'God loves me all the time, even when I'm naughty', said a child in year 2. The head teacher works closely with vulnerable families and responds appropriately to meeting their needs. She views her position in school as being 'where God has placed me to do His work' and as such works tirelessly to make all aware of the Christian faith. Local and international charity work supports pupils' global awareness and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural [SMSC] development. Pupils are encouraged to care for others in the world through their prayers and fundraising. Consequently, pupils experience Christianity in action. As a result of a balance between learning about and learning from religion, through thought-provoking activities, RE makes a positive contribution to the school's Christian character and to pupils' SMSC development. Christian teaching is at the heart of the school's core values which are known by all pupils. The pupils know that Jesus had 'something important to say' about these values. One pupil said that collecting food at Harvest was linked to their value of justice because sharing with those who had less was important, 'it's what Jesus would have done.' The shared Christian values clearly have an impact on how pupils act.

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

The impact of daily worship, which is a central part of the school day, is profound. This part of the day is a time for the school community to celebrate, reflect and engage in an act of worship that holds meaning and purpose for all. Pupils say that there is now a variety of worship and they enjoy being part of it. They know about the seasons of the Church's year and some of the Anglican traditions. Pupils confidently make links between the school values and relevant Christian teaching. When explaining the significance of hope, one of the school's Christian values, the older pupils could explain that hope for Christians stemmed from 'God giving His Son in sacrifice for their sins'. Pupils can explain how God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is significant within the Christian faith. Staff and parents show that they too value this aspect of the school's life. The importance of worship for parents is reflected in their high attendance at a variety of acts of worship. Pupils are engaged and responsive in worship. They like the fact that worship brings them together, 'like a big family'. Pupils plan and deliver their weekly class worship supported by their teachers. They enjoy leading Key Stage worship although some still feel 'a bit shy'. They are becoming increasingly involved in evaluating acts of worship. Their evaluations, which include asking adults and pupils what difference worship has made to them, help to shape future planning. For example there is now a consistent format for worship in place and regular opportunities for everyone to be involved. Pupil worship leaders recently attended a training session delivered by the Diocese. A parent commented that this had made a huge impact on the faith journey of her child. Pupils frequently contribute their own prayers to school worship. They understand that prayer provides an opportunity to talk to God, to praise, give thanks, say sorry, ask for forgiveness and share concerns. Each class has a prayer area and the prayer space in the hall is used for quiet reflection during the school day. Pupils and some staff speak without reservation about the impact of worship on their personal faith journey, reflecting the depth of spiritual development which is taking place. Collective worship is well planned and based firmly on Christian values and Biblical teaching. Worship has a significant

impact on attitudes and behaviour in that pupils understand that they are trying to follow the example of Jesus. They know that the candle being lit represents 'Jesus as the light of the world coming into our school'. The use of music as a vehicle for praise is much valued by pupils and they enjoy a wide variety of worship songs. A parent commented 'my child even sings worship songs in the bath!' The head teacher makes the best possible use of opportunities to work with the local church and the vicar regularly visits school. The whole school community now sees the interconnectedness of school and church which is bringing Christianity alive. Older pupils are now admitted to Holy Communion before confirmation. Pupils say that this makes them feel they belong to the church family as well as the school family.

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

Many pupils have little experience of Christianity or other faiths on starting school. Their individual books, class scrap books and assessment records demonstrate that they make good progress from their individual starting points in RE. By the time pupils leave the school the attainment of most pupils is at least in line with the national expectations. RE anchors the school's values and challenges pupils to develop and grow an understanding of the Christian faith and the integral part it, and other world faiths, can play in life and learning. Strong and dynamic leadership of the subject ensures that teaching is now securely good with some evidence of outstanding lessons. Teachers set high standards, including in the presentation of work. In some year groups marking and feedback are used effectively to challenge pupils to the next level of learning. Some differentiated activities in RE are now planned and there is evidence of outstanding teaching and learning when this happens. Christianity is successfully woven into all areas of the school curriculum and pupils benefit from this inclusive approach. A recent art and spirituality project based on Bible stories produced some thought-provoking responses by the pupils. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support and extend learning. Teachers are well-supported by the subject leader who has an up-to-date knowledge of current developments. RE provides a significant impact on pupils' SMSC development by ensuring that each unit of work begins and ends with the pupils' own experiences. A year 2 pupil taking the part of Jesus in the last supper said, 'I'm happy I'm going back to my Father but I'm worried that Judas might hurt my friends'. Many pupils have a secure knowledge of Christianity as well as the core beliefs and practices of other faiths studied. Pupils have a limited understanding of diversity within the Christian faith.

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

The head teacher and chair of governors have established a clear Christian vision for the school in which each person is unique and valued within the context of the Christian faith. They have been supported in this by the whole school community. The Christian vision has raised standards for the school and attainment is now significantly above national expectations. With support from the Diocese the school has now established clear roles and responsibilities for the governing body. There is now an effective chair of governors in place who has inspired the governing body to develop the Christian character of the school. Governors ensure that the school's Christian ethos is a key feature of recruitment and as a result all staff act as role models for the school's values. There is limited staff development to prepare for future leadership of church schools. The school has developed strong and effective links with the local church which is highly supportive of the school's Christian character and vision. The church building is used for breakfast club and the vicar often accompanies school visits including the residential to Robin Wood. This practical support is viewed by foundation governors as part of the churches mission. The RE subject leader has worked hard to successfully raise the profile of RE within the school and assessment now informs planning. The arrangements for RE and worship meet statutory requirements.