



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Weeton St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Road
Weeton
Lancashire
PR4 3WD

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Blackburn

Local authority: Lancashire

Dates of inspection: 26 November 2015

Date of last inspection: 11 March 2011

School's unique reference number: 119561

Headteacher: Pamela Weeden

Inspector's name and number: Ann Aspden

School context

This small primary school serves the rural village of Weeton and surrounding areas including Blackpool. There are currently 40 children on roll. The school is situated next to the church and has strong links with the parish and the local community. The incumbent has responsibility for several parishes but visits the school weekly. The Headteacher, who has been in post for 7 years, will be leaving at the end of the autumn term 2015 and the school will be entering into an associate headship partnership with another local school.

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

- The school is seen as a Christian family by parents, children, staff and governors.
- The strong Christian vision and leadership of the headteacher is enthusiastically endorsed and supported by all staff and governors.
- The work of the headteacher as religious education (RE) subject leader and worship co-ordinator has had a significant impact on raising standards in this church school.

Areas to improve

- To embed high standards of RE teaching and learning in all year groups so that all children develop well in their depth of understanding of Christianity and world faiths.
- To develop opportunities for children to plan and lead worship so that they take ownership and are able to demonstrate an understanding of the importance of worship.
- To develop spirituality in the school so that there are greater opportunities for children to broaden their spiritual experiences.

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

From their first day in school, every child is welcomed as a valued and a member of this special Christian family. The welcome is underpinned by the school's Christian vision which is understood by most members of the school community. The security and care generated by the living out of the vision enables children to make good progress academically and in their overall development. Children's behaviour and attitudes are influenced by the positive contribution made by the high quality of teaching in the areas of spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. This teaching is based on the Christian values at the heart of the school's vision. One child commented that 'Jesus is important to us. We care, we listen and we live our lives like He did.' Christian values underpin relationships in the school where everyone is valued and loved. The school is rightly proud of both its caring ethos and the pastoral support offered to all pupils and their families. School leaders explain a tragic incident that occurred at the school, the impact that it had on the school community and the sensitive manner in which it was handled in a way that reflects the school's ethos. Members of staff and of the local community demonstrate their commitment to the school's ethos through voluntary acts such as the Friday carousel activity afternoon. The children have a respect for other world faiths and are beginning to have an understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith through the links that have been formed with the Antwiwaa Educational Complex in Ghana. RE makes a valuable contribution to the Christian character of the school. It provides a good foundation for and teaches about the source of the Christian centred values that are evident in the school. The focus on children's spirituality is beginning to have a positive impact on the development of their ability to express their own thoughts and views in a deeper and more meaningful way. However, too small a proportion of the children are so far able to do this. The school environment, including displays in the hall, corridors, classrooms and the outdoor library, makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual development of many of the children. The children have opportunities to express their views through the pupil leadership team. They know they are listened to and that their concerns and ideas are taken seriously. The children are proud of their school and speak confidently about why it is special to them. Parents value the school highly. One parent commented 'This school is very friendly. The children know that they are loved here'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.

Collective worship at St Michael's reflects the school's Christian distinctiveness. It is varied, relevant and a valuable experience for all children. Monitoring and evaluation have effectively led to the development of themes that encourage a positive and spiritual response from the children. One boy, a member of the pupil leadership team, remarked, 'In worship we have a chance to talk to God and listen to Him in prayer. It's important'. Acts of worship are carefully planned and include biblical references and links to the church calendar. The children are successfully introduced to Christian traditions such as the symbolism of Advent wreath. These traditions are made relevant and help to reinforce the importance of Christian values in their lives. A range of worship songs and hymns is used and children sing well and with enthusiasm. The children have a good understanding of the value of prayer. They know that they can express their thoughts to God through prayer especially special times in the school year such as harvest and Christmas. Children have started to become more involved in planning and leading worship but this needs to be developed to involve all year groups. The children do not yet have an understanding of the Trinity and or of the Biblical events that have revealed them. The school community sees worship as valuable aspect of school life. They gain a sense of belonging from collective worship and see it as a way of celebrating the school's Christian ethos. Links with the church are strong and church leaders are actively involved in planning collective worship. The school often joins the parish for worship on Sunday and opens up the school building for the congregation after services. As a result, members of the community feel valued and welcomed

by the school.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

The Headteacher successfully leads the development of RE and ensures that staff receive effective in-house professional development which impacts on standards. RE has the same status as other core subjects and is planned to the same rigorous standard. Effective assessment procedures are in place which inform planning. For the vast majority of children, standards in RE are good and there is an effective balance between teacher-led and child-centred activities. The children say that RE lessons are fun. In the EYFS and Key Stage 1 class children are taught to relate their own experiences to those of key biblical characters. One child compared the good news of her own birthday with Mary's good news of having baby who she confidently said was going to be 'Jesus and the son of God'. The children were able to talk about the importance of angels and one child commented, 'Angels are like kindness and a spot of light. Even though you can't see them they are always there.' In Key Stage 2, children's spirituality is being developed through careful questioning which teases out thoughtful responses. As part of a discussion about prior learning related to the story of the calming of the storm, one child commented that 'This shows how important it is that we persevere and have courage. God's love helps us to do this.' In this way, RE teaching makes a significant contribution to the way in which Christian values are embedded in school life. Children are beginning to ask thoughtful questions which provide opportunities for further research. One child asked 'What do Jews think the Messiah is going to do?' However, the theological understanding behind Christian values is not yet thoroughly understood by the children and this limits the progress of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Governors speak highly of the progress that has been made in RE teaching and are well informed about developments as a result of increased involvement in monitoring and evaluation. The governors' church and community committee challenges and questions the work in RE and have a clear understanding of their role when visiting the school to gain first hand experience of the standards in this subject. The school is successfully teaching about other world faiths as is evidenced through classroom displays and children's work. However, children are not yet able to speak with knowledge and confidence about other religions. The school is committed to ensuring that RE is taught to a consistently high standard throughout the school in the future.

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

Senior leaders are committed to driving the school forward with energy and enthusiasm. They work hard to ensure that the school's vision statement and Christian values are embedded in school life and impact on all areas of school life. However, Christian distinctiveness is not yet sufficiently bold. Statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are fully met and governors regularly discuss the impact that these have on the school community. Foundation governors clearly challenge the school to continually improve in its Christian distinctiveness. They are involved in monitoring a variety of aspects of the school and their findings are shared with the church and community committee, who in turn report to the full governing body. Governors, and particularly the chair of governors, are very supportive of the headteacher and mindful of her wellbeing. They appreciate the work that she does in raising their awareness of the key features of Church distinctiveness and, as a result, speak confidently about standards in the school. There are positive links between the school and the church which are actively promoted by all leaders. One long-standing governor commented that when the school family comes to church 'The children are marvellous, so respectful and calm. They see the church as a special place and display true respect and reverence'. The professional development of all staff is seen as a priority by governors who have actively supported the headteacher in pursuit of the next step in her career. At the same time, they are confident and well informed about future developments at the school