



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

### Chorley St Laurence Church of England voluntary aided Primary School

Highfield Road

Chorley

Lancashire

PR7 1RB

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

**Diocese:** Blackburn

Local authority: Lancashire

Date of inspection: 11 November 2014

Date of last inspection: October 2009

School's unique reference number: 119465

Headteacher: Yvonne Taylor

Inspector's name and number: Ruth Wall (548)

#### School context

St. Laurence is similar in size to most other primary schools in Lancashire with 208 children on roll. The school serves a residential area near the town centre. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The school achieved the Race Equality Mark in 2013 and the Church School Award in 2014.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Chorley St Laurence as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Christian values are clearly expressed and demonstrated by children and staff and underpin the positive relationships between all members of the community and the very good behaviour of the children.
- The care, nurture and guidance of all children show the distinct Christian ethos of the school in action.
- The school provides broad and creative learning experiences which deepen children's spiritual understanding across the curriculum, especially in religious education (RE) and collective worship.

#### Areas to improve

- Develop the governors' approach to self-evaluation and monitoring of the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school in order to embed a more structured approach.

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

The school aims to 'put the love of God, as revealed through the teaching of Jesus Christ, into practice'. This, together with seven core Christian values selected by the school community, shapes the thinking of the school. Children speak with clarity and conviction of the Christian values they have learnt about and that are important for their lives. They agree that 'love is 'definitely the most important one' and that 'teachers never give up on us'. The headteacher explains to children, 'God loves you; we love you and want the best for you'. A unique Advent calendar successfully encourages children to show 'an act of kindness' each day leading up to Christmas. Parents say the school's teaching of Christian values 'definitely impacts on children's behaviour at home'. Children's efforts and achievements are acknowledged and celebrated. Their behaviour and attitudes are excellent and, as a result, learning and attendance are very good. The school's Christian character results in a secure and caring environment where academic attainment is well above the national average and the majority of children exceed expected progress. The school is highly effective in using data to track children's achievement and put in place intervention strategies to ensure they achieve challenging targets. There is a broad and rich curriculum which contributes fully to the children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. Vibrant displays and opportunities for quiet reflection positively impact on children's spiritual development. Children are made aware that Christianity is a global world faith through a range of activities including 'Sparkle the Robin's travels round the world in search of Christianity'. Children understand the need to help others less fortunate than themselves through their Christian service. Fund-raising is often initiated by the children, for example in selling their own cakes to raise money for Derian House, children's hospice. The school demonstrates that it is both distinctive in its Christian character and inclusive in its approach to diversity.

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

High quality worship planning includes Christian themes, with a strong emphasis on Christian values and important Christian festivals. This enables children to have an understanding of the nature of worship, the Christian faith and Anglican traditions and practice. The headteacher, senior management team and the rector are involved in planning and evaluating worship. Collective Worship makes a significant impact on the lives of pupils. They are able to explain their developing understanding of God, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. A child explained, 'the Holy Spirit fills us on the inside and changes the way we act'. Junior children are now involved regularly in planning and leading collective worship. They agree that their involvement 'makes it more interesting'. With their teachers they evaluate how they can make improvements. One group of children decided to ensure that the whole school had understood their worship presentation by leading a question and answer session at the end. A beautifully presented worship log, described as a 'celebration of worship', contains personal comments and reflections of worship. Parents say they really enjoy the Friday celebration worship where they see their children's efforts and achievements being rewarded. They make particular mention of the headteacher's prayers, which, they say, reflect very sensitively the needs and concerns of their close-knit school community. Children benefit from a varied experience of worship led by a range of people. The Anglican rector's input in worship is enjoyed by the school community. Children say that he links the message to the modern day. The Methodist minister, they agree, 'tells stories really well and always puts fun into it'. The school community enjoyed the visit from Christians from the Solomon Islands which showed them a different way of worshipping God. Children say formal Anglican prayers but also respond to opportunities to prepare and express their own personal prayers at other times in the school day.

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

Children make very good progress as is evidenced in portfolios, in their written work and in their oral responses. The subject leader monitors RE thoroughly using observations, book scrutiny and cross-checking of standards. This monitoring ensures that all children are experiencing creative and challenging RE and that there is an excellent balance between learning about and learning from religion. A system for assessing children's achievements is now fully embedded and used effectively to track progress and determine next steps in learning. The coordinator has benefitted from diocesan training and provides informed and valued support to colleagues ensuring that work is of a high quality. She describes her work as 'an adventure'. She explains that one lesson focussed on the Old Testament book of Isaiah's prophecies of the coming of Jesus several hundred years before his birth. She was thrilled when a child exclaimed 'do you know what, this is so exciting'. The additional activities with 'Bible Explorers' have contributed to children's very good knowledge of the Bible. The study of other faiths and a global outlook are fully embedded in the school curriculum. Children understand and make links between the beliefs and practices of faiths, other than Christianity, through visits to their places of worship and visits from people of other faiths. The school believes this gives children a deeper understanding of their own and other cultures and prepares them for life in our diverse global society. A variety of effective teaching and learning strategies are used, including role play, art and craft and multi-media resources. RE makes a significant contribution to children's spiritual development. This includes the very successful 'Spirituality Day' for Year 6 children and 'Holy Week' celebrations for the whole-school. Specially designed activities help children in their knowledge and understanding of Christian teaching.

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

The headteacher and governors provide outstanding management and leadership of the school as a church school. They are highly effective in articulating and promoting the Christian ethos throughout the school and beyond to the community. Christian values are embedded in all policies and practice. Governors monitor and evaluate the work of the school ensuring that church school issues are identified and addressed through school improvement planning. However, this is often done in an informal way rather than by using structured procedures. The views of all stakeholders are sought on all matters. There is an agreed belief in inclusion which has led to changing the admission policy to include all children in the parish. RE and collective worship are both extremely well led with planning and evaluation key to future development. The rector of St Laurence Church is very successful in maintaining a strong link with the school. The Palm Praise, Pentecost Praise and Messy Church events are particularly successful in involving the school and church communities. Leaders and governors are successful in ensuring that the academic needs of the children are met. In doing so they recognise the importance of the school's Christian character in creating an ethos which supports effective learning. Issues from the previous inspection have been fully addressed. The school is supported very effectively by the diocese. The professional development of the staff is a high priority with training specifically linked to church school development. Children value their role in decision making through the school council and know that their views are valued. They take their responsibilities seriously, including the Pals at Play-time who, they explain, 'help younger children develop their play while we all have fun'. The well-being of all members of the school community is a high priority. A parent says, 'the support I get from the school makes a massive difference'.

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