



## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

<b>St Cuthbert's Church of England Primary School</b>	St Alban's Road Darwen Lancashire BB3 0HY
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Blackburn</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Outstanding
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Date of inspection	27 October 2016
Date of last inspection	February 2012
School's unique reference number	119615
Headteacher	Michelle Smith
Inspector's name and number	Tracy Heys 831

### School context

St Cuthbert's is an average sized primary school situated on the edge of Darwen. The school has a special resource provision for 10 pupils with special educational needs. These pupils spend much of their time in mainstream. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils for whom the school receives extra funding due to social disadvantage is above average. The current headteacher joined the school in April 2014. The parish church has been without a vicar for two years. However, a new vicar is due to take up post in November 2016.

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

- The senior leadership team's inspirational Christian vision for the school ensures that the whole school community is driven by a deeply embedded Christian ethos.
- Excellent relationships are firmly rooted in the school's core Christian values and lead to the exemplary behaviour of pupils.
- The governors actively promote the school's Christian distinctiveness and provide support and challenge which leads to effective school improvement.

### Areas to improve

- Ensure that assessment in religious education (RE) informs planning to provide appropriately supportive and challenging activities to meet the learning needs of all pupils.

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

There is a powerful ethos based on a clear set of Christian values emphasising faith, hope, love, trust and peace. These pervade the whole of the fabric, routines and practices of this school. They contribute effectively to spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. These areas of personal development are nourished and challenged through this inclusive Christian community. A climate of Christian love, forgiveness and reconciliation enables pupils to thrive within a culture of positive challenge. This deeply supports pupils' academic development as well as their personal well-being. Pupils readily relate actions to Christian values and the teachings of Jesus, explaining 'our values are part of everyday life to make things better'. Every action is a reflection of the Christian faith in action. This is expressed deeply in the obvious feeling of togetherness and joy in learning together. Many pupils come into school with attainment below national expectations. However, all ability groups make good or better progress and achieve well. Most pupils reach at least age-related expectations by the end of Year 6. Effective support programmes ensure disadvantaged pupils' attainment is higher than that of similar pupils nationally. The school's distinctive Christian ethos clearly informs its approach to its improved attendance which is now above the national average

The Christian character of the school is reflected in displays, often with reflective questions. The outdoor facilities are used effectively to further develop thinking skills, spiritual awareness and reflection. It is evident that the school motto of 'learning to love, loving to learn' is centred on God's love for all. This has a positive impact leading to high standards of behaviour and strong relationships. Pupils describe lessons being 'great' because 'our teachers want us to be the best we can be'. Some of the school's policies fail to effectively reflect the deep rooted Christian ethos evident in its life and work. As they get older pupils are articulate, confident and mature in their explanations of how the school's values influence their behaviour. One Year 5 pupil explained how at a recent disco some money had gone missing. When the headteacher reminded pupils about trust the money was found. The pupil attributed this to the hope of a better school if the shared Christian values are followed.

RE makes a positive contribution to the Christian character of the school and to pupils' SMSC development. Pupils' understanding of diversity within local, national and global faith communities is less well developed. The school has a great welcome for all pupils. The ethos that 'every child should flourish in their potential as a child of God.' is clear. The whole school community is acutely aware of the special needs of pupils who are part of its special resource facility. Each pupil is fully integrated into the everyday life of the school. Parents of pupils in this facility comment on how their children have been 'transformed' by the school. Some of these pupils were bullied in other settings but 'here our children's needs are met..... they are just loved as God loves them'.

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

Worship has a central place in the life of the school. A range of worship leaders seek to ensure it is fun and thought provoking for pupils. Adults and pupils participate well and comment on how they value being part of this worshipping community. All enjoy worship and value opportunities to learn about Christian beliefs. Pupils have less knowledge and understanding about the different Christian traditions or the world-wide aspect of Christianity. Pupils experience worship in a range of settings, as a whole school, in key stages and sometimes in classrooms which enhances their experience. The pupils have a good understanding of Anglican traditions and practices as these are a key feature of collective worship. The lighting of a candle marks the beginning of worship. A range of Old and New Testament stories are used which pupils clearly enjoy. Some pupils can make sound links between the stories heard in worship and are beginning to apply this to their own lives. A Year 6 girl talked about the courage of Noah and how she was going to need courage to move to high school. Pupils have a good understanding of the major events and celebrations of the church calendar as well as significant Christian beliefs and practices. This includes an appropriate understanding of Christian belief in the God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pupils can confidently explain the significance of different colours being used at different times of the Christian year.

Pupils of all backgrounds feel included in worship knowing that different beliefs are respected and honoured. They value prayer and can explain that it can be used in a variety of ways. Prayer areas in classrooms and the use of prayer trees around school further enhance pupils' experience of personal prayer. Some pupils are unsure about what happens to prayers they offer on the prayer tree. This limits their understanding of prayer in the life of the worshipping community. Records are kept of worship but the monitoring and evaluation of its impact for pupils is in its formative stages. The worship club meets weekly with the head teacher. They are taking an increasing responsibility for leading worship which increases their confidence and self-esteem. However, pupils are not sufficiently involved with planning and formal evaluation of the worship programme.

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

RE is given a high priority throughout the school. The school uses the Blackburn diocesan syllabus. Christianity is the major religion studied and the curriculum meets the Church of England statement of entitlement for RE. Teaching staff create an atmosphere in the classroom which enables pupils to speak confidently and share ideas, ably supported by high quality support staff. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and their questioning skills help to develop the pupils' thinking. The skills pupils develop ensure that they make the most of opportunities for spiritual and moral development. The school has accurately recognised that reflective and critical thinking is a strength of RE, sometimes linking it to cross curricular teaching. However, the focus for some lessons planned is not always clearly in line with the diocesan syllabus. This means that learning about or from religion is not always explicit. Where planning is good teaching develops pupils' learning beyond factual knowledge and explores the implications of the beliefs of different groups of people. Visits and visitors further enhance the RE curriculum. Following a lesson about Mary Jones and her Bible Year 2 pupils asked their teacher if they could raise money for the Bible Society to enable more people in the world to have their own Bible.

The standards achieved in RE are in line with other subjects. The development of a robust assessment procedure, used by all staff, gives a clear indicator of progress. This is beginning to inform teachers' planning. The explicit linking of tasks to different pupil's ability levels is not a consistent part of the planning process. Therefore pupils are not always sufficiently supported and challenged.

Pupils engage well in RE. Year 6 pupils can confidently talk about how they saw Jesus as a role model and how his teaching, if followed, 'would make everyone live a very good Christian life'. Year 2 are eager to share their learning about holy books from different religions and have a basic understanding of the importance of these for people of faith.

The new subject leader has a firm foundation on which to further develop RE in the school. Self-evaluation is accurate and there is a clear and comprehensive plan to improve RE.

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

In leading the school the headteacher articulates her personal vision based on her strong Christian faith. The senior leadership team and governing body ensure that the distinctive Christian values and ethos pervade all aspects of school life. They confidently articulate that 'we want to be the best we can be because that is what God wants for us'. This ensures that high standards permeate every area of school life.

The headteacher and the deputy head in their roles as leaders of worship and RE ensure that a high priority is given to both areas and this has improved practice in both areas.

Led by an efficient chair, the governing body is effective in evaluating the school's Christian distinctiveness. This results in a well-informed and active exploration of the distinctive Christian character of the school and to accurate and focused self-evaluation. Christian values drive actions and decision-making at all levels. A regular item on the governors' agenda is 'faith schools, what makes us distinctive?' The governing body ensures that arrangements for RE and worship meet statutory requirements and they contribute effectively to setting school improvement targets. The targets set for the headteacher are linked to promoting the Christian character of the school. The school has a robust system for appointing and inducting new staff, which helps to positively maintain the Christian ethos. The governors are committed to effective staff development to promote the school's Christian distinctiveness. They work effectively to achieve this.

There are good relationships between the church and the school - both bodies supporting each other in their various ventures. The links with parents are excellent. Parents feel strongly that pupils are nurtured and supported sensitively. Discussions with parents and comments gathered by the school indicate the high regard the parents have for this school. Many choose it for the distinctive Christian ethos. Parents give good examples of how the school has responded when they have encountered difficulties. One parent commented on how the school 'cares about all our family and makes me feel special'. The school is very involved in its local community. For example, the school choir participates in many concerts in the locality. This often involves Christian material and the pupils are excellent ambassadors to reflect the Christian foundation of their school.