



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### **Tockholes St. Stephen's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Rock Lane,  
Darwen,  
Lancashire,  
BB3 0LX.

**Previous SIAS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Good**

**Diocese: Blackburn**

Local authority: Blackburn with Darwen

Date of inspection: 30 June 2016

Date of last inspection: 7 February 2011

School's unique reference number: 119459

Executive headteacher: Alison Ashworth-Taylor

Inspector's name and number: Anne B. Woodcock 445

#### **School context**

St. Stephen's serves the rural community of Tockholes near Darwen. The majority of the 42 pupils are of White British heritage and they come from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils receiving the pupil premium grant is slightly above average. The school supports an above average number of pupils with additional needs. Collaboration with The Redeemer Church of England School in Blackburn commenced in spring 2015, following a challenging time in the school's development. The collaboration was formalised in January 2016. The executive headteacher is in school one day each week. The Redeemer's two assistant headteachers each work half of every week in St. Stephen's.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Tockholes St. Stephen's as a Church of England school are good**

- The outstanding leadership and example of the executive headteacher and assistant headteacher team has inspired staff and governors to re-establish a truly Christian, fully inclusive learning community.
- Strong, collaborative relationships, based on trust and respect, support all members of the school family.
- Pupils' understanding of Christian friendship and forgiveness is reflected in their good behaviour and positive attitudes.

#### **Areas to improve**

- Provide regular opportunities for children to plan and lead collective worship so that they can demonstrate their understanding of the nature and purpose of worship.
- Extend pupils' understanding of diverse cultures and faiths in Religious Education (RE) by providing more first-hand experience using visits and visitors.
- Establish links with the wider world to support pupils' knowledge and understanding of global issues.

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

Christian values clearly influence all aspects of school life. They are prominently displayed and explicitly expressed by staff, pupils and governors. One Year 6 pupil explained, 'Values are the traits of Jesus. If we follow in his footsteps and try to do them all, we will be better people and better Christians.' Standards of behaviour are good because children know and use Christian friendship and forgiveness in their daily lives. They treat others respectfully and are considerate of each other's feelings. Relationships across all members of the school family are strong and nurturing. As a result, all children are supported and encouraged and their emotional well-being is prioritised. Parents comment positively on the way in which their children are respected and treated as unique and special to God. A Year 5 pupil stated, 'Everyone is included. We are a family.' Children are increasingly enthusiastic and eager learners, so levels of attendance are very good. They enjoy and are challenged by their learning, explaining that their teachers make lessons fun because they know how every child learns. Children strive to achieve the challenging targets set for them. Rates of pupil progress have risen dramatically. As a result, standards continue to rise and all pupils make good progress from their starting points. Children's spiritual development is good. They have many opportunities to explore the natural world and express their ideas through the creative arts and sport. Reflection is a key feature throughout the curriculum. Pupils' responses to their experiences are displayed creatively using art, prose, prayer and poetry. RE contributes significantly to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. They develop an awareness of diversity through the study of major world faiths. Children are eager to accept responsibility for helping those less fortunate than themselves. An Ethos group member explained, 'We help to raise money for charities so that we can help others. Jesus taught us about compassion in parables like the Good Samaritan.'

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

Collective worship is inspirational and inclusive. 'It is a learning experience for everyone,' explained a Year 6 pupil. 'It teaches you more about God and Jesus and how you can respect other people.' Themes explore Christian values and festivals. They are firmly based on Bible teaching. Detailed planning and recording ensures that themes are explored creatively, using a range of approaches which make them accessible to all. As a result, children have a good knowledge of Bible stories and of the life and teaching of Jesus. They make effective links between parables, such as the Lost Sheep, and Christian values. 'We all know that Jesus was perfect but we can't be. We have to keep trying to show love and courage,' stated a Year 6 child. Children's understanding of God as a creator is clearly expressed. Their understanding of the Trinity is very well supported through the daily use of three candles, graces and symbols. This reinforces the concept so that a member of the Ethos group is able to explain, 'God is everything. He sent his son Jesus to make the world a better place and the Holy Spirit as a gift to help.' Prayer and reflection are key features of worship. Children know the Lord's Prayer, graces and traditional responses. They write and use their own prayers and graces, some of which are displayed in books and along the 'prayer trail' which runs through the school to the outdoor classroom. Although there has been no incumbent at St. Stephen's church for two years, local clergy have ensured that the link with the church has been maintained and developed. Children enjoy the worship led by a retired vicar. Their experience of different styles of Christian worship continues to be extended through links with other local churches, such as the United Reformed Church. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation by staff, pupils and governors has led to rapid improvement in both the style and impact of worship. Pupils participate willingly, taking responsibility for prayers, reading and helping to act out stories. They plan and lead special services held in church at festival times. However, they do not yet have regular opportunities to take responsibility for planning and leading collective worship.

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

Children's attitudes to RE are very positive. They enjoy and are challenged by lessons,

explaining that teachers make them fun and interesting. 'RE is my best lesson because there are no wrong answers.' 'You talk about ideas and important questions,' stated two Year 6 pupils. Lessons are well planned, making effective use of a range of resources and approaches to meet different pupil needs. A good balance is achieved between learning about and learning from religion. As a result, children explore ideas, find similarities and differences and make connections. For example, a display in a Key stage 1 classroom showed how children had compared compassion stories from Islamic and Christian scriptures. The subject leader has ensured that teachers are well-supported and trained so that they deliver high quality lessons in which pupils make progress. Pupils make good progress from their starting points and standards are in line with those achieved in other core subjects. Pupils' work books, class scrap books and portfolios of evidence reflect the importance of the subject and demonstrate the quality of work produced. The rigorous assessment process now in place tracks pupil progress and ensures that gaps in learning are identified to inform future planning. Pupils are engaged in some self and peer assessment and marking identifies ways in which they can improve their work. Monitoring and evaluation by staff and governors is effective and is leading to ongoing improvements. RE makes a significant contribution to children's SMSC development. 'You get to respect other people's faiths if you know something about their holy books and the way they celebrate festivals,' explained a Year 5 pupil. Through the study of Islam and Judaism, children gain insight and understanding of how people of different faiths worship and serve God. Visits, such as the recent one to a synagogue, support children's learning. However, at present they have limited opportunities to gain first-hand experience of aspects of the other major world religions.

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

The impact of the collaboration on all aspects of church school improvement cannot be over-emphasised. All members of the school community agree that the headteacher, assistant headteachers and chair of governors have inspired a complete transformation. This has created a united team determined to provide the best possible learning environment for pupils. Their uncompromising determination to improve and develop the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness has brought about rapid change. Standards and rates of pupil progress are rising substantially. However, since most of the changes are recent, the impact continues to be evaluated. Nevertheless, it is clear that, given time to embed and sustain the current good practice, the school has the capacity to become outstanding. Staff and governors have been re-invigorated. All work together, supporting and encouraging each other in an atmosphere of trust and respect. The support of the diocese has been instrumental in creating an enthusiastic, effective governor team. Governors have addressed many challenging situations with Christian compassion and forgiveness. They have worked alongside staff and pupils to create the new mission statement which is lived out daily in school. Governors have developed a robust self-evaluation process which engages all members of the school community. Church school issues are prioritised within school improvement planning. All issues from the previous inspection have been addressed. Governors have secured strong leadership for RE and collective worship. Both make a significant contribution to the school's distinctiveness and are well-supported and resourced. Partnerships with the church and local community continue to be developed. However, the school recognises that links with the wider world need to be created in order to further develop pupils' understanding of global issues such as conservation and injustice. Partnerships with The Redeemer Church of England School and the diocese support governance, teaching and learning and curriculum development. They also support the strategic development of the school. Links with the church, local community and parents support pupils' learning and enjoyment. Parents are confident that school leaders are managing the school well because they feel involved. One parent stated, 'Our children's core values shine. They are a natural part of their lives, helping them at home and guiding them in the outside world.'

