



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

### St Nicholas Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

School Road  
Marton Moss  
Blackpool  
FY4 5DS

**Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding**

**Current inspection grade: Good**

**Diocese: Blackburn**

Local authority: Blackpool

Date of inspection: 3 March 2016

Date of last inspection: October 2010

School's unique reference number: 119594

Headteacher: Andrew Mellor

Inspector's name and number: Gail Fullbrook 530

#### School context

St Nicholas School is a larger than average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium and special educational needs is slightly below the national average. Pupil mobility is higher than the national average and pupils from the Roma/gypsy community form a significant ethnic minority. The coordinators for religious education (RE) and collective worship were appointed subject leaders in September 2015. The parish church is almost two miles away from the school.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Nicholas as a Church of England school are good

- The children's behaviour is exemplary as a result of strong relationships and a clear understanding of key Christian values.
- Children engage with collective worship enthusiastically and develop a clear understanding of the nature of God.
- Teachers use questioning effectively in RE to deepen the children's understanding and to challenge their thinking.
- The school's robust approach to self-evaluation ensures a clear and accurate understanding of its strengths as a church school and has identified appropriate areas for growth.

#### Areas to improve

- Develop the children's understanding of faiths other than Christianity to enable them to expand their understanding of, and respect for, diversity within their own community and in the wider world.
- Increase the involvement of children in the planning and leading of worship to deepen spiritual understanding and increase the impact of worship on the school community.

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

The Christian character of this exciting primary school is evident in the warmth of the relationships apparent as you walk through the door. Children are proud of their school and recognise the importance of its Christian foundation to all aspects of school life. As a result of the focus on each child as a unique child of God, children make good or better progress and achieve well. They confidently talk of the importance of Christian values to their attitudes to learning. They also speak of the importance of the values of endurance and resilience when they are finding new work difficult. Children share stories of Jesus and other biblical characters to illustrate their understanding of the roots of their values. Parents value their involvement in the school's approach to Christian values and talk of the benefits of the shared approach that the school encourages. The school is relentless in its drive to ensure that individual children are given the best education that they can offer. The well-being of the children and of their families is given high priority. As a consequence, children feel understood, safe and know that they are valued and a child spoke of the importance of remembering that she belonged to God at times when she felt sad or worried. The school promotes good attendance but recognises that individual family circumstances, particularly amongst the Roma/gypsy community, sometimes result in term time absence. There is a strong sense that the school, as Jesus, meets people at their point of need. The spiritual, moral and social development of the children is given high priority. It is well supported within RE and worship and through inspiring posters and displays around the school. Behaviour is exemplary and on the rare occasions when adults become involved with issues of behaviour the children are confident that they will be dealt with fairly and sensitively. Relationships are a strength of the school. Parents are appreciative of the availability of staff and find the school approachable and open. They say that teachers speak to the children 'calmly and kindly' and often refer to the school's values when supporting an unhappy or disgruntled child. Discussion about Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith led one child to remark that wherever you were in the world you would find a church with Christians in it. However, although children say that they would accept and respect those of other cultures and faiths, they currently lack the knowledge and understanding of what that would mean.

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

Collective worship is highly valued by all members of the school family. Children say that worship is interesting and that they welcome the opportunity to worship and pray with their peers. Children are able to relate acts of worship that have an impact on them. One child commented that, 'worship makes me happy because I learn how God wants me to be.' Worship includes a range of Anglican traditions including a Christian greeting, a story from the Bible and time for prayer and reflection. Children recognise that these elements are taken from the pattern of church worship. Links between worship themes and behaviour in and around the school are apparent and children enjoy sharing their understanding of Christian values when talking about their work or behaviour. Well thought out worship themes reflect the Christian year as well as responding to local and global events. As a result, children understand the importance of Christian giving and are keen to raise funds in response to the needs of others. Although children have some involvement within worship and are keen to share their views and responses when asked, the planning and leading of worship by the children is not a regular occurrence. The children sing with enthusiasm and talk of praising God in song. They have a clear understanding of the nature of prayer seeing it as a time when they can have a 'one to one' with God. Children are familiar with some traditional prayers but are equally comfortable when writing and sharing their own prayers. The children eagerly share a prayer written by a Key Stage 1 child and recognise the importance of its message to them. 'We want to be people who are kind and loving to others. Please help us to use words that build others up and bring praise to your name.' Understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is not yet embedded. A number of staff and clergy lead worship and children enjoy the variation in

delivery.

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

RE has a high profile in the school curriculum. Standards are in line with national expectations for the majority of children. Rigorous assessments and moderation show that children in most year groups make good progress. The school has a strong focus on the importance of using questioning within lessons to develop understanding. As a result, the key skills of enquiry and reflection are well taught and result in older children being able to explain with clarity, ways in which the Christian faith has impact on the lives of believers. Understanding of the school's core values is strengthened within RE lessons as children learn more about Christianity, the Bible and major Christian festivals. This understanding is frequently reinforced within worship. The children's knowledge and understanding of other faiths is however, less secure. They are not able to make links between the beliefs and practices of Christians and those of other faiths. The majority of teaching is good with some being outstanding. The school's creative approach to teaching RE impacts on the enthusiasm and engagement the children show towards the subject. In the best lessons, where learning is differentiated to meet the needs of different groups of children, children make good and sometimes rapid progress. End of year assessments are accurate. However, the marking of work does not always lead to children reflecting on their learning or to their understanding being deepened. Aspects of spiritual, moral and social education provide a foundation for learning in RE and children are respectful and empathetic when discussing difficult issues. For example, when discussing the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, children reflected on the ways in which betrayal changes lives and causes suffering. The RE subject leader is relatively new to her role but has already had impact on the ways in which learning is recorded. She shows an enthusiasm and excitement for the subject and is keen that RE becomes an outstanding feature of the school.

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

The school's Christian foundation is shared and understood by all staff who confidently and consistently live out the gospel values which they effectively share with the children by example. A new vision statement has been developed in consultation with governors and parents and is set to provide a foundation for all aspects of school life. Children and adults talk of the importance of Christian values in the life of the school and share ways in which, through discussion and example, they have impact on academic achievement, behaviour, attitudes and relationships. Self-evaluation of the school as a church school is accurate and appropriately challenging. Governors are well informed about the Christian distinctiveness of the school and have a clear vision for the school as a church school. They are supported by the school's Christian leaders, a group of representative children from whom they gain valuable feedback on aspects of school life. Community links are strong and children are encouraged to support local events. These include singing for senior community members and raising funds for a local charity, Donna's Dream House. Members of the church community are familiar visitors to the school and the school makes full use of the professional development offered by the diocese. The school has identified the need to develop links further afield to enhance the children's national and global awareness. Support is given to teachers identified as future leaders in church schools. The RE and worship coordinators have access to the training and leadership development that will increase their impact on key aspects of school life.

SIAMS report March 2016 St Nicholas Church of England Aided Primary, Blackpool FY4 5DS