



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Aidan's CE Primary School

Larch Grove Bamber Bridge Preston PR5 6GX

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Blackburn

Local authority: Lancashire

Dates of inspection: 21 May 2015

Date of last inspection: 22 March 2010

School's unique reference number: 119380

Headteacher: Leanne Finch

Inspector's name and number: Carol Berry 324

School context

St Aidan's is a voluntary controlled school of 100 children situated in small town in Lancashire. Significantly more children than usual (62%) come from deprived backgrounds and there are 44% disadvantaged pupils in receipt of the pupil premium. The number of children with special needs (24%) is above average. There are very few children who are not white British. The school was awarded 'requires improvement' for the Ofsted inspections that took place in 2012 and 2013. In recent years there have been several changes of headteacher. The present headteacher took up her post in June 2014 and was appointed on a permanent basis in April 2015. The incumbent has been in post for two years.

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

- Christian values are evident in the support and care provided for each individual child, whatever their needs.
- The strong leadership of the headteacher is resulting in a shared vision and effective school improvement.
- The strong staff team put Christian values into practice in the way they care for the children they teach and for each other.
- There are very effective and mutually beneficial links with the local church.

Areas to improve

- To ensure that governors regularly review the school as a church school to ensure that action plans for development are implemented. This will bring the full range of stakeholders into the self-evaluation process.
- To plan for spiritual development, reflection on Christian values and opportunities for engagement with people of different cultures and faiths in RE. This is to ensure that the Christian character of the school makes the best possible contribution to spiritual, moral and cultural development.
- To support children in leading significant parts of collective worship. This is to develop their understanding of worship and their engagement with it.

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

The school is a compassionate and nurturing community, committed to meeting the needs of each individual child. Comments from parents include, 'It is a warm and caring environment which is like a big family' and, 'You can walk through the door with a big problem and it is not brushed under the carpet'. The Christian ethos secures a happy and secure learning environment. Achievement was judged to require improvement at the time of the last inspection, but children's progress is now improving. Children have a very good understanding of the school's Christian values. They explain the importance of being kind by making links to the example and teaching of Jesus. They link their care for the environment to the importance of caring for God's world. Children develop a strong sense of fairness and are committed to including everyone. This is evident in the excellent guidance of playground leaders who ensure that all children are included in their games. A parent said that her daughter at high school has retained this commitment to being inclusive with the result that she is 'always looking out for those who are left out'. Children are developing the ability to be still and reflect. Staff often grasp moments for awe and wonder as they arise in the curriculum. However, formal planning for lessons other than RE does not at present include consideration of Christian values or planned opportunities for spiritual development. RE makes an excellent contribution to the Christian character of the school. It helps children to understand Christian values and worship. Challenging work on bereavement has recently made a significant contribution to their personal development. Children demonstrate enthusiasm for studying different faiths and respect for diversity. However, they do not have opportunities to engage with people of other faiths and cultures.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is important to children and staff. Children readily participate in worship and sing with enthusiasm. They say worship is often fun and explain how it helps them to think about their own lives. It inspires them to act compassionately through their support of a range of charities and in the way they care for each other. This term, worship has focused on the theme of trust. Consequently children have a developed understanding of what it means to trust someone. They use Bible stories such as the stories of Abraham and Jesus' disciples to explain what it means to trust in God for the future. The vicar makes an excellent contribution to collective worship. He is involved in planning and the children look forward to his weekly visits. They say that the worship he leads is always 'fun!' A strength of his leadership is the way in which he targets different parts of the worship towards different age groups. A Year 6 boy said that he speaks 'for all the people there, not just the older ones'. Parents and the wider school family give excellent support to the special services in church and the weekly celebration assemblies. As a result, the partnership between school, church and the community is being strengthened. Planning for worship ensures that children explore a range of Bible stories, values and beliefs. They are able to explain the significance of important Christian festivals and different Christian traditions. They have a very good understanding of important Christian beliefs about God and Jesus. For example, they use a varied vocabulary to explain what God is like and they are able to talk about the victory of Jesus at Easter. However, they are less confident in explaining what is meant by the Holy Spirit. Collective worship makes a very good contribution to spiritual development. Children often take time to reflect in worship. They write their own prayers and the use of prayer corners in their classrooms contributes to their developed understanding of why Christians pray. Children participate enthusiastically in worship. They often read, take part in drama, readily volunteer ideas and take part in interactive worship activities. However, although children participate fully, they do not take responsibility for leading significant parts of worship. Self-evaluation of collective worship informs development planning and children play an important part in this. However, at present, parents are not involved in the formal evaluation of collective worship.

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

The excellent leadership of the recently appointed headteacher provides a clear Christian vision for the school which is shared by the whole community. Her leadership is playing a significant role in raising standards of achievement. The mission statement is understood by everyone because time has been spent reflecting on what it means, for example, in collective worship. The staff team is strong and supportive. Despite the challenges of the last few years, they have maintained the school's caring and distinctive Christian ethos. The commitment of both the present vicar and the previous incumbent have provided excellent support for the school during this time. The leadership of collective worship and RE is highly effective. It is resulting in very good outcomes and swiftly bringing about further improvements. Staff development is an important priority and the assistant headteacher is engaged in training for headship. Governors are very supportive of the school and have discussed church school issues. However, they do not always play a full part in self-evaluation of the school as a church school. Only the vicar has received training for his role as a governor of church school. Self-evaluation of the Christian ethos, collective worship and RE is incorporated into the school's rigorous monitoring and evaluation cycle. The school has made some effective responses to the focus for development from the last inspection. However, developing partnerships with people of other faiths and cultures remains an area for improvement. The school has correctly identified issues for development and has a clear action plan for improvement. These plans include provision of time to further develop the Christian vision and the school are excited about taking these plans forward.

SIAMS report May 2015. St Aidan's CE Primary School, Bamber Bridge, Preston. PR5 6GX