



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

### St. Michael with St. John Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Swallow Drive  
Blackburn  
BB1 6LE

**Previous SIAMS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Good**

**Diocese: Blackburn**

Local authority: Blackburn with Darwen

Dates of inspection: 12 November 2015

Date of last inspection: January 2011

School's unique reference number: 119356

Headteacher: Sarah Murphy

Inspector's name and number: Linda Roberts 523

#### School context

The school is situated close to the centre of Blackburn within an area of significant social and economic deprivation. The vast majority of the 393 pupils are Muslim and 95% speak English as an additional language. Over the past two years, the school has experienced a significant fall in numbers due to the opening of a Free Islamic School nearby. Approximately 24% of pupils attract the pupil premium grant. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above the national average. Since the previous inspection, the acting headteacher has been appointed as headteacher.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Michael with St. John as a Church of England school are good.

- The headteacher and senior leadership team have a clear Christian vision for the school which ensures that the school meets the needs of pupils and families within this diverse community.
- Christian values are at the heart of school life and have a positive impact upon the behaviour, attitudes and relationships of the whole school community.
- Accurate self-evaluation, involving all members of the school's community, and a drive for consistency of approach, results in continuous improvement in all aspects of school life.
- Worship, which is well planned and evaluated, makes a valuable contribution to the school's distinctiveness and to the spiritual life of children and staff.

#### Areas to improve

- Develop the pupils' knowledge and understanding of Bible stories so that they

can relate these to the Christian values lived out in school.

- Further enhance pupils' spiritual development by providing opportunities for engagement with life's 'big questions' within the classroom worship/reflection areas.
- Ensure that more recently appointed governors are supported effectively so that they fully understand the distinctiveness of St. Michael with St. John as a church school.

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

At St. Michael with St. John, all aspects of school life are firmly founded upon Christian values, such as service and courage. The school is constantly responding to the ever changing needs of its community by presenting a way of life that has Jesus as its role model. As a result, relationships within the school are excellent and pupils' behaviour is extremely good. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards learning and the school ensures that everyone feels valued, secure and happy. Attendance figures are broadly in line with national percentages. National data and the school's own tracking systems show that all groups of pupils make good progress from a low starting point on entry to school. Data also indicates that levels of achievement have risen steadily over the past three years so that they are in line with national expectations and, in some areas, above national expectations. Additional funding has been used well to accelerate progress, support attendance and provide enrichment to the curriculum. Pupils state that the values are one of the best things about their school. Two key stage 2 pupils say that values 'teach us how to do things that are good' and 'we have values so people can follow them and make the right choices'. Pupils are eager to be involved in a range of initiatives designed to support others, such as the Poppy Appeal, UNICEF and the local foodbank, thereby showing the values of service and compassion in action. They describe the Holy Spirit as being the part of God that encourages them to do things to support others. However, pupils do not readily relate their understanding of values to Bible stories and so have a limited understanding of these values as being distinctively Christian. Pupils' social and cultural development are enhanced through mutually beneficial links with a school in a contrasting locality and through 'super learning' weeks, such as 'science, technology, engineering and maths week'. Imaginative teaching in religious education (RE) contributes well to pupils' spiritual development. Recently, this has been enhanced further by some initial work on the exploration of thought provoking questions.

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

Collective worship is central to the life of the school. Year 5 and 6 pupils say that they have worship 'to remember God', 'to talk to God', and that it is 'a special time to be together'. Worship is well planned with an emphasis on Christian values and the church year. It also incorporates aspects of the school's scheme of work for personal, social and health education which makes an effective contribution to the pupils' understanding of each Christian value. Acts of worship are organised in a range of groupings which include whole school, key stage and class groups. This helps pupils to access worship at a level appropriate to their stage of development. Staff are well supported by the worship coordinator who is passionate about her role. She has ensured a consistency of

approach through the model of welcoming, learning, reflecting and responding. In turn, this planning model ensures that worship makes an effective contribution to pupils' spiritual development by providing regular time for thought and prayer. Prayer is central to worship and to the school day. Pupils regularly write prayers for use in class and worship and class prayer boxes are in regular use. In the hall, the 'tree of worship' provides a focal point for pupils' thoughts and prayers. There is also a collection of worship scrapbooks which pupils view as an aid to help them to understand the values. Opportunities for reflection outside of worship times are provided through the worship tables in each classroom. Material displayed encourages pupils to think more deeply about the value for the half term. However, there is little opportunity for pupils to interact with the materials and respond to thought provoking questions. The school has addressed the area for improvement from the previous inspection and pupils are now fully involved in planning and leading acts of worship, as well as contributing to readings, prayers and drama on a regular basis. Evaluation of the quality of worship is a strength. It is built into the school's annual cycle of self-evaluation and involves all staff and pupils. Pupils regard this as a meaningful and effective way of being involved in developing worship as 'we all get together and discuss worship'.

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

The headteacher and senior leadership team are highly effective. They have a strong and clearly articulated Christian vision, based on the Christian model of servanthood, dedicated to meeting the challenging and ever-changing needs of the community served by the school. It is a model shared by all within the school community. The drive for continuous improvement is relentless and effective due to rigorous monitoring and accurate self-evaluation that feeds into strategic planning. Feedback from parents and pupils indicates that they are overwhelmingly positive about the school and proud to be associated with it. The experienced and skilful collective worship coordinator has recently taken on the role of RE subject leader and has clear strategies in place for continuing improvement. Staff development is a high priority. School leaders access diocesan leadership training and the diocesan adviser has led in-house training for all staff. Governors are well informed and very supportive of the school. Some members of the governing body are new to their role and the leadership is aware of the need to ensure that they are supported appropriately in order to develop their understanding of the distinctive nature of the school. Pupils have real opportunities for leadership responsibility through the school council and prefects system. They take responsibility for themselves and others through their own monitoring processes. The democratically elected head boy and head girl are effective ambassadors and readily articulate their pride in the school. All areas for development from the previous inspection have been addressed.

SIAMS report November 2015 Blackburn St. Michael with St. John BB1 6LE