



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### St Matthew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Blackburn

Withers Street  
Blackburn  
BB1 1DF

**Previous SIAMS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Good**

**Diocese: Blackburn**

Local authority: Lancashire

Dates of inspection: 17 March 2016

Date of last inspection: 26 November 2010

School's unique reference number: 119505

Headteacher: Julian Rogers

Inspector's name and number: Ann Aspden 858

#### School context

The school is in an area of extreme socio-economic deprivation and the majority of children are from minority ethnic backgrounds in which English is not the first language. Most of the 265 children are of the Muslim faith. A higher than average number of children attract the Pupil Premium grant. The number of children with special educational needs is twice the national average. The school is federated with the adjoining Brunel Nursery. The school has links with Christ Church, Blackburn.

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

- Christian values are at the heart of relationships in the school so that everyone is valued and loved.
- The headteacher and other senior leaders lead the school and articulate the vision with energy and enthusiasm so that a very strong distinctive Christian ethos is promoted.
- Children have a good understanding of Christianity which demonstrates the positive impact that religious education has on their own attitudes and behaviour.
- Distinctive Christian values are understood by members of the school community and impact on their daily lives.

#### Areas to improve

- The children's awareness of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith and of other faiths so as to extend and deepen their understanding of diversity.
- The monitoring and evaluation of religious education and collective worship by leaders to inform self evaluation and ensure continued improvement.
- Opportunities for children to plan and lead collective worship so that they are able to demonstrate an understanding of its importance and relevance.

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

St Matthew's is clearly a Christian school where children are happy and safe. Christian values are lived out in all areas of school life. The school's Christian vision is understood by all members of the school community. The security and care based on the school's vision enables children to make good progress academically and in their overall development. The Christian nature of the school has informed its approach to the monitoring of attendance which has greatly improved. Christian values are celebrated through the successful system whereby children are 'spotted' demonstrating a value in their daily lives. Everyone promotes the 'You've been spotted' system. They recognise the distinctive characteristics of the school's chosen values. Children's behaviour and attitudes are influenced by the positive contribution made by spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in many aspects of the curriculum and in the school's vision of 'Live, Love, Learn'. The school council's idea of creating a plaque in memory of a child from the school community demonstrates this most effectively. Class reflection areas and the prayer corner are regularly used. The children write prayers to Jesus and express their thoughts clearly and with confidence. One child said, 'If we pray to God, He listens and will help you to become a better person'. The school is developing an outdoor prayer area which further enhances this aspect of their work. The children know they are listened to and that their concerns and ideas are taken seriously. They are proud of their school and speak confidently about why it is special to them. Parents believe that the school is approachable and that their views are valued as was the case when the school logo was changed to reflect the Christian distinctiveness. They feel that the Christian values are ones which they are able to share and understand. One parent commented 'This school is very friendly. The children know that they are loved here'. Families feel that they have a stake in the school's Christian vision and demonstrate this through their attendance at weekly celebration assemblies and events. The 'Big Lunch Club', a bible based club, along with the Church School Distinctiveness Award in 2014 demonstrates the school's commitment to ensuring that every member of the school community has a sense of belonging. RE makes a valuable contribution to the Christian character of the school. It provides a good foundation for and teaches about the source of the Christian centred values that are evident. As a result of religious education, the children have a respect for other world faiths. However, this is an area to improve in the future.

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

Collective worship at St Matthew's reflects the school's Christian distinctiveness and encompasses the Christian calendar and traditions. As a result of careful planning by staff and clergy, the children see its importance in the life of the school and respond positively and willingly. They have a good understanding of Jesus' life, Christian traditions, bible stories and the purpose of prayer. They express their thoughts to God in their own prayers. One child remarked, 'In worship we have a chance to talk to God and listen to Him in prayer. It's important because then we can do the same good things as Jesus did'. All members of the school community see collective worship as a very important part of school life as has been demonstrated by their sincere involvement in monitoring and evaluation. This has been highly effective in developing collective worship and personal spirituality within the school community. The children's involvement resulted in thoughtful comments such as 'In worship we learn that God will forgive us and then we'll try and forgive other people, too'. Some older children can talk about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit by referring to a display linked to the work of St Patrick. However, the place of the Trinity in acts of worship is an area for improvement. Through the involvement of others in planning worship, the children access a range of experiences. In future, children should be more involved in planning and leading worship themselves. The school's links with Christ Church are valued and supported by parents. Harvest was eagerly attended by Muslim families who were pleased for their children to be given a role to play during the service.

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

The children say lessons are fun and talk enthusiastically about the Bible, Jesus' life and how this impacts on their lives. A child retold the story of the Good Samaritan and talked about how refugees are treated in the present day. Younger children can retell aspects of Jesus' life in great detail. They have a secure knowledge of significant events in his life such as the Easter story. One child said 'Jesus died on the cross because he wanted to forgive all of our sins and that includes me!' For the vast majority of children standards are good with a successful balance between teacher-led and child-centred activities. In Key Stage 2, children's spirituality is developed through careful questioning which draws out thoughtful responses. In this way, RE teaching makes a significant contribution to the way in which Christian values are embedded in school life. Children are beginning to ask thoughtful questions which provide opportunities for further research. The school teaches other world faiths as evidenced through classroom displays and children's work. However, children are not yet able to speak with knowledge and confidence about other religions. RE teaching is consistently good. The subject leader successfully leads RE and provides effective in-house professional development which impacts on standards. RE has high status and is a core subject. It is planned to the same rigorous standard as other core subjects in an imaginative way using the Blackburn Diocese syllabus. Effective assessment procedures are in place which inform planning. For the vast majority of children, standards are good with a successful balance between teacher-led and child-centred activities. Effective use is made of a range of routine monitoring and evaluation procedures that accurately identify strengths and focus on raising standards that lead to improvement in pupil performance. However, this is an area for future development.

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

The exceptional leadership of the headteacher and senior leaders promotes the school's distinctively Christian character within a culturally diverse community. As a result of their tireless drive over recent years, the school's Christian distinctiveness is strong and bold. Senior leaders have a thorough understanding of the school's performance based on effective and insightful self-evaluation and can speak with great confidence about standards. They are committed to driving the school forward with energy and enthusiasm. They ensure that the school's Christian vision is embedded in all aspects of school life resulting in excellent standards of behaviour and SMSC development. Leaders actively promote positive and clear links between the school, families, the church, the diocese, and the local community. As a result they are all highly supportive of the school's Christian ethos, actively involved in evaluating the school's work and make a substantial contribution to developments. In the parents' questionnaire, several parents commented on the strength of the school's Christian message in a multi-faith community. A group of parents worked with leaders in the design of the new logo which includes the Apostle Cross and were eager to ensure that it reflected the strong Christian ethos. Leaders ensure that the needs of their families are taken into account so that there are effective channels of communication. The website can be translated into other languages as can text messages and emails. One parent described the school as 'nurturing' and another explained, 'This school is very inclusive. The door is always open to everyone. Christian values are shared by us and we feel part of St Matthew's family.' Parents involvement in strategies related to children's learning leads to convincing and direct improvements in standards of achievement. Leadership of RE and collective worship is excellent and results in highly effective practice throughout the school. The nominated governor for Christian distinctiveness has a very clear understanding of her role and, as a result of planned monitoring and evaluation, is knowledgeable about standards. A highly effective strategy for staff development is in place and this is seen as a priority. As a result, leaders are confident and well informed about future developments at the school. They are also ambitious for the school and are eager to share their expertise and experiences with other schools.