



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Blackburn St. Stephen's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Robinson Street
Blackburn
Lancashire
BB1 5PE

Previous SIAMS grade: Satisfactory

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Blackburn

Local authority: Blackburn with Darwen

Date of inspection: 5 February 2015

Date of last inspection: November 2010

School's unique reference number: 119439

Headteacher: Jacquelyn Young

Inspector's name and number: Kathryn Pym 726

School context

St Stephen's Church of England Primary is situated in Little Harwood, an area of significant social and economic deprivation in Blackburn. The vast majority of the pupils are Muslim and a large majority speak English as an additional language. Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in staffing, including a new headteacher. The school has moved from requires improvement to good in their recent Ofsted inspection.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness St Stephen's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Shared Gospel values are at the heart of all aspects of the life of the school. This provides the foundations for all relationships, policies and teaching and learning.
- The spiritual development of the children through worship, high quality religious education (RE) teaching and opportunities to pray and reflect.
- The Christian leadership and vision of the school is now embraced by the whole school community. This has helped to improve the effectiveness of the school.

Areas to improve

- Ensure children learn about Christianity around the world through RE lessons.
- Develop the role of the worship wardens by significantly involving children in planning, leading and evaluating distinctively Christian worship.

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

The Christian character of the school now makes a significant impact on the academic achievement and the progress that the children make across the curriculum. This has resulted in a recent good Ofsted inspection. Current school analysis shows that the progress that the children are making with their learning is excellent across the curriculum. This is due to raised expectations, clear focus on the Gospel values, including friendship, love and trust and more rigorous accountability with a newly established leadership team. The children's well-being and personal developments are central to the life of the school, which ensures that the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is a strength of the school. The children want to learn and are proud of their own and each other's achievements. This truly is a family school at the heart of a diverse and unique community. One parent described it as a 'loving and caring school, which provides excellent faith based learning.' The children enjoy their school life and as a consequence attendance and behaviour is excellent. Christian values, in particular, love, respect and trust, are deeply embedded and fundamental to all aspects of school life. They are described as 'the golden thread that runs through everything.' The Gospel values are displayed vibrantly throughout the school in many different forms. Behaviour and attitude to learning is excellent due to the values that the school promotes. The children demonstrate excellent knowledge of Bible stories and are able to link these to their own faith and life experiences. The children value their own faith and can talk confidently about what they believe. The school uses every opportunity to develop the children's spirituality. As a result, the children are able to respond well to challenging questions. The learning environment is used to celebrate the Gospel values, and providing space in each classroom, hall and outside for prayer and reflection. The peace garden is used well, especially as part of the children's 'Peace Week' activities. The school mission statement is integral to daily life and is recited daily by all of the children; 'aiming high with God in our hearts.' The positive relationships in the school are a tremendous strength. As a result, there is a shared commitment to the Christian vision of the school. However, the school has identified that further work needs to be done with the children with regards to developing an understanding and awareness of Christianity as a global world faith. Collective worship and RE lessons make a significant contribution to the Christian character of the school and the children's spiritual development. Pupils enjoy the creative approaches that the school uses to teaching in RE and are very proud of the work that they produce.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship engages and inspires the children and is valued by all the whole school community. It is at the heart of the school day and is used to promote the Christian distinctiveness of the school. It celebrates the unique family nature of the school with one child explaining that, 'it reminds us every day that God is always in our hearts'.

High quality worship enables the children to gain a good understanding of Bible stories and Anglican traditions and it is varied in approach. RE enables children to engage with the Eucharist. Children pray, reflect, praise and listen. Worship is inclusive and as a result of careful planning, provides the children with time to consider their own faith in a safe and special place. Worship planning focuses on the school's Gospel values, which include trust, cooperation and justice. Significant points in the liturgical calendar are celebrated with special services in church, which are well supported by parents. The school also benefits from the support of PAIS volunteers; youth workers based in local parishes, who organise a values club at lunch time and lead worship. A prayer group meets weekly and is well attended. The children understand the Trinity and three candles are used as a focal point to remind the children at the beginning of each worship. Collective worship ensures all of the children and staff develop spiritually. In worship times, the fruits of the spirit are used to consider how we all need to grow in faith and how the Gospel values enable this to happen. The Worship

Wardens and other children play a part in leading some acts of worship. However, this is an area that the children are keen to expand on, along with planning their own services more regularly. Children and adults, including all governors, frequently evaluate worship and this informs future planning, showing how the school has progressed since the last inspection.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Standards attained in RE throughout the school are in line with and in some instances above national expectations and in other subjects in the school. The quality of teaching in RE is outstanding, which is evident in the learning outcomes. This reflects excellent progress throughout the school. Monitoring strategies are rigorous and have resulted in raised standards for all learners across the curriculum. Assessment strategies for RE are effective and inform planning and RE developments. Immense value is placed on staff moderating work in RE. This is evident in the children's work and also the thought provoking RE displays and reflection areas throughout the school. Lessons are of a very high standard and demonstrate excellent subject knowledge and creativity. The children thoroughly enjoy RE. They value it and know that they are expected to work hard. The children feel challenged and are proud of their RE work and demonstrate excellent understanding of Bible stories, which they are then able to relate to their own faith. RE has a very positive impact on the children's spiritual development. This is because the children are given the opportunity to respond to thought provoking questions and relate issues to their own experiences. The children explain that they 'need to learn about all faiths so that they can understand what other people believe.' The school uses the diocesan scheme of work as well as providing focus weeks to promote the Gospel values which the school promotes. The subject is led very well and as a consequence it is given a very high profile in the school. The subject is very well resourced which enables teachers to teach in a creative way, which engages the children. However, the school has rightly recognised that further steps now need to be taken to extend the children's knowledge of the Christian church world-wide.

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

The headteacher and governors of the school enthusiastically promote a distinctive school vision based on Christian values. The headteacher's Christian faith is evident in all she does and inspires the whole school community. This impacts significantly on the outcomes of the children, who are confident, achieve their best and have a love of learning. The children work hard and are proud to be part of St. Stephen's School. Parents, staff and children are clear about the Christian foundations of the school and see them as the cornerstone. All statutory requirements are met for RE and collective worship. The school uses every opportunity available to promote their distinctive Gospel values, in particular in worship and RE. Parental engagement is a strength and the parents speak very highly of the faith based education that the children experience and they trust that the school will provide the best learning outcomes for their children. The well-being of pupils is given the highest priority, which is evident in all aspects of the school life. Significant improvements have been made to the overall quality of provision over the past few years and this is clearly evident in the outcomes for learners and the high expectations for all. Following training and support from the diocese, the governors are involved in an effective programme of self-evaluation and school improvement. Governors demonstrate a very clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development with regard to the Christian distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school. They provide both challenge and support to the headteacher. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Collective worship is led and managed very well. All teaching staff lead worship and the school is committed to professional development with regards to both RE and worship. (different sized text)Succession planning is a key consideration during any recruitment processes and the head teacher is committed to the professional development of all of the staff. Recent training has instigated positive change in both RE and worship evaluation. Pupil voice in school is strong and the children feel listened to and valued. The school council are very proud of the charitable works that they have undertaken 'because it is important to share

what we have.' The school is at the heart of the diverse community that it serves. Links with the church and the local Muslim community are very well established and beneficial to the school and the families that they serve. The school also has substantial links with neighbouring schools and other family support agencies.

SIAMS report February 2015 St. Stephen's CE VA Primary School BBI 5PE