



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Preston St Matthew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

New Hall Lane, Preston PR1 5XB

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Blackburn

Local authority: Lancashire

Date of inspection: 23 April 2015

Date of last inspection: 15 July 2010

School's unique reference number: 119603

Headteacher: Roger Small

Inspector's name and number: Lesley Brookbanks 771

School context

St Matthew's is a large inner city primary school with 474 children on roll. It serves a diverse cultural community with children of several different faith backgrounds. It is set in an area where there is a high level of social and economic deprivation. The percentage of pupils eligible for pupil premium is above the national average. A large majority of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Although a majority of pupils speak English as an additional language and their attainment is below average on entry, they make very good progress as they move through the school.

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

- The school's Christian character is outstanding at supporting the academic, social and spiritual development of the school's diverse cultural community.
- Christian values and worship are at the heart of the school's work and influence the day to day actions of all who work and learn there.
- Religious Education (RE) has a high profile and strong subject leadership which results in teaching and learning which inspires high standards and enthusiastic learners.
- Governors play a full and active role in monitoring the distinctive Christian character of the school.

Areas to improve

- Develop an RE evidence base that uses consistent and effective strategies for assessment, including moderation that enables assessment for learning.

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

The school's Christian ethos supports children exceptionally well. There is total commitment to support every child's needs and ensure that they achieve their very best academically. This means that children are keen to learn and enabled to make very good progress through the school. This ethos recognises the uniqueness of individual children in the eyes of God and therefore affirms children's strengths and interests, especially for the most vulnerable. Attendance is good and exclusions rare. The school has high expectations of behaviour which are rooted in Christian teaching and values. As a result, children show great respect and care for each other. Relationships between all members of the school community are exemplary. An enthusiastic and proactive children's ethos committee plans activities for all classes based on the school's core Christian values. Consequently, children recognise how values make a difference to their school. They explain that values help them with friendships, trust and respect. This is because through their actions children show each other how to live well. High quality displays, Christian signs and symbols emphasise the school's distinctiveness and effectively support the children's spiritual awareness and development. Collective worship and RE make a significant contribution to children's spiritual development. Children enjoy worship and are proud of the activities and work they produce in RE. They have great respect for diversity and difference and have a good knowledge and understanding of each other's faith. Parents value how the school affirms all expressions of faith through its Christian character, values and RE. This, together with the strong emphasis on care for others, makes an exceptional contribution to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is vibrant, inclusive and inspires the whole school community. It is at the heart of the school day and promotes the Christian distinctiveness of the school. One child explained that, 'God is with us in worship and will listen to us; he shows us the right path'. Worship impacts positively on the spiritual development of all faiths. Children say worship is, 'a religious time to talk with your God.' High quality planning of Christian themes includes a strong emphasis on Christian values and important Christian festivals. This enables children to have very good knowledge and understanding of Anglican practice and the nature of Christian worship. The symbolism of the Trinity is regularly used in worship through prayer. RE enables children to engage with and understand the importance and meaning of the Eucharist. Children are enthusiastic, reverent and respectful in their responses to worship. They have excellent understanding of many Bible stories and how Bible teaching can change people's lives, including their own. Children enjoy well established ownership of the planning and delivery of worship. They are keen to plan their ideas with support from the school and parish worker. As a result, they are confident in leading and responding to worship. The regular evaluation of worship by children, adults and governors enables children's views to be shared, heard and acted upon. Although firmly based on Christian values and Bible teaching, world faith festivals are also celebrated by the school. Children have an exceptionally good knowledge of how God is worshipped by people of all faiths. Prayer is firmly embedded in school life. Children value that 'we say prayers together but it is good that we also have time to say our own prayers'. A variety of creative approaches to prayer are regularly used. Children's prayers are composed with depth, meaning and excellent understanding of Christian values. Classroom prayer tables are given a high priority. They are colourful and inviting with activities which change according to the worship theme. Interactive values notebooks and prayer activities reflect the children's meaningful engagement with Christian values and personal prayer. Each table has a unique cloth designed by the children. A dedicated prayer room is available each day at lunchtime and is purposefully used by children of all faiths. There are no withdrawals from collective worship. Services in church at key points in the liturgical and school year are very well attended by parents. Parents of all faiths value the worship life of the school. They appreciate that it gives their children and families a sense of personal belonging and time for personal prayer.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Standards in RE are in line with national expectations and sometimes above. Children make excellent progress through the school. This is because the RE curriculum is carefully planned and expectations of all children are high. Teachers ensure that there are no barriers to learning for those who find difficulty with basic skills. Children are excited by their learning and consider the subject to be important. Teaching and learning is extremely good and often outstanding. Children enjoy the wide range of creative, practical and imaginative approaches to learning used in RE lessons. As a result, they learn exceptionally well and are challenged to extend their thinking through effective questioning. Children are actively encouraged to relate learning in RE to their own lives and to Christian values. Through creative approaches to questioning, older children made meaningful links between their values and those of the story of Ruth. They share ideas openly and honestly. Younger children say they enjoy investigating the church. They ask and answer questions about Christian belief as they locate and identify its important features. Children talk knowledgeably about holy books and faith traditions and identify many similarities between their faith and that of others. The high quality of children's work is exemplified in class scrapbooks and levelled portfolios of evidence as well as their books and displays. Marking and feedback is of high quality. It has a clear RE focus and this enables children to reflect thoughtfully on their work. Subject leadership is strong and effective and impacts on ensuring that the profile of RE remains high. The subject leader is highly ambitious for its success. As a result, monitoring is rigorous. However, assessment of activities recorded in class scrapbooks is not yet consistently included in termly moderation. Discussions with children and work scrutiny inform next steps for development. RE schemes of work comply fully with the diocesan syllabus. Governors attend RE training alongside staff and regularly visit classrooms to talk to children and staff about learning. They are well informed about monitoring outcomes, self-evaluation and next steps for development.

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

The inspirational Christian leadership and vision of the headteacher is well supported by an enthusiastic staff and governors who are highly committed to the school and the distinctive values it shares. The school's determined approach to inclusion and diversity ensures that all children are valued and encouraged. As a result, children work hard, achieve very well and are extremely proud of their school. Collective worship and RE are led with enthusiasm and total commitment which ensures continual improvement. All statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are met. Governors are proactive and insightful in their knowledge of the school. They provide both challenge and support for the headteacher. They are very regular visitors and actively involved in monitoring and evaluation. This results in a significant contribution to a shared Christian vision and strong commitment to the school's self-evaluation and future development. There is a strong emphasis on supporting the professional development and leadership of staff with a view to succession planning. The school is at the heart of the diverse community it serves. There are extensive links with St Matthew's church and clergy and the Muslim community. As a result, it is able to unite different faiths through its Christian worship, values and RE. This is clearly reflected in the children's attitudes towards each other and their active interest in each other's beliefs. The school benefits from the innovation of a school and parish worker. She leads class worships, messy church, a drama group and pastoral groups for parents. These are well attended and beneficial to both parents and children. Her work promotes the well-being of the whole school community. Parents are highly supportive of the school. They value its openness. They say that, 'Children are happy and celebrated in this school, their attitudes and behaviour are greatly influenced by its Christian ethos'.

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