



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church St  
Droylsden  
M437BR

#### Diocese of Manchester

LA Tameside  
URN: 106247

Date of Inspection: 15<sup>th</sup> October 2013

Date of last inspection: 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> October 2009

Headteacher: Kathryn Hampson

Inspector: Sandra Palmer

Inspector No: 724

#### School context

St Mary's is a single cohort primary school situated in a pleasant modern building on a busy main road near the centre of Droylsden on the east side of the city of Manchester. The children are from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds with the majority having a white Christian heritage and around 15 % having other cultural and religious backgrounds. On entry most of the children attain below the national expectations. 22% of children receive free school meals and the number of children with special education needs is in line with the national average. The headteacher has been in post four years having previously been the deputy head.

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

#### Established strengths

- The excellent leadership who successfully implement an explicit vision of a Church of England school
- The very positive impact of the school on children's spiritual, moral and religious development
- The thorough comprehensive approach to School Worship which permeates the life of the school.

#### Focus for development

- Enable the children to develop further their understanding of Islam and Judaism as living faiths by visiting their places of worship.
- Ensure that RE lessons that focus on discussion and thinking skills also engage children's emotions.
- Develop further children's knowledge and understanding of other cultures.

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

The school's distinctively Christian character stands out in its explicit statements of values and in the manner in which it meets the needs of all learners. Prominent displays from the entrance hall to the classroom indicate the school's commitment to its Christian foundation and to Christianity as the main context in which children explore questions of faith. School policies are firmly and explicitly based on Christian values, with emphasis being placed on respecting children, treating them as individuals within a community and making learning interesting. There is a very strong link between the school and the local church - the two communities overlap. Members of the church often contribute to the life of the school in the wider curriculum and in specifically Christian activities when children visit the church. The rector and headteacher work productively together to identify matters of concern and give pastoral care to parents where appropriate. Being part of a Christian community has a great impact on the children. Parents and staff speak of the high profile of the school in the area as a church school where the children behave very well, and their needs are met, including their special education needs. The pupils are friendly and courteous, respecting one another as well as adults. There is a quiet, productive, positive atmosphere in the school. Difficulties are handled by staff with patience and listening. Values of caring, cooperation and friendship are deeply embedded. The children readily speak of the need to be kind and loving, even when not rewarded, though being praised is clearly important to them. Their willingness to sit on a buddy bench when they feel lonely is an indication that the school is a place where the children feel safe and confident. The children show compassion in the way they talk about other children's needs and their willingness to befriend lonely ones. They make clear connections between these attitudes and what they have heard in worship and Bible stories and have a strong sense of the presence of God. Class links between older and younger pupils are very effective in building a school community and enabling children to care for one another. The children are also very appreciative of the share boxes in the classroom. They post things they wish to share with others on a wide variety of topics- from achievement to worries. These are sometimes used as the basis for a discussion or prayer and means that the voices of all children are heard, as well as those of children on the school council. Children from non- Christian backgrounds feel included in the school and readily participate in discussions. The excellent results at Key Stage 2 after a low starting point on entry indicate that the school's commitment to meeting children's academic needs has been very productive. Christian values of persistence, appreciation of God's world, and the importance of each individual are very significant in achieving these standards. The children enjoy school, including playtimes, with older children describing their passion for particular subjects they study. After school clubs extend the children's experience in school. Pupils' attendance is above the national average and improving; children attend because they like being in school. They think of others beyond the school and enthusiastically raise money for charities, and see themselves as part of a wider community. Pupils have a strong respect for difference, but the use of multi-cultural stories in literacy and acknowledgement of festivals in worship is having only a superficial impact on their understanding of wider cultures. RE makes a significant contribution to the Christian ethos of the school as the children, as the children are learning from as well as about religion.

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

Worship is integral to the life of St Mary's. Acts of Christian worship are supplemented by the small acts of worship which frame the day. They are introduced to the Anglican tradition of worship through a variety of prayers and hymns as well as the structure of worship. The children enjoy visiting the church once a week for worship and especially love 'messy-church', a time which involves members of the congregation and the opportunity for exploration of festival themes. At other times the school hall is marked as a sacred space with a worship table on which there is a lit candle. The school is clear on the distinction between good work assembly and school worship. The worship is explicitly Trinitarian in

prayer and in the celebration of Christian festivals. Children are absorbing this language and making sense of it in ways appropriate to their age. They speak of Jesus as God's Son and the Holy Spirit being inside them to guide them. The worship covers a range of subject matter including Bible stories and themes which raise a high level of moral expectation. Guests sometimes lead worship expanding children's understanding of Christian worship. These guests are given clear guidance on their role. The children are attentive during worship, sing with enthusiasm and sometimes find it 'awesome'. They take seriously the subjects raised in worship so that, for example, they are conscious of using their time well- a current worship theme. Members of staff take part confidently in planning and leading worship as well as having roles in the worship led by others. Children have lots of opportunities to participate in worship and some are being trained to plan and lead it. Drama and artefacts enhance it. Feedback gathered from parents and children is analysed and acted upon. There is high level of parental attendance at special days such as Harvest. The children value prayer and the prayer boxes. They talk about praying at home and can discuss prayer thoughtfully seeing it as an opportunity to praise God, give thanks and pray for the needs of others. They have a positive appreciative attitude to life.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding**

Teachers share the subject leader's vision of RE as part of a life long path of spiritual growth in which religious questions are explored and questioned. They plan lessons that enable children to engage, reflect and question, thereby making links between the religious material they are studying and their own lives and contributing substantially to their emotional and spiritual development. The content of lessons is rich and varied; art, drama and technology are used very effectively to help the children engage with religious material including Bible stories and to develop skills such as empathy. Children have lots of opportunity for discussion and analytic and evaluative tasks so that they are thinking, not merely acquiring information and are stretched intellectually. Sometimes lessons that focus on discussion are less engaging of the children's emotions than those based on an arts activity. The regular class based assessment indicate that, for the majority of children, the standards attained are in line with other subjects and sometimes better. Nevertheless the effectiveness of the religious education in contributing to children's spiritual, moral and religious development is outstanding. The children have an excellent grounding in Christianity, including beginning to understand that Christianity is a diverse world faith. They talk keenly about God and other religious questions, listening thoughtfully to each other. They not only behave well but they are able to reason about morality drawing on skills and knowledge they have acquired in RE and making reference to the Bible, God and Jesus. They are able to apply thoughtfully what they have learnt about one faith to another and are very interested in learning about non-Christian faiths. Visits to Christian places of worship including the local Moravian settlement contribute to a deeper understanding of Christianity by making it real and furthers their cultural understanding. The absence of visits to a mosque and synagogue make their understanding of Islam and Judaism less meaningful though the contributions of Muslim children and parents go some way to address this. The priority given to RE is evident in the school's requirement that all trainee teachers are observed teaching RE on placement. The monitoring of RE gives the RE co-ordinator an overview of where development is needed and it is always a point in the school development plan. Teachers are committed to teaching RE to the highest standard and know they can look to the subject leader for support and guidance. It is at least 5% of the timetable, and the teaching of Christianity occupies more than two thirds of the curriculum. RE has a significant role in contributing to the Christian ethos of the school.

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

The headteacher, school management team and governors work closely together to, in the headteacher's words, "talk and walk" a vision for the school which is deeply rooted in Christian values. The headteacher has successfully led the school through a difficult financial period having inherited a large deficit budget and maintained a Christian duty of care to individual employees whilst having to make hard decisions. Staff are consistently managed with patience, fairness and firmness without ever losing sight of the need to put children at the heart of the school. They are supported through times of personal difficulty and are extremely grateful for the headteacher's open door policy. People speak of loving working in the school and they go the extra mile by being involved in after school clubs and school trips. Open discussion about Christianity and attending courses on teaching in a church school is contributing to developing staff as leaders in a Christian school. Governors give themselves devotedly to the role, have high aspirations for the children, but also support the school in encouraging a Christian attitude to life - one that is wider than personal success and the acquisition of money. The management has been outstanding in enabling a major shift since the last SIAS inspection, early in the occupancy of the post by the current headteacher. The negative attitudes and low level disruption among the children reported then are now notably absent. The strategies chosen to achieve this change - praise, consistency and an enriched curriculum - spring from the management's Christian values. It is clear that there is genuine care for each child. A constant well-documented process of self evaluation draws on the views all stakeholders making them feel that their voice is heard. The leadership and management are outstanding in the creation and maintenance of the school as a church school.

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