

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### St Catherine's Church of England Primary School

Greenstone Ave, Horwich, Bolton, BL6 5SJ

**Current SIAMS inspection grade**

**Outstanding**

**Diocese**

**Manchester**

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

Bolton

Date of inspection

3 May 2018

Date of last inspection

July 2013

Type of school and unique reference number

VA 144045

Headteacher

Karen Graham

Inspector's name and number

Lisa Horobin 900

#### School context

St Catherine's Church of England Primary School with Nursery converted to academy status in January 2018 and is the founder member of the Mulberry Tree Multi Academy Trust. The academy serves the local community and pupils come from a wide mix of different socio-economic backgrounds. The majority are of White British heritage. The numbers of pupils who have additional needs is lower than average. Pupils make good progress and achievement is above national expectations. Since the last inspection there have been significant staffing changes and the senior leadership team has been restructured.

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

- The inspirational Christian leadership of the headteacher and senior leadership team, fully supported by the dedicated staff, ensures the clearly focussed Christian vision of the school is lived out across the school community.
- The Christian vision of the school is deeply embedded and permeates every aspect of school life. This is evident in relationships, the environment, worship and the curriculum. Pupil behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary.
- Dedicated and strong subject leadership has ensured that religious education (RE) has a high profile in school and that learning experiences are challenging and relevant. As a result, expectations of achievement and standards are high.

#### Areas to improve

- Provide a wider variety of learning experiences that will extend pupils' knowledge and deepen their understanding of Christianity as a living and diverse world faith.
- Increase the opportunities for pupils to create and lead worship throughout the school year to further develop their skills and empower them to independently lead spontaneous worship.

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

St Catherine's is a school where a clearly identifiable and uncompromising Christian vision for education is truly lived out by all members of the school community. Pupils know, understand, and fully embrace the school's Christian values. They recognise how the values make a difference to their attitudes and behaviour by showing great respect and care for one another. The staff take seriously their responsibility to be good role models. The pupils recognise this, commenting that 'Christian values are for everyone, they help you to be a kind person.' Pupils are extremely polite and demonstrate excellent behaviour. Attendance exceeds national targets, pupils are eager to be in school. The new school uniform has added to their pride in being a part of the St Catherine's family. A Key Stage 2 pupil remarked, 'It's a great building but the best thing is the people, all the pupils and the staff and we are happy.'

Parents describe St Catherine's as a warm family school where all members of staff are approachable and their pupils are equipped with skills for life. Parents of pupils who have additional needs praise the school for the care and support given to them as a whole family. Despite increasing budgetary constraints St Catherine's provides the best resources available for their more vulnerable pupils.

The academic success of pupils is well above national averages. Staff and governors are motivated by a desire for St Catherine's to be a school 'where every child becomes the person God has created them to be'. Along with high academic achievement they ensure the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of every child is also a priority. There is a list of experiences, including educational visits, which every child must encounter before they leave St Catherine's. The curriculum includes a wide variety of exciting opportunities that are designed to develop the child as a whole person. In addition pupils can choose to be part of Team Tatton, become reading buddies with younger pupils or be given time to take part in the Spirited Arts competition illustrating the rich interpretation of spiritual development shared across the school.

The RE curriculum plays a major role in contributing to the school's Christian character and pupils' level of attainment and understanding is impressive. Pupils talk about the ways in which their learning in RE contributes to their attitudes and choices. Pupils are aware that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith however their knowledge and understanding of the cultural diversity within Christianity is limited.

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

Collective worship is central to the life of the whole school community. This is visible in the school environment and through pupils' attitudes. As soon as you arrive in the entrance hall there is evidence of the importance placed on prayer in the shape of the 'Giving Tree'. Worship music plays throughout the day and pupils freely access the sacred space taking time out to write prayers for themselves and others. The interactive and creative sacred spaces in each classroom ensure that the value of prayer remains a prominent feature beyond the entrance hall. These spaces challenge pupils to think and reflect in the presence of God.

Worship is well structured and uses aspects of Anglican liturgy, for example sharing the peace with one another. As the pupils and staff leave their classrooms and walk to the hall for worship they begin to sing. Therefore they enter the hall already engaged and with a sense of purpose. The collective worship coordinator is a well organised reflective practitioner who has responded to monitoring and evaluation through the introduction of new songs and resources. As a result, the exciting and relevant content enhances pupils' spiritual and moral development. Pupils commented that they enjoy the opportunity to close their eyes and reflect on big questions that effect their behaviour. Pupils express their views and response to situations of social injustice using the language of Christian values appropriately. Parents spoke about the occasions when their children had taught them about the deeper meaning of the Christian values and the teachings of Jesus. Members of the Collective Crew can confidently relate Biblical stories and Christian teaching to their school Christian values. The Collective Crew are very proud of their responsibility to raise the profile of the school's values and lead by example. One member of the group humbly said that 'Obviously we are not perfect but we try our best to be the best we can be.' The establishment of this group has addressed the area for improvement raised by the previous inspection. Pupils do now have opportunities to plan and lead worship and they are keen for this to happen more often especially in a spontaneous manner. They recognise that worship is an expression of praise and emotion and are certain that 'it gives us things to think about that will help us in later life'.

Pupils have a clear understanding of the Trinitarian nature of God. They naturally spoke about Jesus as God in human form and said 'God the Holy Spirit is with us right now!' The school regularly joins with St Catherine's and other local churches to celebrate the major festivals of the church year. At Christmas the school enjoyed taking part in the Christingle and Posada. This gives pupils a good knowledge of the Church's year and a rich experience of worship at festival times in different settings.

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

Religious education (RE) is considered to be a core curriculum subject that influences the whole of school life. Pupils explained that the school 'wouldn't be St Catherine's if we didn't do RE, it's everywhere'. The standards of teaching and learning in RE are exceptional. Pupils' progress and attainment are excellent and in line with other core subjects. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning, and their knowledge of Christianity and other world faiths is remarkable. Pupils are given tasks that increase their knowledge further and through application of a range of higher level skills pupils can make links between beliefs, practices and values.

Lessons are creative, relevant and celebrated on the display board of 'Amazing RE' in the main corridor. Pupils are very proud of this display and aspire to having made a contribution towards it. One pupil commented that 'in RE we don't just learn facts we use our imagination'. In lessons observed pupils were challenged with enquiry based activities and given opportunities to reflect on 'big' questions. As a result RE makes a considerable impact on pupils' SMSC. Teachers make clear links between the RE curriculum content and Christian values. Workbooks and scrapbooks revealed a variety of multi-sensory learning experiences that pupils valued. Pupils could confidently explain the purpose of their learning. One pupil stated that 'RE helps you feel and understand about going to church and what is said there.' Marking comments deepen pupils' understanding of the lesson content and challenge them to continue thinking on the subject that has been discussed.

The local vicar is chair of governors and member of the governing board with responsibility for RE. He regularly visits school to meet with the coordinator and take part in RE lessons that, in particular explore baptism and Holy Communion. Pupils talk about him with great respect and appreciate being able to chat to him and ask questions. Reverend Behrend's presence in school enriches the pupils' understanding of Christianity as a living faith.

The RE coordinator has a sound knowledge of her subject and she has ensured the successful implementation of the new Diocesan RE syllabus 'Questful RE' along with the national resource Understanding Christianity. She regularly attends diocesan training and local network meetings. Rigorous and purposeful systems for assessment and monitoring are embedded and inform action plans that have led to improvement across the school. Since the last inspection, RE in the Early Years has been reviewed and revised providing a firm foundation for future learning.

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

The dynamic leadership of the school confidently articulates their Christian vision which is firmly rooted in Biblical teaching. The evidence of the impact of the school's five explicitly Christian values is tangible. Compassion, honesty, fairness, love and respect underpin every decision and school policy. Pupils are nurtured and they say they feel safe, loved and listened to. As soon as they enter the school the 'Gardeners and Seeds' project where the Year 6 pupils welcome and look after the new Reception class begins to develop positive relationships based on Christian values across the school. Through compassionate social action such as fundraising for World Vision, supporting Guide Dogs and delivering flowers at Harvest the school builds relationships locally and globally. This gives pupils a sense of their place and responsibility in the world.

Links between school and St Catherine's church are strong. Many school families are members of the thriving congregation. Parents are actively involved in the life of the school. They feel well informed and that their voice is heard. Parents described school as a place where they felt 'genuinely welcome'. They are appreciative of the dedication and hard work of the staff who go the extra mile for their pupils.

The headteacher and wider leadership of the school have a thorough knowledge of the school's performance based on rigorous self-assessment. This means that the staff and governors ensure that the school is constantly improving and moving forward. The staff keep up to date with current thinking in Christian education and there is a strategic plan of continuing professional development for all. Both collective worship and RE are led by members of the school's senior leadership team and given high priority which leads to exceptional practice.

The school's Christian vision is the motivation behind the establishment of the Mulberry Tree Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). Through the MAT the school's leadership and staff in partnership with the parents, hope to support schools in the surrounding area by sharing their ethos and outstanding practice. They wholly believe that every child deserves the very best opportunities to flourish. The school strapline 'Learning Together, Shine Together' is a true reflection of life at St Catherine's where they wholeheartedly fulfil Jesus' teaching to be a light shining with God's love in the community.