

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

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

Manchester Road  
Astley  
Manchester  
M29 7BT

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Manchester</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of inspection	2 March 2017
Date of last inspection	February 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary aided 106482
Headteacher	Jill Southern
Inspector's name and number	Robert Haigh 660

#### School context

St Stephen's is an average-sized primary school. The vast majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is above the national average. The headteacher took up her post in September 2016. The chair of governors and the team rector were appointed in 2015 and 2016 respectively. St Stephen's Church is adjacent to the school. The school holds several national awards and accreditations, including the RE Silver Quality Mark.

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

- The headteacher's Christian leadership, supported by a dedicated staff team and highly skilled governing body, means the drive for excellence and church school distinctiveness are paramount.
- A belief in the God-given value of each child creates an inclusive and welcoming Christian ethos which enables all to feel warmly accepted. In response, pupils display impeccable behaviour, considerate respect for others and a vibrant love of learning.
- The seamless partnership between school and church nourishes pupils' spiritual growth, strengthens the church's ministry with families and is a beacon of Christian witness in the community.

#### Areas to improve

- Develop the role of the ethos team in planning, leading and evaluating worship to enhance their spiritual flourishing and leadership skills and enrich all pupils' experience of collective worship.
- Ensure the robust monitoring and evaluation of teaching, learning and assessment become embedded in religious education (RE) in all key stages. This will enable the pace of improvement in teaching quality, pupils' progress and standards of achievement to be sustained.

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

Everyone involved at St Stephen's is engaged in its mission 'to be a school rooted and growing in Christian faith and committed to excellence'. Its nine core Christian values, including trust, thankfulness, friendship, compassion and forgiveness, were chosen by the whole school community and are now firmly embedded. Parents recognise that the core values permeate the school, as well as being a topic of conversation at home. Many pupils explain the impact

of these values on their thinking and behaviour. A Year 5 boy said, 'The values help us to learn how we can live better lives in the way Jesus wants us to.' A Year 6 girl remarked, 'We try to be Christian role models for the younger children. We trust, befriend and help and when things go wrong we forgive in a minute.' Relationships are caring and supportive. Pupils say they feel safe and loved in school. Their behaviour and politeness are exemplary. This Christ-centred family friendly ethos is highly conducive to pupils' learning. Staff have high expectations and, in the words of one Year 6 boy, 'make lessons exciting and challenging'. As a result, pupils' attitudes to learning are outstanding. They make good and better progress from their broadly typical starting points. The most able pupils make accelerated progress. The difference in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others is being reduced. Attainment in 2016 was above the national average.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is effectively promoted in RE, worship and the wider curriculum. Pupils respond well and express their ideas about faith and its influence in their own lives with increasing confidence. Classroom reflection areas and interactive values displays in public areas engage pupils and prompt their spiritual and moral awareness. The weekly Window on the World discussion assembly is skilfully facilitated. It enables pupils to deepen their understanding of Christian values, spiritual and moral issues and current affairs. Pupils are entrusted with responsibility, for example, in the school council and ethos group. This delegation builds their self-confidence and commitment to the school's aims. The choir performs locally, an involvement seen as part of its Christian service to the community. Pupils study Christianity and other world faiths in RE. As a result they have a growing awareness of religious diversity, cultural difference and shared values. They organise charity fund raising, linking it to the value of compassion. Support for Christian Aid and children in Mexico and Kenya via a Christian child sponsorship scheme develops their awareness of Christianity as a multi-cultural global faith.

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

Worship is a unique and valued aspect of the school's day. Pupils and adults enjoy coming together for worship and speak about the inspiration, strength and learning it provides. Worship themes are based on values, Bible stories, religious festivals and the Church's year. Worship also includes the teachings of Jesus which pupils particularly enjoy. They make connections between them and the core values.

Worship in school and church provides experience of Anglican practice. The Lord's Prayer and responses are used. Members of the enthusiastic ethos team say worship encourages them in their faith and helps them to think more deeply about what it means to be a Christian. In the words of one Year 6 pupil, 'We aren't forced to believe, it's ok just to be learning about it.' Pupils value prayer because it enables them to give thanks to God, ask for forgiveness and remember the needs of others as well as their own. The recent introduction of a prayer tree has increased pupils' enjoyment in contributing prayers to worship. They would like to do so more often. They value their classroom reflection areas and approach worship respectfully with quiet anticipation. They also sing joyfully which they say lifts their spirits in giving praise to God. Artefacts on the worship table are being developed to reflect the Trinity and pupils say this helps them to think about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The regular leading of worship by the rector and other parishioners both in school and at St Stephen's church deepens the spiritual experience of pupils. A Year 6 girl said, 'The church is like an extension of the school and we enjoy coming together there as a family.' Pupils lead worship in school and church occasionally, but it is largely an adult activity. The need to increase opportunities for pupils' involvement in worship is recognised as a way of enriching their experience and enabling them to feel more included.

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

A high priority is given to RE as a core curriculum subject and its importance in the life of the school is clearly understood. Pupils enjoy it and achieve very well. This is because RE teaching is consistently good and often outstanding. Pupils' progress and attainment are at least in line with and often above national expectations. The school received public recognition of these high standards when it was awarded the RE Silver Quality Mark in 2016. Teaching in RE enables pupils to learn about and from religion, reflect on new knowledge and appreciate the impact of faith in the lives of believers. Links with the school values and pupils' SMSC development are explicitly planned for and taught. Pupils are confident in making these links. RE successfully enables pupils to ask and reflect on the big questions of life, meaning and purpose. This allows them to develop and apply the higher order skills of enquiry, analysis, interpretation and reflection which deepens their thinking. Teachers are adept at asking challenging questions, leading class discussion and enabling pupils to learn from each other. This promotes pupils' skills of listening and empathy as well as their insight into spiritual and moral issues. Pupils have a good knowledge of Christianity. A programme of inter-faith learning and cross-cultural dialogue has been developed. Pupils have the opportunity to visit non-Christian places of worship. Consequently they are able to make comparisons between beliefs, practices and value systems across religions.

The subject leader has a clear vision for RE in a church school. Her conscientious, research-based expertise and leadership are increasing the effectiveness of the subject as the Diocese of Blackburn syllabus becomes embedded. Procedures for the rigorous and systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in RE are not yet sufficiently embedded in Key Stage 2. Progress in this area will ensure the full and continuing development of the leadership, quality of teaching and depth of pupils' learning in RE.

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

The highly-respected headteacher and the deputy head, staff and governors demonstrate and promote a Christian vision which infuses all areas of school life. The headteacher has high expectations of everyone in working to enable pupils to experience fullness of life through faith in action and Christian values. Her invitational and steadfast servant leadership inspires strong teamwork and has enabled staff and pupils to embrace change. Self-evaluation is effective and provides leaders with detailed understanding of the school's Christian distinctiveness. Church school strategic priorities appear in the school development plan. School policies demonstrate how Christian values are applied to school practice. The strong and effective governing body is vigilant, pro-active and visible in school. Its challenge and support enhances the effectiveness of leadership and promotes school development. The headteacher, rector and RE leader oversee the development of worship and RE provision. Governors ensure that collective worship and RE retain a high profile and are well led and resourced. Areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been successfully addressed.

Links with St Stephen's church create a strong relationship. This strengthens the school's Christian character and inspires its service at the heart of the community. Church groups use the school building and school worship takes place in church. The headteacher attends PCC meetings. The involvement of the rector increases the church's profile in the school which in turn has brought it into contact with more families. The development of Christian leadership is receiving attention. The induction of new governors and staff into their role in a church school is effective. The school has beneficial links with the diocese, local authority and its partner schools. Governors, leaders and teachers say this professional development enhances their expertise and effectiveness. The school knows the pupils and their families well and meets their pastoral needs through a culture of Christian nurturing. Parents say they are well-informed and declare the school to be welcoming, open and making a positive difference. They affirm that their children's happiness and success are rooted in the school's Christian qualities, ethos and values. 'The school enables them to do well, grow in faith and become more caring individuals,' said one parent.

SIAMS report March 2017, St Stephen's Church of England Primary School, Astley, Manchester M29 7BT