

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary and St Paul's Church of England Primary School	
Bryer Road, Prescot, Merseyside, L35 5DN	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Liverpool
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Knowsley
Date of inspection	03 May 2018
Date of last inspection	May 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 104453
Headteacher	Iain Parks
Inspector's name and number	Sue Mawdsley 930

School context

St Mary and St Paul's is a smaller than average voluntary aided primary school with nursery provision. The school is in an area of high deprivation with two-thirds of its pupils identified as disadvantaged. Rates of absence are higher than the national average. The number of pupils with special educational needs is much higher than the national figure. Pupils are of predominantly White British origin with very few pupils speaking English as an additional language. The school is a designated local provider for School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT). A new headteacher took up post in January 2018.

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

- School leaders have a compassionate and highly ambitious Christian vision for the school community, based on love, hope and building aspiration.
- Christian values, deeply rooted in Biblical teaching, have a significant impact on all aspects of school life. As a result, very strong personal relationships enable all to flourish and feel loved.
- Collective worship is highly valued and themes inspire a high level of spiritual and moral reflection which impacts powerfully on pupils' personal development.
- Partnerships with parents and the local community are strong, inclusive and highly supportive, leading to significant benefits for all groups, placing the school at the heart of its community.

Areas to improve

- In order to sustain leaders' ambitious Christian vision for the school, ensure the school's motto, mission statement and aims are explicitly linked to its core set of Christian values and clearly understood by the whole school community.
- Embed the newly devised assessment procedures in religious education (RE) to ensure that judgements of achievement are consistent and robust across the school. This will enable leaders to pinpoint confidently future improvements to teaching and learning.

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

At St Mary and St Paul's, Christian values are woven through the life of the school. They have a significant impact on the achievement and well-being of all learners in this nurturing and inclusive community. Staff work tirelessly to promote the value of education in inspiring ambition and hope for the future. They willingly provide extra support to nurture and engage vulnerable children and their families. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and achieve well from a wide range of starting points. There is a shared understanding by staff and children that a high quality education is a God given right for every child. Staff and pupils show love and respect for their school and the learning environment is bright and attractive. Special attention is given to displays, many of which highlight Christian values and celebrate pupils' achievements. The school's Christian distinctiveness shapes its approach to behaviour and attendance. Parents praise the school's open and fair approach based on a spirit of justice and reconciliation. There are extensive reward systems in place and staff work tirelessly to promote the value of education and reach out to families who have difficulty engaging with school. As a result, exclusion rates and attendance are improving. The role of the school as a centre for hope and aspiration is clearly expressed by leaders and parents. This secures effective personal relationships at all levels. Pupils appreciate the support they get from school staff and clearly see how teachers promote Christian values. One pupil said, 'Everyone here forgives you if you make a mistake. Teachers always look on the bright side and tell us to try and try again. They are always happy and hopeful.' Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education (SMSC) is woven through the life of the school and is rooted in a Christian vision. Reflection areas are prominent around the school and children can confidently articulate the impact of the Bible on their daily lives. On the day of the inspection children in Year 4 were wearing friendship bracelets they had made to ensure everyone felt special and included. 'Jesus showed friendship, even to the taxman,' said one pupil, 'so we want to make sure no one feels left out.' Although all members of the school community have a clear understanding of how the school's Christian values impact on their everyday lives there is less understanding of how the school's motto, purpose and mission statement contribute to its vision. The school has been proactive in developing the children's understanding and respect for diversity. It recognises this as an important focus for a school with families largely from a White British heritage. Opportunities to explore a range of faiths are built into the life of school. For example, pupils are able to talk about different places of worship. They speak with compassion about the need for all people to respect different beliefs. RE makes a significant contribution to the school's Christian distinctiveness. Even younger children are able to talk about values such as justice and, for example, how this was shown in the story of Moses and the flight from Egypt.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is highly valued and pupils speak movingly about the importance of joining together to sing, pray, celebrate and reflect. As a result of careful planning, all members of the school community can talk about the links between the school's Christian values, Biblical teaching and the impact this has on their daily lives. Themes raise aspirations and support the school's vision of hope and love. Daily whole school collective worship provides the springboard for deeper reflection back in class. As a result, pupils are able to talk about the impact of themes in a way that is relevant to their age and experience. Following a collective worship focus on the school's Christian value of justice, one Year 6 boy clearly understood the link with the story of the wisdom of Solomon. He explained thinking about the story helped him sort out a problem for a smaller child in school. Pupils value reflection areas in each classroom, which provide opportunities for personal prayer and reflection outside collective worship. They write their own prayers which are read and displayed in classrooms and on the hall prayer tree. One pupil described how prayer helped her if she was worried. 'You can write a prayer and let go of your worries by sharing them with God,' she explained. Parents feel welcome as they join celebration assembly each week and particularly enjoy the variety of school services in church that mark the liturgical year. One parent said, 'School services in church are very positive and accessible. We enjoy singing the hymns because we understand what they mean.' Biblical teaching and Anglican traditions are embedded in collective worship and pupils understand the significance of lighting a candle on the worship table which also holds a Bible and a cross. The Trinitarian nature of Christianity is explored by the range of adults leading worship, resulting in a growing understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Collective worship has a high status in school and is coordinated effectively by the deputy headteacher. It is well planned and led by a range of school staff and local clergy. There are explicit links in planning with the school's Christian values and the liturgical year. A detailed framework for monitoring and evaluation is in place. Since the last inspection a worship committee of children has been involved in planning and evaluating collective worship. Their feedback has led to improvements in pupil participation. They now join in with leading worship, making up and saying prayers and acting in role plays. To extend the rich experiences already in place, the school has rightly identified giving pupils more responsibility for leading worship as its next focus for improvement.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching and learning in RE has improved. Pupils now reflect on questions of meaning and purpose with confidence and insight. This is particularly evident in class RE scrapbooks, which show pupils using enquiry and evaluation skills effectively. Marking is now focussed on pupils' grasp of theological concepts and often includes prompts to encourage further questioning and response. As a result, achievement in RE is now in line with core subjects in the school. Pupils eagerly share their work. They point out many examples of the impact of religion on believers. The school's decision to focus on linking its Christian values, collective worship themes and RE has had a significant impact on developing pupils' understanding of Christianity. This holistic approach has led to pupils having a rich and insightful understanding of a range of Biblical stories and their significance. As a result, pupils engage well with RE, no matter what their starting point. Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge, leading to pupils making deeper links in Bible concepts, even at a young age. In a Year 2 lesson, for example, careful exploration of the road to Emmaus story by the teacher led to young learners suddenly understanding how the disciples knew they were with Jesus. Pupils were excited by the way His identity was revealed and their prior knowledge of the last supper enabled them to spot the clues effectively. Teachers are confident in tackling a range of more difficult concepts. For example, in a Year 5 lesson the teacher confidently used a modern film clip to explore the themes of death and heaven. Through carefully structured questioning, all pupils sensitively explored the concepts involved. RE is led enthusiastically by the assistant headteacher, ably supported by systems brought in by the new headteacher. It has a high status in school. Self-evaluation is insightful and leads directly to targeted school improvement, which is well planned and monitored. A rigorous whole school assessment and pupil tracking system has recently been introduced and there is sufficient data to show that achievement is in line with other subjects, including for different groups of learners. This has highlighted areas for improvement and the school has already begun to address these. The school has introduced systems to ensure that teacher judgements of attainment across the school are robust and consistent.

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

The recently appointed headteacher has already articulated a powerful and passionate Christian vision for the school, securely rooted in Biblical teaching. It is clearly understood by staff and governors and is shaping the school's role in its community. The headteacher is ably supported by an effective deputy and assistant headteacher, as well as hard working staff and governors. A deeply held common Christian purpose leads to a tangible sense of love and aspiration for every pupil and family. As a result, pupils achieve well and are helped to grow into responsible and compassionate citizens, including those who live in challenging circumstances. The carefully planned and inclusive curriculum is built on the school's Christian vision and has a significant impact on meeting the needs of the wide range of learners. Leaders understand the increasing role of the school as the hub of a community where other local services have declined in recent years. The chair of governors described the school as an 'anchor' for the community in uncertain times. One example of this is parents' overwhelming appreciation for the support the school gives them, especially in times of difficulty. 'Teachers know our children well,' said one parent. 'My child is happy and flourishing here and the head is quick to sort out any problems.' Parents and pupils appreciate the efforts of school leaders in improving their health and well-being. For example, they speak of the benefits of the school's involvement in the national FareShare food scheme. Governors know the school well and give an effective balance of challenge and support for school leaders. They have a clear perception of their strategic role in a church school. Self-evaluation processes are well articulated to governors, resulting in a shared understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Although the school's vision is confidently articulated through a comprehensive range of Christian values, its current motto, mission statement and aims are not so well understood. The new headteacher has rightly identified his appointment as an opportunity for review. The stable and committed staff share in the Christian vision for the school and see themselves as making a real difference to the lives of its children and families. 'This is a rewarding place to be,' said one member of staff. 'We love all our children and we want them to do the very best they can.' As a local SCITT school, leaders effectively support professional development at all levels. Young teachers are regularly promoted from within and are nurtured in the ethos of the school. Arrangements for religious education and collective worship meet statutory requirements. Partnerships with the church and diocese are strong. Since the last inspection the school has achieved a diocesan church school partnership award. Links with the adjoining nursery are mutually beneficial. There is a strong joint school and church vision for St Mary and St Paul's to reach out to serve its community and children and engage them in valuing education from the youngest age.

SIAMS report, May 2018 St Mary and St Paul's Church of England Primary School, Prescott, L35 5DN