



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Holy Trinity C of E School

Kenyon Street
Ashton-under-Lyne
OL6 7DU

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Manchester

Local authority: Tameside

Dates of inspection: 26 June 2015

Date of last inspection: 10 March 2010

School's unique reference number: 106244

Headteacher: Simon Brereton

Inspector's name and number: Barbara Easton (Assessor: Jo Fageant 104)

School context

Holy Trinity is an average sized church school serving a pupil population which is 96% Muslim. It is in an area of significant social and economic deprivation with a high proportion of children qualifying for free school meals. Over 90% learners have English as an additional language and the proportion of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) is above average. Attainment on entry is below national average. The local church, with which the school shares a site, has recently discontinued Sunday services but is used midweek and for community work.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Holy Trinity as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The Christian commitment to provision of 'life in all its fullness' is successfully challenging underperformance and raising attainment for children in this community.
- The focus on rooted Christian values - articulating, embedding and living them out, means that Holy Trinity has a far reaching impact on Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural (SMSC) growth.
- The school is a model of harmonious Christian community living, with the result that children accept people's differences and grow in respect both for themselves and others. The impact of this is extensive because the school is 'at the heart of the community'.
- The school is respected as a paradigm of what it means to be Christian in this context – because leaders speak with a clear Christian voice while walking sympathetically alongside the people of other faiths who form its community.

Areas to improve

- Enhance opportunities for informal, spontaneous worship so that children, as individuals and small groups, have opportunities for personal reflection and spiritual self-expression.
- Improve systems for monitoring and evaluating collective worship, so that a wide range of participants contribute to its review and further development.

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

Values are at the heart of Holy Trinity and deeply embedded as the touchstone for every aspect of school life, a frequent reference point in work in lessons as well as in worship and displays. The school is strong in expressing its Christian identity and its values are firmly rooted in an expression of Christian theology and tradition which is accessible to the whole school community. Children, even the youngest, can explain the school's ideals and talk impressively about applying them in school and beyond. So, for example, Year 3 children explained that we should welcome others 'with open arms' and 'always forgive'. Children clearly enjoy and value belonging to the Holy Trinity family. As a consequence, standards of attendance and behaviour are high and there is a genuine spirit of mutual support and encouragement. Children voluntarily go out of their way to help others and are patient with each other. A particular strength of the Christian character of the school is the contribution it makes to mutual respect and interfaith understanding, not just for the children in the school but spreading out into the local community. 'Being in the school has changed children's perceptions' of people who are different from them and 'significantly broken down barriers'. The school is a model of how people of faith can live and develop positively alongside one another and 'people are fully confident to be fully themselves'. Religious education and worship make a particular contribution to this. The school has an established reputation as embodying Christian principles of care for others and this is strongly valued by stakeholders. Provision made for a child with a disability was highly praised and vulnerable and disadvantaged learners do well alongside others. Parents experience the school as a place where 'everybody is safe' and value the personal and timely attention given to concerns by senior staff who are 'so, so kind'. The Christian principle of 'going the extra mile' is evidenced by the extensive programme of out-of-hours activities and partnerships with other agencies. In recent years, Holy Trinity has successfully refocused its work on learning and teaching and significantly raised children's achievement, tackling the challenges of above average SEN and communication needs, socio-economic disadvantage and low attainment on entry. The school clearly articulates this commitment to academic success as the Christian mission of a Church of England school. The influence of the school's Christian character in learning promotes enthusiasm, wonder and reflection amongst youngsters who go home curious and full of questions: 'children who come to this school always have something interesting to say when they come home'. Parents are embraced by this drive for learning and feel empowered and supported to work in partnership with the school to help their children learn. Through this, the school makes an important contribution in a community where some adults have had only very limited access to the opportunities of formal education.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The behaviour and engagement of children in worship, and their reverence for it, is exemplary. They sing with energy and pray with sincerity - the vigour with which the whole school launched into the hymn 'He who would valiant be' was very moving. Worship is given a high importance within the school and maintains an appropriate, and increasing, focus on Christian theology and practice with the result that even very young children can clearly express the importance of Jesus to Christians. Children enjoy leading worship, are supportive of each others' participation and confident to share their own vulnerability in each others' presence. Regular worship in school reinforces and celebrates the school's values, reflecting on the Christian foundation. This has a significant impact on the common life of the whole school community and contributes strongly to SMSC development. The planning of worship is effective and reflective but there is little evidence of formal evaluation or of encouraging participation in monitoring. There are, as yet, only limited opportunities for prayer outside collective worship. Special worship such as at Easter or Remembrance centres on Bible readings and strongly traditional hymns, while being varied, thoughtful and creative. Services in the church, community or, occasionally, cathedral extend children's experiences and bring them into contact with a different range of worshippers.

These are well supported by parents who find them interesting and see their value for children.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious education has gained a high profile in the school. All staff shared in the review and development of the subject so that everyone working with children in the classroom is able to promote a shared expectation of excellent knowledge understanding and personal reflection. Significant support is given to planning so that lessons are inspiring, creative and well resourced. The work of learners in lessons is impressive in relation to national expectations and shows a high level of challenge. For example, learners in Year 3 undertook a testing comparative study of the story of Noah/Nuh, using sophisticated vocabulary to reflect on his feelings and identify the qualities which he showed in response to God's call. They then related these to the values lived out in the school and spontaneously made links with a recent assembly. Learners 'really enjoy RE', are inspired by it and offer very articulate and reflective responses to the opportunities given. The curriculum content enables learners to acquire a thorough knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith and reflect on it in relation to their own understanding of Islam. Remembering work on Easter, children spoke about the Christian belief that Jesus is the Son of God and that he 'is alive – here!' Recent opportunities to extend this learning into the less familiar territory of Hinduism and Judaism have had a significant impact on the SMSC development of learners so that they show a respectful openness when encountering the religions of others. Commendable energy is put into delivering a programme of visits and visitors as a 'basic entitlement' for every child. The leadership and management of RE is reflective and responsive. It is because of the high quality of leadership that the subject is securely founded and able continuously and confidently to develop. Issues in the last inspection, where they remain appropriate, have been securely addressed, with strong work ongoing in the area of assessment. Subject leadership is expert, well focused and showing significant impact.

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

Led by the headteacher, and supported by governors of all backgrounds, the school articulates a powerful vision for its work which is distinctive and firmly rooted in Holy Trinity's Christian tradition while sensitive to the school's local community. People interviewed spoke of the school exemplifying what it means to be Christian in this context. The strength of commitment of the head is particularly valued: 'Parents want to know that the head holds firm to what matters so they are confident about the value of faith in the school'. The school is a strong and cohesive community because of the way school leaders have worked with other stakeholders to define common values which are embraced by all, within and beyond the school. The 'Holy Trinity Way' creates a powerful loyalty among its members to the school and to each other. Governors speak of how distinctively Christian perspectives have informed their work, such as striving 'to model forgiveness' in the behaviour policy. They have intentionally 'worked at being a place where everyone comes together' with the result that community cohesion is exemplary and extends beyond the school: 'families all feel that they can be together and listen to others'. In an area of considerable social deprivation, perceptive school self evaluation has enabled school leaders clearly to identify the improvement of academic achievement for the children of the community as their 'vital and valuable role'. They recognise this is 'as much part of Christian mission' as the ethos of care for which the school has long been valued because, through transformed life chances, children will be able to overcome economic disadvantage and access life in all its fullness. School leadership is insightful, agile and constantly reflective and this energy and vision have maintained the relevance and popularity of this church school 'at the heart of the community'. A similar approach to religious education has enabled the subject to flourish and make a strong contribution to the wider work of the school, while the strengthening of collective worship has reaffirmed the school's Christian identity and embedded SMSC development.