

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St John with St Mark Church of England Primary School

Athlone Avenue, Bury BL9 5EE

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Diocese

Manchester

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Local authority

Bury

Date of inspection

26 January 2018

Date of last inspection

June 2013

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Controlled 133929

Headteacher

Steven Ollis

Inspector's name and number

Gail Fullbrook 530

School context

St John with St Mark school is a larger than average primary school with nursery provision. The school serves a community of high deprivation close to the centre of Bury. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is significantly above the national average. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities or who have an education health care plan is below the national average. The current headteacher joined the school in September 2016.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St John with St Mark as a Church of England school are outstanding

- This is a school where differences are valued, diversity is celebrated and everyone is treated equally. As a result, pupils show maturity and love in the outstanding relationships they enjoy with one another.
- The highly effective, inspirational and distinctively Christian leadership of the headteacher, supported by senior leaders, staff and governors, drives all aspects of school improvement.
- Pupils' extremely good behaviour and attitudes to learning are rooted in their clarity of understanding of the school's core Christian values.
- Outstanding, inclusive collective worship has a significant impact on pupils' personal development and spiritual growth. As a result, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is excellent.
- Through links with the church and the local community, pupils demonstrate an impressive understanding of the value of koinonia. This is demonstrated in support for local charities and the creativity of their approach to fundraising.

Areas to improve

- Increase the involvement of governors in the process of monitoring the school's Christian distinctiveness to support the school in further developing its outstanding practice.
- Ensure that key policies reflect that the school's excellent practice founded upon Christian values.

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

The school's distinctive vision of being a safe and welcoming place, where God's love is reflected in the respect and care shown, is deeply embedded in school life. The importance of the school's Christian character is recognised and appreciated by all members of the school community. A clear and focussed approach to developing understanding of Christian values threads through the life of the school. The values are upheld within and beyond the classroom through discussion, displays celebrating their importance and by Values Ambassadors. The Ambassadors' role of teaching about the values in worship and promoting them through the school day ensures that they have a high profile in school life. As a result, pupils own the values and live by them. An older pupil commented that, 'Our values make things better in the classroom and the playground.' Pupils freely discuss the biblical stories that underpin Christian values, and verses from the Bible and Qur'an are used to reinforce their importance to Christians and Muslims.

As a result of the wide range of responsibilities, experiences and opportunities enjoyed by pupils, their SMSC development is a significant strength of the school. Eco Warriors encourage everyone to care for the environment. School councillors represent their peers in discussions about school developments. Pupils sing enthusiastically, learn to play musical instruments and experience a wide range of recorded and live music.

The inclusion manager, pastoral worker and speech therapist are all outward signs of the school's commitment to the well-being and personal development of pupils and their families. Where concerns arise about attendance, behaviour or the well-being of a pupil, the school's Christian character is reflected in the ways in which pupils and families are supported. Where pupils join the school speaking little or no English, Christian love is shared as staff and pupils work together to help the pupils and their families settle in. A younger pupil shared that, 'Making them feel happy makes me feel happy too.' This was followed by an older pupil's comment that 'everyone's self-esteem is important in our school'.

Pupils are enthusiastic learners and talk of 'liking to feel challenged'. They feel secure in their inclusive school where sharing God's love with everyone is a fundamental principle. Consequently pupils know making mistakes is an important part of learning. As a result, they are enthusiastic and committed learners. All pupils, including the significant proportion of pupils who join the school speaking little or no English, make good progress. In the key subjects of reading and maths, the percentage of pupils reaching age-expected levels of attainment is in line with national averages.

In this outstanding multi-cultural, multi-faith school, pupils are respectful of each other and keen to learn from their peers. In discussions around issues of faith pupils readily share their understanding of all that the different faiths represented in their school have in common. They recognise the importance of the church in their local community and through their link with a Christian orphanage in Kenya, recognise that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith.

The impact of effective religious education (RE) extends far beyond subject boundaries. Pupils are able to apply their knowledge of biblical story and Christian teaching to a wide range of every day occurrences. They are proud to belong to a multi-cultural world faith school and recognise the special insight this gives them into their local community and the wider world.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Engaging and inspiring worship lies at the heart of school life. Each day pupils and staff explore the school's core Christian values, listen to biblical stories and reflect on big questions. Music, a strength of the school, makes a significant contribution to the worshipful experience of pupils. Well-chosen songs allow pupils of all faiths to offer praise. Violin and piano accompaniments provide space and time for reflection on the story and big question of the week. Muslim pupils talk with confidence of making links between Christian teaching and Islam. Where possible verses from Qur'an are used to support the week's theme. For example, when considering the importance of truthfulness a verse from Proverbs, 'whoever takes crooked paths will be found out' was shared alongside words from the Qur'an, 'if you only do one thing, tell the truth'. Key Stage I pupils, when reflecting on the worship later in the day, reflected on the importance of honesty in their friendships with one another.

Pupils are familiar with a range of Christian symbols. The three candles lit each day remind them of the centrality of the Trinity to Christians and of Jesus as light of the world. The excellent Values Ambassadors regularly plan and lead worship in creative and imaginative ways. For example, when thinking about what they need to live each day, the Ambassadors performed a drama contrasting the life of a homeless woman with their own family lives. Pupils are encouraged to share their responses with one another in worship and do so quietly and respectfully. They are familiar with most key festivals of the Church year. Pupils confidently share their understanding of traditional prayers such as the Lord's Prayer and the Grace and recognise the importance of Holy Communion to Christians. Times of prayer and reflection are woven through worship and the school day. Classroom reflection areas are used appropriately and serve as a place where pupils can offer personal prayer. Many pupils talk of the importance of

daily prayer in their lives and some talk of times when prayer has brought comfort and resolution at difficult times. Pupils have an age appropriate understanding of important theological concepts such as forgiveness and faith. Older pupils, where a new approach to teaching RE is being explored, are familiar with a number of core concepts. Worship is planned thematically, incorporates biblical story and time to reflect and develops understanding of the school's core Christian values, vision and mission statement. A wide range of people, including pupils, develop worship themes through the week in interesting and thoughtful ways. Systems for monitoring and evaluating worship support those who lead and manage worship effectively. Feedback, both on the day and over time, enables the school to refine its plans and develop new ways of worshipping in response to suggestions from pupils. In this inclusive multi-faith school every effort is made to ensure that all pupils find worship relevant and thought provoking.

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

The distinctive vision of this outstanding school is lived out with confidence by all members of the school community. The headteacher, supported by a committed staff team, relentlessly places Christian values at the heart of decision making. The school is rightly proud that its diversity is its strength and this is reflected in the deep knowledge staff have about pupils, their families and their culture. It is exemplified in the many ways in which the school goes far beyond what might be expected of them to enable pupils to learn and enjoy school. The school's curriculum is planned around a series of big questions where pupils play an active part in planning their own learning. The big questions link with RE themes and worship plans and as a result, the curriculum is both broad and distinctively Christian.

Whilst current monitoring and evaluation procedures effectively support the school in planning and developing its practice, governors are not yet sufficiently involved in the process to enable them to be good critical friends. They are however, a visible presence in school, with many making significant contributions to the life and work of the school. Areas for development identified at the last inspection have been addressed with some actions leading to innovative ongoing practice. Examples of this include the role of the Values Ambassadors and pupils' knowledge and understanding of the life and witness of major world faith groups.

Teachers new to the school recognise the quality of the professional support given to equip them for their work in a multi-faith church school. Through diocesan training and local school partnerships, key staff regularly have the opportunity to share good practice and to learn from others. The school's RE and worship teams are well supported by the diocese and ensure that both areas of school life meet national expectations.

Partnerships with the local church and community, supported by the links each class has with a local charity, make significant contribution to school life and enrich the lives of pupils. The vicar's support, both as governor and spiritual leader, is clearly welcomed by staff and pupils. Members of the church team support the school in a number of ways, enhancing the school's Christian character. Parents are supportive of the school. They find staff approachable and know that any concerns they have will be quickly and effectively addressed. They are appreciative of the school's inclusivity and the range of opportunities their children have at the school.

SIAMS report January 2018 St John with St Mark CE Primary School, Bury, BL9 5EE