



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	Wright Street, Platt Bridge, Wigan WN2 3NX
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Liverpool
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Outstanding
Local authority	Wigan
Name of multi-academy trust/ federation	N/A
Date of inspection	20 October 2016
Date of last inspection	September 2011
School's unique reference number	106447
Headteacher	Gillian Talbot
Inspector's name and number	Tracy Beatty

School context

St Mary's is an average –sized primary school. There is currently more than one class in each year group in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. St Mary's moved to a new building in April 2015 due to growth in pupil numbers and this has provided improved facilities for pupils and staff. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average, as is the proportion eligible for pupil premium. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage with a small proportion from minority backgrounds. St Mary's achieved the Church School Partnership award in September 2014.

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

- This school is a beacon of God's love and hope in its community which enables every child to thrive regardless of background.
- The dedicated staff led by the inspirational headteacher and her deputy are united and effective. They fulfil their mission 'to teach children to build successful relationships, have clear Christian values and principles and live by them'.
- Christian values are not only articulated by all members of the community, but also truly influence how they live. This has a strong impact on children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.
- The very effective and approachable pastoral support team ensures families are well supported. This creates true partnership within which the needs of every child are met and differences diminished.

Areas to improve

- Develop and expand 'Activity Church' so it more effectively brings church to pupils and their families.
- Enhance and enrich the physical environment of the new school to proclaim beyond doubt its Christian identity.

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

This school is an oasis of peace in its community and generates an excitement for learning echoed by staff and pupils at all levels. A Year 5 pupil said 'Our school is amazing, we love to learn and everybody cares about each other'. The school values are rooted firmly in Christianity, fully embedded and lived out by all members of the school community on a daily basis. Staff passionately articulate a shared Christian vision. They effectively introduce pupils, many of whom have no prior knowledge, to God, gospel values and worship. This is reinforced by parents who say their children teach them 'fascinating things about God and the Bible'. Staff and pupils speak openly and confidently about how the demonstration of Christian values by leaders has made a positive difference to their spiritual journeys. The behaviour of the children is exemplary. Abiding by the core Christian values is a non-negotiable. On the rare occasions pupils display challenging behaviour, staff respond with patience and 'pull out all the stops' to meet their needs. They hold an unwavering commitment to forgiveness, fresh starts and renewed hospitality. Pupils are given regular opportunities to demonstrate Christian values in leadership roles as prefects and through 'Enterprise' where aspirations are raised and perseverance is developed. Pupils describe their school as a 'generous' one, committed to charitable giving as an expression of Christian values. Christian values such as thankfulness and perseverance are evidenced through interactive religious education (RE) displays, prayer walls, and worship corners in every classroom as well as pervading the curriculum. These features are less obvious in other parts of the school building. This strongly contributes to the excellent social, emotional, spiritual and cultural development of pupils within a challenging context. The foundation stage leader showed the impact the school has on personal, social and emotional development in Reception where children enter at exceptionally low starting points. Pupils in all year groups make accelerated progress. This is as a result of a commitment to removing barriers to learning, resulting in standards that are above national average when they leave. This intense input is coupled with an introduction to God and Christian values where a climate of open questioning is created. The excellent RE provision successfully underpins the development of pupils' spirituality and the school's Christian character. Pupils are proud of their RE work and a clear thread between this and collective worship is evident. Pupils relate Bible stories to their own lives. One child remarked that 'hearing about how Paul and Silas were joyful in prison made me want to be positive for my mum'. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the Trinity and of other faiths, enriched by extra-curricular visits to different places of worship.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is high quality, high profile and central to school life. It is very well planned with regular biblical input that shapes behaviour. The styles and routines in worship kindle a sense of awe and wonder. Expectations for behaviour in worship are of the highest standard. This creates a time of respectful tranquillity and glad participation that everyone benefits from. Staff are eager to share the support they receive in leading collective worship. They are incredibly positive about the investment of the headteacher in their training and for giving them the opportunities to lead worship in their own style. This guarantees the engagement of pupils. A Key Stage 2 teacher said 'I am excited about worship because the leaders are. We have been enthused by them and love it, particularly teacher choice week.' All pupils said they enjoyed worship and demonstrated impressive understanding of the Bible and prayer. A Year 4 pupil said 'we don't just ask God for things, we pray to show him we're worshipping him, that we love him, and we're thankful for everything he's done'. Pupils are inspired by collective worship. In the words of one staff member 'they are very spiritual and have a desire to talk about God which doesn't come from home'. All members of the school community value worship as special, when the school comes together as a family. Pupils affirmed how much they enjoy it and how their teachers always make it interesting with visuals and puppets. Monitoring has a genuine purpose and has led to improvement of collective worship that better meets the needs of the growing school. For example, the leaders have introduced new songs and smaller worship sessions in response to pupil evaluation and growing numbers. Leaders have been proactive in securing clergy visits following the relocation to the new school building. The Reverend Rachel stresses the mutual benefit of working together and how it brings her great joy to visit school every week. She commented on

how staff make a huge effort in planning vibrant acts of worship that cause pupils to really think. Pupils participate regularly in leading aspects of worship and evaluating it. The school has recently introduced a worship group which will develop this further. The use of candles, crosses, music, responses and images that promote spirituality all contribute to an understanding of Anglican traditions.

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

Unity, compassion and teamwork characterise the very effective leadership at St Mary's. Genuine value is placed on every individual resulting in staff at all levels being fully committed to the Christian vision. Succession planning is always at the forefront of governors' minds, ensuring they are providing opportunities to develop and distribute leaders without watering down the vision. This includes high quality diocesan training. Recruitment is rigorous and involves questions that reveal each person's commitment to uphold Christian values. The chair of governors spoke of how the Headteacher was appointed in part because of her strong distinctively Christian vision for the school. This visionary leadership has enabled her to build a strong senior leadership team and a rapport with the effective governing body and leaders at all levels. All follow her example. She has instilled a desire to assist every child to reach their potential and aim high. This has resulted in above average progress for the majority of pupils in all areas by the end of KS2. School improvement priorities have included keeping close links with St Mary's parish despite the relocation away from the church. This has been achieved. The shared vision is stronger than ever and the school is continually building on its strengths. As a result of the passionate endeavour to support families pastorally, links with the community are particularly strong. Parents say the pastoral team is at the heart of the school, never too busy to listen or help. They are particularly appreciative of members of the team being available at the beginning and end of the school day. This enables them to meet parents, show Christian care and work in partnership with them. The pupils regularly visit another local church and a team of three clergy 'bring church to the school'. Partnerships include Eucharist and confirmation classes, displays in church and regular services in the church building. The recently-introduced 'Activity Church' is intended to strengthen the impact of this collaboration. Clergy claim staff 'do not hesitate' to ask for prayer support or help in answering the searching questions children ask, such as 'How can I know God's peace?' As a consequence, the pupils demonstrated an admirable understanding of the Christian faith. Their Christian compassion and empathy are demonstrated through their support for an extensive range of charities. A Year 4 boy said 'We are thankful school. We love to give to others who have less than us'. Pupils talk about how much their teachers love them and how they know they are loved by God. This is a strong affirmation that leaders and staff here have created a safe haven for the children in their care.

SIAMS report, October 2016, St Mary's CE Primary School, Ince, Wigan WN2 3NX