

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

<b>Blackpool St. John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School</b>	
Church Street Blackpool FY1 3NX	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Blackburn</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Blackpool
Date of inspection	9 February 2017
Date of last inspection	July 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided Primary 119595
Headteacher	Sandra Hall
Inspector's name and number	Susan Cliffe 832

### School context

Blackpool St. John's Church of England Primary School is a smaller than average primary school located in the town centre of Blackpool. The school is popular with places for the 2016 intake being oversubscribed. The vast majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. There are rising levels of deprivation which are significantly above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is higher than the national average. In recent months, the school has been without an incumbent. Since the last denominational inspection, a new religious education (RE) co-ordinator has been appointed.

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

- The headteacher's outstanding Christian vision and the dedication of staff and governors have a positive impact on the standards within school.
- Embedded Christian values, such as empathy and courage, underpin the exemplary behaviour of the pupils.
- Pupils are inspired by the high quality RE and collective worship provision due to the important status of these areas within this church school.
- The explicit Christian character of the school permeates all aspects of school life and nurtures the school community.

### Areas to improve

- Cultivate further community links outside the local area to increase pupils' knowledge and understanding of other cultures and faiths and Christianity as a world faith.
- Increase the involvement of pupils in the evaluation of collective worship in order to ensure ownership and drive improvement.

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

The school's mission, 'Everyone matters in God's world' is known and embraced by the school community. The core Christian values, such as empathy and love, influence every facet of school life. This is a school that the previous curate described as 'one that believes in its mission statement'. This mission fosters the excellent relationships and the positive attitudes found within school which are complemented by the exemplary behaviour of the pupils. The chair of governors stated that, 'Pupils take away with them the Christian ethos and values they have experienced at our school.' Members of the school community feel 'listened to' and parents particularly value the input from the inclusion-pastoral team which tailor-make provision for families. Achievement is high, with outstanding progress given the pupils' below average starting points. Staff attribute this to the positive expectations they have of each pupil and the Christian character of the school. They see this as a calling to bring out the best in each individual. Pupils are extremely positive about their school, feel safe and are, consequently, keen to attend. 'The values help us all to get on and do our best,' commented a Year 3 pupil. This attitude fosters the school's calm, respectful environment. The varied curriculum, into which the Christian values are threaded, is inspiring and leads to a pupil's comment that, 'Lessons are never boring.' Supported by excellent RE provision, the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is strong. Pupils are excited and challenged by RE which contributes very positively to the school's Christian character. There is good provision for them to explore their spirituality. The reflection areas, Christian displays such as 'Life is a journey' and high quality worship impact positively on this development. As a result, pupils are willing to respond to challenging questions and are comfortable expressing their thoughts. The school generously supports, as part of its Christian duty, charitable causes such as the Samaritan's Purse and Children in Need. A parent explained that the current value of empathy led to her child giving a homeless man a chocolate bar. As the pupil gave it to the man, he told the man, 'God loves you.' Pupils are respectful of cultures and beliefs other than their own and are aware that we are all 'God's children'. They have a developing appreciation of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. However, the school recognises that this understanding is not, as yet, outstanding and school leaders are keen to provide stronger links with Christian groups overseas. This is a highly cohesive school community in which all feel valued regardless of ability or disadvantage.

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

Collective worship is firmly rooted in Christian values and Bible teachings and holds a very important place within the school. It is at the heart of all that the school does 'providing spiritual nourishment for all'. Members of staff state that they can 'feel the spirituality' during collective worship. One pupil explained, 'Worship is fun and it helps me to learn how to please Jesus.' Pupils are enthusiastically engaged in worship and this has direct impact upon the positive relationships, attitudes and care for others found in school. A Christian value is focused upon every four weeks and staff and pupils are given challenges to complete linked to the current value. Examples of such challenges are secretly supporting someone in school or imagining walking in someone else's shoes. This initiative is enjoyed by all and has, as one teacher explained, helped everyone to live the values. Worship is well planned and delivered with the increasing involvement of the pupil led worship wardens. They meet each week after school to plan, with the headteacher, for forthcoming services related to the Christian calendar. In addition, class led worship for the whole school has resulted in the increased confidence and involvement of pupils. Due to the outstanding worship in school, the pupils show a very good understanding of the person of Jesus, Christian faith and Anglican practice. Despite the recent absence of an incumbent, the school has used a variety of visitors from neighbouring churches and schools to ensure that worship remains of a high quality. This provision was also in direct response to the pupils' request for more visitors to lead worship. As a result, pupils now see worship as more varied and interesting. Evaluation leads to improvement within worship. However, this is an area which the school has already identified for further development. The involvement of the pupils in gathering sample feedback from those present after each worship is yet to be embedded. All members of staff take part in worship and many parents attend services held in church such as the leavers' service, Christmas concerts and Harvest. This has supported the growth of the spiritual development of the school community. Pupils have an understanding of the Trinity and this has been nurtured by it being a focus for discussion, worship and through display within school. One pupil explained, 'It's the Holy Spirit, Jesus and God all put together.' Personal prayer is enhanced by the reflection areas in each classroom. These are seen as special areas within school; a pupil shared, 'If you want to be quiet or pray, we go to the reflection area.' The school is keen to develop more areas for reflection together with the increased contribution of the pupils to informal and formal prayer within worship.

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

RE is recognised as a core subject and has a high profile in school leading pupils to progress well within the subject. Pupils' attitudes to RE are overwhelmingly positive. They find it creative and thought-provoking due to challenging questions. The variety of tasks set, including visits and drama, enhance the pupils' love of RE and consequently their learning. This has led to high achievement in RE. It is in line with other core subjects and this is supported by the excellent teaching and behaviour of the pupils. 'I love RE because I answer big questions and it's fun,' enthused a Year 5 pupil. In lessons, pupils are attentive, give thoughtful responses and work well with each other. A governor shared that RE in school gives pupils the chance to explore their feelings in a safe place. RE scrapbooks and the RE portfolio of pupils' work show evidence of appropriate development across a range of skills. The ambitious subject leader, new in post since the last denominational inspection, is well informed. This is due to her enthusiasm for the subject and attendance at diocesan training and cluster meetings. She shares information effectively with staff and governors and this has contributed significantly to the high standards within the subject. Systems for planning, monitoring and assessment are effective and have been put in place following diocesan advice. RE is a focus for discussion during circle review when staff talk to pupils about their opinions as they take part in book scrutinies together. This leads to improvement of standards through dialogue. Also, provision is changed in response to requests. For example, RE now contains more drama activities. Governors are kept fully informed about the impact of RE teaching within school and the subject facilitates the exploration of Christian values. RE impacts significantly on the SMSC development of the school. Written work from the pupils illustrates thoughtful sensitivity. For example, a Year 4 pupil wrote, 'Jesus is my light and he guides me through bad memories.' A parent commented that as a result of RE, their child likes to discuss really big questions at home such as, 'What does the kingdom of God look like?' Pupils have a thorough understanding of the Bible and life of Jesus due to effective teaching and high expectations. This is enriched by input such as that of the parish curate during lessons. The study of other faiths and visits to places of worship, such as a mosque and Buddhist temple, supports the pupils' growing cultural awareness. It also strengthens their understanding of other faiths. The pupils particularly enjoyed visits to the synagogue and the building of a sukkah in class which brought the Jewish faith to life. The school is committed to ensuring the understanding of faiths and cultures is further embedded.

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

The Christian vision of the headteacher, senior leadership team and the governors drives the school forward. This vision is discussed with the school community and is shared and fully embedded into all areas of school life. A member of staff commented that the Christian values ensure that the school is fully inclusive and places the pupil at the centre of all school does. There is a strong sense of wellbeing within the school community and the school is, as the headteacher explained, 'an oasis of safety'. The curriculum is underpinned by Christian values and this impacts on the excellent behaviour seen in school. Values such as empathy have considerable impact on the high standards of achievement and caring relationships enjoyed by the school. Staff and pupils see the headteacher as approachable and caring and she, along with the governors, ensures that the staff are nurtured as future leaders. The school has good systems for self-evaluation which lead to high standards within school. Areas identified for improvement during the previous denominational inspection have been addressed. Parents are highly appreciative of the school stating that school goes above and beyond teaching their children. 'They helped my family through really difficult times. They sat with me for ages. They really care,' remarked one mother. Consequently, the school is seen as being a supportive hub for the community where, as a governor stated, 'Everyone matters and all are respected.' Links with the church have been strengthened by the successful establishment by parishioners of the Chill Zone group for parents. They meet in school 'to share the journey to God'. The parish and school have coped admirably in the absence of an incumbent by enlisting the support of parish and other churches. The inclusive, welcoming nature of this Christian school has led to more family involvement within the parish. The school has forged a strong partnership with the diocese, with the school receiving advice and training, ensuring the professional development of staff. This has led to the high standard of provision seen in RE and worship which enjoy their place at the heart of school life. Both areas meet statutory requirements and are well supported. The school has rightly made links locally, nationally and globally to extend the understanding pupils have of the wider world. They have effective contact with the Scripture Union group and local high school chaplain, both of whom lead worship half-termly. Forest schools are promoted via a local church school who share their outdoor provision. Nationally, there are partnerships with schools in Manchester and Staffordshire. Globally, the school hosts an annual visit from African drummers and supports toilet twinning in Burundi, Africa. Pupils speak with empathy about the charities they support and feel it is only right to do this as Christians. St. John's School also has a developing link, shared with the parish, with a South African township. However, the school is continuing to focus on the wider community to embed global understanding further. Extra-curricular provision is excellent along with the variety of trips provided which enrich the pupils' experience. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is excellent.