



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Martin's Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

St Martin's Road

Fitton Hill

Oldham

OL8 2PY

Diocese: Manchester

Local authority: Oldham

Date of inspection: 1st October 2014

Date of last inspection: 8th December 2009

School's unique reference number: 105703

Headteacher: Mrs Helen Woodward

Inspector's name and number: Stephen Burrow

Inspector Number: 622

School context

St Martin's CE is a slightly above average sized primary school. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for extra funding through the pupil premium is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils whose learning needs are supported at school action is broadly average and at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. The school has strong links with the local church community and has achieved the International Schools Award, Enhanced Platinum Healthy Schools and Sainsbury's Silver Schools Games Award.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Martin's CE, as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Outstanding leadership by the headteacher and excellent support from staff and governors demonstrates a clear Christian vision, strongly promoting the school's Christian character and mission.
- Exceptionally strong, caring and nurturing relationships, based on Christian values support all members of the school family.
- The explicit Christian character of the school, demonstrated through the Christian symbols and high quality displays of pupils' work, creates the very positive, welcoming and supportive atmosphere felt by all who visit.
- The strong, mutually supportive links with the local church, make a significant contribution to the school's Christian character and to the spiritual development of all members of its community.

Areas to improve

- Establish ways for pupils to be more involved in the planning of worship, so that their ideas and thoughts can be shared and discussed with a view to enriching the experience of worship.

- Further refine the evaluation of collective worship to include all who deliver worship, especially the pupils, in order to inform future planning and lead to ongoing improvement.

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

Christian values are explicitly expressed and the deeply embedded Christian distinctiveness is clearly understood by all members of the school family. These values which enhance the spiritual development of all members of the school community, are understood, articulated and embraced by everyone. As a result, outstanding mutually, nurturing and supportive relationships exist throughout the school. Consequently pupils feel safe, happy, valued and cared for. When asked what is special about St Martin's, one pupil commented, 'When you walk into school, you immediately feel that you are not just an individual, you are already part of our circle of friends.' All agree that the mission statement, together with the focus on Christian love as the core value, provides the key essence and purpose of the school. Pupils talk confidently about the mission statement known to everyone as 'SHINE'. They were involved in its creation and everyone is encouraged and supported to live out its messages. The school's curriculum is rich and varied and provides a wide range of experiences both within and outside school hours. These contribute well to pupils' enjoyment of school and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is outstanding and well supported by the school's distinctive Christian ethos. The school's focus on gospel values helps pupils' spiritual understanding. Pupils leave St Martin's school as well adjusted, happy and caring individuals who have been well prepared for the next stage in their education. As a result of this caring, loving environment pupils are supported well in their learning and strive to meet the high expectations set by teachers who inspire them with creative ideas and challenges, thus enabling them to make outstanding progress. Standards of attainment are high and consistently above national averages. Pupils behave exceptionally well and eagerly accept roles of responsibility. Because the school's strong emphasis on caring for each other, pupils enjoy raising money for charities such as Foodbank and Cancer Research. A group of boys set up their own charity giving in response to a recent fire at Manchester Dogs Home. Displays around the school are vibrant and stimulating, these lift the spirits and provide both reflection and discussion opportunities. Pupils have a deep understanding of the Christian faith and church values. Their learning about other faiths enables them to understand and respect differences and similarities, including shared values. Links with schools in India and France are also enriching pupils' global understanding.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is central to the daily life of the school, it is the driver for the school's Christian values and has a strong Christian foundation. It is very well planned by the headteacher and vicar with themes developed around the school's core values, festivals, the Bible and the teachings of Jesus. As a result pupils enjoy and highly value their worship experiences, both in school and in church. However, the school recognises that pupils need to be more involved in the planning of worship themes in addition to the involvement they already have in class led worship. They particularly enjoy the singing and opportunities to read or act out a story in worship. They talk about their worship with confidence and enthusiasm, recognising times of reflection and their prayer life as being very important. What they hear and do in worship is in their thinking during the day and reflected in their actions. One pupil said that, 'We learn about God in different stories', another said 'Jesus sacrificed his life for us and God gave us the ability to be the way we are.' Respect for the act of worship is clearly evident through the willingness of children to participate, entering with reverence, listening to Bible stories, answering questions, participating in prayer, and reflective silence. On the inspection day pupils led worship with the headteacher, on the theme of 'Thankfulness,' acting out sketches to show how upset and sad people feel if no one says thank you. This message was linked well to how Jesus felt when only one of the lepers he had healed took the trouble to thank him. As a result pupils were able to reflect on their own actions in everyday situations and think about how Jesus would like us to treat each other. The worship was enhanced by a worship table with a cross and candle which Year 6 pupils were responsible for preparing in order to create a reflective atmosphere. All staff joined in, demonstrating genuine involvement and spiritual awareness. Strong links with the church make a very significant contribution to the nature of worship. The school worships in church at Easter, Harvest and Christmas. Parents and members of the local community attend these services, thus strengthening links between the school, church and the community. The vicar is a regular visitor to the school, supporting learning and running confirmation preparation lessons. Pupils know and use formal prayers and graces. Prayer and reflection are regular features of all forms of worship. Pupils write and use

their own prayers, which are kept on a prayer wall and in a book on the altar. These are then dedicated to God during collective worship. Prayer, along with the well-used prayer and reflection garden in the school grounds makes a very significant contribution towards pupils' spiritual development. Worship is monitored by a governors' Values and Beliefs Committee. Although there is some evaluation of worship by staff, which kindles new ideas and developments, pupils do not yet have the opportunity to contribute to this process and thereby influence ongoing improvements. Pupil's awareness of Christianity as a worldwide faith is well embedded and there is good understanding of the Christian concept of the Trinity.

The effectiveness of the religious education (RE) is outstanding

Christianity is the core of the RE curriculum. Pupils are extremely positive about RE and enjoy their learning, which they say is always fun and interesting. Lessons are extremely well planned and delivered, using a range of approaches, which challenge and inspire the pupils. In a Year 3 lesson observed, the teacher, through careful questioning, encouraged the pupils to think about things we can be thankful for. They were given reflection time to formulate their own thoughts and ideas and came up with excellent ways to thank God. Pupils' knowledge deepens year by year because lessons build on what they have learned previously and Biblical teaching within collective worship constantly enriches this understanding. Pupils have a good knowledge of the Bible and the life of Jesus and their knowledge of other major world faiths is excellent. RE has a very high profile and is extremely well managed. Due to the supportive and knowledgeable senior leadership team and relevant training the RE subject leader has developed into an experienced practitioner and is passionate about the subject. She has made wise decisions about exactly where to focus support and training for staff to make sure that pupils develop the specific skills they need to do well in RE. Marking is purposeful and effective. It encourages pupils to reflect on their work and points the way to further improvement. Monitoring through lesson observations, pupil interviews and checks on planning and pupils' work are managed well as part of the constant drive to improve. Together with outstanding assessment procedures this means that standards and progress in RE are excellent. RE makes a very significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, both through discrete RE lessons and the way in which it is used in cross-curricular themes. Visits to other places of worship, including a mosque, and a Jewish museum enhance pupils' appreciation of the beliefs and practices of other world faiths.

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

The distinctive Christian character and vision for the school is shared, agreed and upheld by all members of the school community. Staff, pupils, governors and parents are fully aware of the school's core Christian values, which can be seen in the very strong, nurturing relationships, which permeate the school. The headteacher and senior leaders have a clear understanding of what it means to lead a church school and carry out their roles very effectively. They have created an atmosphere underpinned by Christian values in which all staff feel their ideas are listened to and appreciated. All staff are inducted well into what is expected of them in relation to promoting the Christian ethos of the school and they regularly consider the impact on pupils of living out the mission statement. They have personal ownership of the mission statement and school motto and are eager to ensure that it is lived every day and embedded throughout school. Governors know the school well because of their regular involvement in its life and their monitoring of RE and collective worship. They also receive detailed information on developments in RE and worship through the Values and Beliefs Committee, which ensures that they have a clear understanding of the school. Governors support and challenge the school leadership team in all areas of school improvement and ensure that church school issues are prioritised in improvement planning. They know exactly what the school needs to do to improve further. Issues from the previous inspection have been addressed with continuous improvement managed through rigorous, honest self-evaluation. The exceptionally strong links with the church and local community have a significant impact upon the Christian character of the school, exerting a positive influence on the lives of all members of the school family. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously and are confident that their voice is heard with their ideas and opinions valued and acted upon. They are proud of their achievements and their contribution to the school's decision making processes, citing the purchase of outdoor play equipment as a recent success. There is a strong 'Friends of St Martin's Association', which actively supports the work of the school through social and fund raising events. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They say the school listens to their views and that their children enjoy school, are happy, safe and nurtured within a distinctly Christian environment.

SIAMS report October 2014 St Martin's CE (Aided) Primary School, Oldham. OL8 2PY