

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Bishop Martin Church of England Primary School

Church Road, Woolton L25 5JF	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Liverpool
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Liverpool
Date of inspection	10 November 2017
Date of last inspection	May 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 104621
Executive Headteacher	Sally Aspinwall
Inspector's name and number	Jean Forward 625

School context

Bishop Martin C of E Primary School is below average in size and is situated in a residential area of Liverpool. The school currently has an executive headteacher who has been in post since September 2016. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is below the national average, as is the percentage of pupils with a statement for special educational needs or education, health, care plan. The school is in the process of joining the Liverpool diocesan multi-academy trust.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bishop Martin as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The outstanding servant leadership of the executive headteacher and her Christian vision for the development of the school ensure that the distinctive character and ethos are of the highest priority.
- The school creates a caring, nurturing and inclusive environment rooted in Christian values. This has a positive influence on pupils' well-being, self-esteem and positive attitudes to learning.
- The pupils' excellent behaviour and care for each other stem from the school's core Christian values.
- Worship is at the heart of the school's daily life. Christian values are set in their biblical context and this has a significant influence on the spiritual development of the whole school family.
- The governing body provides outstanding support and challenge through commitment and expertise. As a result, highly effective and strategic self-evaluation of church school distinctiveness ensures that the school's Christian ethos is at the centre of the school improvement process.

Areas to improve

- Continue to develop religious education (RE), particularly in terms of the new diocesan syllabus and Understanding Christianity programme. This will add further rigour and will enable the school to have a clear approach to assessment, pupil progress and the development of higher attainers.
- Ensure greater consistency in the quality and content of pupils' written work in RE so that there is clear progression in their learning as they move through the school.

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

An outstanding commitment to the development and well-being of every pupil underpins the school's work and is rooted in Christian love. The school's mission statement 'Learning together in God's love' takes everything forward. The executive headteacher stresses that high expectations and encouragement are directly linked to the Christian life of the school so that staff and pupils can 'do their very best'. Pupils talk confidently about the importance of the school's core Christian values. A Year 6 pupil said, 'Christian values make school a better place and bring us together as a family.' As a result, the positive relationships across the community are rooted in a Christ-centred approach and there is a calm and productive atmosphere. Pupils say that staff support and help them in a caring and understanding way. Parents believe that the Christian ethos is threaded through everything the school does and that this encourages the development of the whole child. A parent commented that staff are always approachable and supportive. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is excellent. Pupils have access to a creative and stimulating curriculum, wide range of extra-curricular activities and trips which broaden their experience and develop individual skills and talents. School and national test data show that progress and achievement often exceed national expectations.

Christian friendship and respect are clearly evident and this results in all members of the school community feeling valued. Pupils demonstrate respect and concern for others in and beyond the school. They have many opportunities to show responsibility and citizenship as members of the school council and ethos group and as reading buddies, worship leaders and sports playleaders. They understand that these opportunities are an example of service. The school has a strong commitment to Christian stewardship, supporting a range of charities including Children in Need, a local foodbank and a community project in Brazil. They raise money throughout the year for the Brazil project in conjunction with St. Peter's church. Pupils understand the importance of showing generosity and know that this is rooted in Jesus's teaching. A Year 6 pupil said, 'We like to give to others.'

Vibrant displays and Bible quotations emphasise the school's Christian character and prompt the pupils' spiritual awareness and understanding extremely well. A pupil said, 'God is with us as we walk around the school.' Pupils value the classroom reflection areas and are able to explain that these support them spiritually and are an aid to prayer. A commitment to widening pupils' knowledge of non-Christian faiths through carefully planned RE contributes well to positive attitudes about other beliefs and cultures. The emphasis on respect for all makes a strong contribution to the school's Christian character and to pupils' SMSC development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

All members of the school community recognise the importance of collective worship and the central part it plays in the life of the school. The executive headteacher is the school's worship co-ordinator and she ensures that planning is rooted in biblical teaching and an understanding of the life and work of Jesus. Pupils enjoy worship and participate enthusiastically whilst maintaining a due sense of reverence. The school worships in the church every week and individual classes have the opportunity to lead worship on these occasions. Parents comment on how much they value being able to attend worship in the church.

Acts of worship follow a clear pattern which gives the children a sense of liturgical structure and familiarity. Anglican responses for gathering and dismissal are used every day and the pupils are introduced to collects and aspects of Common Worship. Worship themes are planned carefully and include biblical teaching, major festivals and Christian values. Each half term's Christian value theme ensures that pupils are able to link this to biblical teaching and their daily lives. The executive headteacher, members of the teaching staff and the parish priest of St. Peter's lead worship. The pupils enjoy these varied experiences which broaden their understanding of Christian teaching and Anglican tradition. Class worship provides an opportunity for pupils to further explore theological ideas at an appropriate level.

Prayer and reflection have a central role in all worship. Pupils understand the importance of silence and that prayer is a way of talking to God. Their awareness of the meaning and purpose of prayer is developed further through the classroom reflection areas. Pupils are involved in worship through music, drama and reading, especially when celebrating major festivals in the church. The pupils who are worship leaders plan and lead worship on a regular basis and with increasing independence. Older pupils have some understanding of the Trinitarian nature of Christianity and are able to explain that the three candles lit at the beginning of worship are a constant reminder. There are arrangements for all sections of the school community to evaluate worship. This leads to change and development so that worship remains vibrant and relevant.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The importance of RE in the life of the school is demonstrated by its high priority as a core subject. Teaching is consistently good. Standards are comparable to those in other core subjects although there is some inconsistency

in the quality of pupil's written work. Lessons are planned to meet the needs of all learners, using varied and differentiated activities which engage pupils and develop essential understanding and skills. The subject is taught in a creative way with a strong emphasis on developing Christian values. Pupils are challenged to expand on their ideas and use appropriate vocabulary. There is a clear balance between learning about religion and opportunities for pupils to think about what their learning means to them. As a result, they are able to think deeply and express their opinions. When speaking about RE, pupils are confident and enthusiastic and they say that they enjoy their learning. Evidence of prior learning and thinking skills was demonstrated in a Year 1 lesson about the significance of giving and receiving gifts. Pupils tackled challenging questions with determination and were able to talk about the many gifts we receive from God. As a result, they demonstrated a good level of prior knowledge of Bible stories and their ability to enter into collaborative discussion. Year 6 pupils were asked a range of focused questions and given challenging tasks when exploring the life of John the Baptist and his call for repentance. Pupils demonstrated a confident use of appropriate vocabulary and good prior learning. Non-Christian faiths are introduced through the RE curriculum, visits and visitors. A pupil commented, 'We enjoy learning about other faiths and visiting places of worship.' The pupils explained that it is important to understand non-Christian faiths and that this leads to greater respect for one another.

The recently appointed and committed subject leader supports colleagues and ensures that there are regular in-house professional development and standardisation activities. The school has a range of resources to enhance teaching and learning. Informative marking guides pupils and invites them to answer questions which in turn extends their deeper thinking. The subject leader monitors teaching and learning through a programme of observations, moderation and book scrutiny and she is supported by the RE link governor. Assessment is effective in tracking attainment and progress. The new diocesan syllabus and Understanding Christianity programme offer an opportunity for the school to further develop its provision for RE.

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

The executive headteacher's informed and dedicated Christian leadership is rooted in a deep personal faith and sense of service. The promotion of the core values ensures that the Christian ethos is always paramount. The executive headteacher has a clear Christian vision for the school which is focused on ensuring that all pupils know that they are of individual worth. She is supported by a strong senior leadership team, committed staff and dedicated governors. Everyone is committed to fostering all aspects of pupils' development and well-being through the school's Christian ethos. There is a determination to ensure that the school enables all pupils to do their best. As a result, the school recognises the importance of creating a Christian ethos which supports effective learning and equal opportunities.

The school knows its pupils and their families well and meets individual needs through a culture of Christian nurturing and support. Parents recognise the distinctive Christian character of the school and believe that it fosters a strong sense of family. They say that communication is extremely good. Parents make a valuable contribution through the parent teacher association and their involvement in the daily life of the school. As a result, the home and school partnership is reinforced. The school and the parish priest have a close working relationship. This strengthens the spiritual and pastoral elements of the relationship between the school, its families and the church. The school works closely with the congregation of St. Peter's church on many initiatives and there is a true sense of the school and church being at the centre of the community.

Foundation governors have a clear understanding of their strategic role. They ask informed questions and provide a high level of challenge. Detailed action plans for RE and worship are included in the school's development planning and are reviewed regularly through the distinctiveness sub-committee. These plans set challenging targets and strategies for further improvement. The designated RE and distinctiveness governor is knowledgeable and committed to her role. With the help of these excellent aspects of governance, the school's Christian ethos draws together every element of decision-making and leads to highly effective and strategic leadership. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

The school is outward-looking, engaging with other schools on matters of school improvement and development and in particular, there is a very strong partnership with The Beacon Church of England Primary School. An extremely effective relationship with the diocese through support and training contributes to the development of church school distinctiveness and school improvement. Succession planning for leadership of church schools is a priority and this enables staff to contribute ideas and insights which enhance their own and the school's Christian development.