

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Peter's Smithills Dean Church of England Primary School

Limefield Road, Bolton, BL1 6LA

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Diocese

Manchester

Previous SIAS inspection grade

Outstanding

Local authority

Bolton

Date/s of inspection

24 November 2016

Date of last inspection

November 2011

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Aided 105228

Headteacher

Christine Lancashire

Inspector's name and number

Nigel Castledine (652)

School context

St Peter's is an averaged-sized primary school on the edge of the Bolton conurbation, in a semi-rural setting.

The pupils are mainly White British with a small number from minority ethnic families. St Peter's serves the local community, with a lesser number of pupils coming from further afield.

The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is much lower than average, as is the proportion with special education needs or disability.

A new deputy headteacher and several class teachers have been appointed since the last inspection.

St Peter's parish church is situated approximately three quarters of a mile from the school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Peter's as a Church of England school are good

- Deeply embedded Christian values underpin the life and learning of the school and strengthen the provision of a distinctively Christian education that enriches pupils' lives.
- The Christian caring dedication of the staff and their commitment to maintaining high standards in all aspects of school life ensure that the pupils thrive academically, spiritually and emotionally.
- The pupils' considerate behaviour, positive working attitudes and regular attendance are rooted in the school's pervasive Christian ethos.

Areas to improve

- Utilise the newly-formed links with a local school serving a culturally differing area to strengthen the pupils' understanding of living in a diverse community with a variety of life-styles and faiths.
- Develop the governing board's strategic vision for evaluating and enriching the school's faith ethos to ensure Christian distinctiveness continues to underpin the drive for the highest standards in all aspects of school life.
- Empower pupils to enrich the faith life of St Peter's by giving them an increased role and responsibility in the planning, leading and evaluation of collective worship.

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

The St Peter's motto is 'Forward together with Christ'. This clear message is lived out by the school community in the strength of its Christian ethos.

St Peter's uses its Christian values as strong foundations for its educational philosophy. These gospel teachings ensure that Christian principles are at the heart of school life. Each class therefore has a Christian value allocated to it, making seven core gospel values. They comprise friendship, thankfulness, trust, forgiveness, hope, compassion and perseverance/endurance. Each class is then responsible for sharing the impact of their value with the school. This is done through presentations and worship, with clear links to Biblical teaching and learning in religious education (RE). These links also emphasise the school's Christian character and nurture the pupils' spiritual development in RE. Gospel values are also displayed throughout the building, so, in the words of the headteacher, 'All can see what we stand for as a church school'. A parent commented, 'The school lives and breathes its Christian values'. Enrichment days enhance the pupils' understanding of living according to the teaching of Jesus. This knowledge of gospel values is used by the pupils who delight in achieving the status of being a 'St Peter's Citizen'. This accolade reflects the high standards of Christian care, concern and enthusiasm expected within the school community.

The pupils' excellent behaviour and caring, thoughtful attitudes clearly show the positive influence of Christian values. Pupils know who to go to in school for help and guidance, whilst self-help strategies enable them to develop independence and high self-esteem. Bullying is a very rare occurrence and is dealt with swiftly, using Christian compassion.

Pupils are keen to show Christian service in taking responsibility and developing leadership skills. They serve as house captains, school councillors or by helping to run lunchtime clubs. They are also thoughtful of the needs of others. Christian concern is clear in the pupils' enthusiastic support for local, national and international charities.

The school recognises that the pupils benefit from opportunities for wider cultural and faith awareness. A new link is already underway with a local school within a community of contrasting faiths and cultures which is enriching pupils' learning in RE. St Peter's is also partnered with a St Peter's school in rural Mamole, Kenya. This connection develops understanding between the two schools through ongoing communication and learning links. It also provides the pupils with experiences of global multi-ethnic Christianity.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship at St Peter's is an integral and influential part of school life in which all can share in the love of God. It is engaging and inspirational for adults and pupils, fostering a sense of being part of a Christian community.

Collective worship is led by the teaching staff and clergy. To ensure pupils experience Anglican worship traditions, an altar is used, draped with the appropriate liturgical colour for the church season. On it are placed Christian symbols: a wooden cross, a candle which is lit for prayer and artefacts symbolising the faith of the Kenyan link school.

Worship follows the Christian year with due emphasis being given to religious special days, seasons and festivals. Pupils' understanding of the Holy Trinity is linked to these festivals, particularly Pentecost and to learning in RE. Although gospel-centred, worship is inclusive, referring to the events and sacred writings of other religions and respecting those of no particular faith.

Worship and faith-related activities also take place in St Peter's church at Christmas and Easter. The parish clergy are closely involved in the school's life and worship. Parents and families are able to experience school worship with their children in both St Peter's church and the school. Pupils contribute enthusiastically to worship, but currently are not given opportunities to plan and lead it independently. Evaluations of worship are carried out but they do not feed the views and suggestions of all stakeholders into future planning on a regular basis.

Prayer is important part of the school's emphasis on spirituality and meaningful worship. To many pupils, engaging in prayer is a natural thing to do. One younger child described it as, 'Me talking with God'. Attractive and inviting faith reflection areas in each classroom also enable pupils to pray or think quietly during the school day. The pupils have been instrumental in the development of both a school and class prayer books which are used in worship. There is also a school prayer which is said regularly. Traditional prayers used reflect the school worship's distinctive Anglican tradition and include the Lord's Prayer. Class prayers also take place at lunchtime and the end of the school day. The church prayer group meets regularly in school to which each class contributes their prayer requests. Parents comment favourably on how their children share at home the prayers and stories they have enjoyed in school worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

RE is a core subject at St Peter's. Pupils speak of their appreciation of the challenge of the subject. A Year 5 child

observed, 'Studying the Bible in RE has shown me why our Christian values are so important'.

Pupils make good progress in RE and achieve at or above age-related expectations, broadly in line with the other core subjects at St Peter's. The school has recently adopted the diocesan 'Questful RE' syllabus which has given a fresh impetus to the subject. However, this development is not yet fully embedded. Teachers comment favourably on the stronger emphasis on learning from religions, which has involved the pupils in deeper thinking and reflection. High standards of RE work are evidenced by the pupils' books and each class's RE 'scrap book', which includes samples of a wide variety of learning styles. Consistently good teaching with elements of outstanding practice has made RE a very creative subject. Pupils are engaged in their RE learning through a cross-curricular mix of drama, art, computing, history, geography, music and dance as well as the written word. For many pupils of all abilities, RE is a highlight of the school week.

Senior leaders and the RE co-ordinator undertake monitoring learning walks to observe the RE provision of the school. The RE coordinator is able to offer support where needed, and is starting to develop reflective practice between teachers to ensure outstanding practice is shared. Foundation governors monitor standards in RE through regular reviews of the subject and collective worship within the school development plan.

Educational visits are made to a variety of places of worship in the locality, which enhance the pupils' understanding and experience of both faith and worship. These visits include St Peter's church and Smithills chapel.

Worship themes are often followed up afterwards in class discussion and in RE lessons. The use of RE displays within classroom reflection areas brings together the themes of worship with the study of faith to prompt pupils' spiritual development.

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

The dedication and enthusiasm of the school's headteacher drives forward the vibrant Christian distinctiveness of St Peter's school. She is ably supported in this work by the senior school leaders and the governing board.

The governing board is linked to key areas of school life and its curriculum and has an action plan for its ongoing development. However, this does not include the governors' responsibility for formally evaluating the impact of the school's Christian distinctiveness on its academic standards and nurture.

Quality first teaching is underpinned by the school's Christian values. It results in pupils making good progress over time and achieving at or above national expectations at the end of Year 6. Vulnerable groups and pupils with potential barriers to their learning are supported and closely monitored, so that all are enabled to make progress. Pupils are enabled to develop a positive 'can-do' approach when faced with challenges, which links to the school's Christian value of perseverance.

There are regular opportunities for staff and governors to develop their skills through training in church school aspects, as prioritised in the school development plan. New members of staff are made well aware of the faith requirements that working in a church school places on them. The diocese provides valued training, support and advice, and the deputy headteacher has undertaken the diocesan Christian leadership course. This has given her an excellent insight into outstanding Church of England school practice. Local church schools (including Roman Catholic primary and Anglican secondary) provide advantageous training opportunities which assist St Peter's development of the impact of its Christian ethos.

Mutually supportive links and Christian outreach between the school, the community and the church ensure St Peter's is an integral part of local life. Joining together for quiet prayer, Sunday worship or social activities enriches the sense of the school being a key part of the local church family.

There is a warm, mutual respect among all members of the school family, underpinned by St Peter's Christian ethos. This ensures a warm welcome for visitors and those new to school life. Parents speak very favourably of the support provided by school. They consider they are kept well informed about events through online media and the children's academic progress through consultation meetings. Parents also value the beneficial and often transformational effects of the school's Christian ethos on their children. One parent summarised why she believes the St Peter's Christian ethos is so pervasive by saying, 'Christ is alive in this school. The Spirit of the Lord is working here'.

SIAMS report November 2016, St Peter's Smithills Dean Church of England Primary School, Bolton, BL1 6LA