



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Maxentius Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

New Heys Way
Bradshaw
Bolton
BL2 4AE

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Manchester

Local authority: Manchester

Dates of inspection: 7 July 2016

Date of last inspection: 12 April 2011

School's unique reference number: 105231

Headteacher: Clare Bennett

Inspector's name and number: Tracy Helen Gunn

Quality Assurance: Lyn Field 151

School context

St Maxentius is an average sized primary school with 221 pupils on roll. The vast majority of pupils are of a White British background. This is a popular school which is currently oversubscribed. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is currently at 6%, considerably lower than the national average, however, the percentage has steadily increased since the last inspection in 2011. The percentage with a statement of special educational needs is lower than the national average. Attendance is above national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Maxentius as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The essence of this school is one that is rooted in Christian principles and is a beacon of God's love. Every piece of documentation, the website and school environment declares they are distinctively different because their values have Jesus as their starting point.
- Every child has a deep understanding of God's love. This is as a result of expert teaching and modelling by a dedicated staff who live and breathe a Christian vision that has been very deliberately shared and sustained by the headteacher, senior leadership team (SLT), vicar and governors.

Areas to improve

- Develop the school's worship forum to allow pupils ownership of Collective Worship and enable them to be confident in planning and leading acts of worship.
- Develop the written strategic planning, involving all stakeholders, to secure the school's distinctive vision in a changing educational climate.

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

The school's mission statement; 'we are a strong community, based on Christian beliefs, values and have an understanding of the awe and wonder of God, His world and His love', informs everything the school does. It is on every piece of documentation, influences the curriculum content and how attendance is promoted, and is articulated by all members of the community. For instance, one teacher asserted 'God is everywhere in this school; on the walls, in conversations, it influences everything'. Behaviour is exemplary because the values are deeply embedded and followed by all children. They have a significant impact on achievement in that all children are striving to work their hardest and contribute to an atmosphere for learning where the potential of everyone is squeezed out.

The whole environment declares the school is proudly a church school. Quality displays are not simply recounts of bible stories, but capture what children have learned from the bible and applied to their lives. For instance, from the story of 'the widow's mite' the children have explored when they have been mean and what they can bring to God. Encouraging verses from the bible are painted on every wall and on every display, resulting in the whole school community being saturated with God's word. The hall is decorated with beautiful pieces of artwork displaying the school values and other religions. However it is not wallpaper; the children are fully competent in articulating what the values mean to them and how they live differently as a result. This has a striking impact on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, a Year 6 child said, 'we are all trying to behave better like Jesus and do random acts of kindness'. Their attitudes to diversity and difference are strongly developed as a result of the Christian ethos woven into the curriculum, as reflected in their overarching curriculum statement on the website.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

Collective worship is a central and highly valued strength of the school. Children said they love collective worship because the teachers plan it thoughtfully and inject it with fun. In addition to this, their spiritual and moral life are also clearly impacted because of the practical application incorporated into each message. One Year 6 boy said, 'Mrs Bennett puts excitement into worship and she doesn't drift off, she keeps us focused on Christian values and how to help us with problems in life, like forgiving people.'

The headteacher and deputy expend a significant amount of time planning and researching their worship to make it as engaging and meaningful as possible. The effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation can be seen in the improvements made since the last inspection by moving away from 'show and tell' to a focus on challenging conduct and encouraging reflection for children and staff. As a result, collective worship is inspirational for all members of the community. All staff attend every day but Friday. They were all in agreement that it is a central and crucial part of their day with comments such as, 'it sets me up for the day, I NEED to start the day like this' and 'it's uplifting, I love the worship to start the day'. Staff refer back to the message in collective worship throughout the day which has real impact on attitudes to learning. For instance, when asked what they had learnt from the collective worship theme of humility, children said they would put others first and not insist on being first all the time. Children demonstrated an impressive degree of understanding about the Trinity as a result of collective worship. Prayer is a regular part of daily life in school with pupils using the prayer boxes in every classroom. The staff are role models in the way they give prayer a high profile, resulting in the children having confidence to pray aloud in their own voice knowing 'God is always listening'. This has been contributed to by the vicar and other visitors that represent authentic Christian faith. The vicar has taught the children about the Christian calendar and Anglican tradition, which they can readily and confidently talk about. High numbers of children take communion alongside adults due to the investment of the vicar in communion classes.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.

The Deputy has worked tirelessly and rigorously monitoring RE and getting alongside staff to coach and support them, resulting in standards being well above expectation. In the lessons observed, the children were encouraged to think about how prayer can be a symbol of hope (Year 4), and if the bible can really change my life (Year 2). The level of insight and understanding far exceeded that expected for their age, as reflected in responses such as, 'we can't physically see God, but we know he's with us all the time and waiting to listen'. A child in Y4 said of prayer, 'when we pray, it feels like God is tapping us on the back'. Another child said 'I can chat to God any time. Prayer blocks the darkness out'. This demonstrates the children have developed a spiritual language they are confident to use and are creatively applying to their lives. The parents talked of how RE lessons significantly contribute to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, such as in helping children deal with real life issues like loss and illness. They also spoke supportively of the school as teaching other faiths well, deep knowledge of which is seen in children's books and artwork around school.

Tasks are closely matched to pupil's individual ability with poignant comments in the marking that children consistently respond to. Higher order questioning is used very effectively to ensure learner's understanding is deepened. Staff are supported with a bank of questions that extend the children's learning, but they reported they now feel confident enough to do this naturally.

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

Leadership is truly inspirational. This team are effectively leading the whole school community on a personal journey with God. Results from a recent questionnaire showed 100% of parents agreed the school is distinctively Christian. Parents spoke passionately about how the relationships in the school stem from the Christian ethos. One parent talked of the dramatic change in her children since transferring to this school, 'because the Christian ethos is lived out in practice and children are smothered with God's love'.

Staff openly shared how working at this school has had an impact on their individual walk with God, such as influencing them returning to church as a result of the teaching in the bible becoming more meaningful when put into practice by colleagues. The parent run prayer group is an example of how a unique community has been formed here, with prayer being a uniting force that knits them together. Their Patchwork meetings are not simply a forum, but an effective way of partnering with the school in change. For example they petitioned the SLT to change the dates of the school residential trip to reduce the cost for disadvantaged families. The head spoke passionately about how all staff go above and beyond to support families, listen to them and allay fears. This was strongly reinforced by parents.

There is mutual benefit in the links between church and school through prayerful support and church based Eucharist classes which are very well attended. RE is given very high priority as a core subject. The SLT have invested greatly in this area in terms of time and money (eg training and weekly management time for the monitoring of RE). RE and collective worship have their own sections in the prospectus and effectiveness of both is regularly reported to governors. The chair of governors is always involved in recruitment of staff which they articulate is key in ensuring the ethos of the school is sustained. All staff are expected to uphold the Christian values and once appointed are supported to do so.

No child is invisible in this school. Thorough tracking of all children ensures they are all making progress. Particular emphasis is being placed on ensuring disadvantaged pupils attain as well as other pupils, which is resulting in the gap narrowing. The leadership team are always seeking ways to improve and sustain the vision for future leaders. Their previous strengths have been built upon even further because RE and collective worship 'are never off the boil'.

SIAMS report July 2016 St Maxentius CE Primary School, New Heys Way, Bradshaw, BL24AE.