

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

<b>Altham St James' Church of England Primary School</b>	
Burnley Road, Altham, Accrington, Lancashire, BB5 5UH	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Blackburn</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Lancashire
Date of inspection	23 February 2017
Date of last inspection	September 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided Primary 119577
Headteacher	Carol Woods
Inspector's name and number	Gail Goodman 571

### School context

Altham St James' Church of England VA Primary School is a very popular, smaller than average school of 57 children across three classrooms. The school serves the semi rural wards around the village of Altham where most of the children are local. The vast majority of pupils are of white British heritage. The number of pupils taking free school meals has risen over the last four years. Since the previous inspection there have been some staff changes, with the current headteacher taking up her post in September 2015. The parish church is a five minute walk from school.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Altham St James' as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The Christian values of God's love, through care and compassion, inspire and guide all aspects of school life.
- Pupils are valued, nurtured and encouraged to flourish, within a distinctive Christian environment, and, as a consequence, behaviour is excellent.
- The headteacher and staff, supported effectively by the governors use a system of self evaluation based on a distinctive Christian vision. This leads directly to effective planning and school improvement.
- Links with the parish church are strong and families value the care, support and guidance that pupils receive from this partnership.

### Areas to improve

- Enhance Christian distinctiveness by providing opportunities within the school grounds for pupils to worship, pray and reflect.

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

The school places high emphasis on Christian values, which are deeply embedded in the life of the school. All members are aware of these values, such as forgiveness, compassion and tolerance and how they make the outstanding educational provision at this school so exciting. This is evidenced in the exemplary relationships between all learners which demonstrate the key role Christian values play. As a result, pupils excel in academic achievement and in their own personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) education. This is borne out by the high levels of attendance and punctuality which confirm the distinctively Christian characteristics of the school's values. The school successfully upholds its vision statement, 'to be the best you can be', as shown by the pupils and staff who clearly respect and care for each other well. Indeed, as the church minister clearly states, 'these children have a certain openness of heart'. This is evidenced in peer mentoring roles and practical jobs around the school, such as school council, worship evaluation group and typing up news headlines. The school plays a pivotal role in the heart of the community that it serves and families value the sense of support and guidance given. One parent explains this by stating, 'All staff are very approachable and know the children well. All issues are dealt with swiftly.' Pupils know, and use the school rules, enabling a well ordered and kind learning community where behaviour is seen as outstanding, as reported by all parents in a recent school questionnaire. Additionally, all parents agree with the statement, 'I am happy with the Christian nature of the school, the worship and the religious education (RE).' RE has a significant impact on all learners' spiritual development. This is witnessed in the children's active involvement in discussion and willingness to ask questions, demonstrating insight and a deepening of faith issues. Pupils actively support several charities, such as the Poppy Appeal, Children in Need, Barnardo's and Book Aid International. They recognise that they can make a difference locally, nationally and internationally. Learners' awareness of Christianity as a multi cultural world faith is helped by links with a school in Nepal and exchanges of letters and gifts. Pupils are aware of the importance of keeping healthy. All children participate in a variety of extra-curricular sports activities such as a 'run a mile a day' programme, football and athletics. There is an exceptional link with the parish church of St James'. The minister and his church team are welcomed into school on a regular basis, both in a teaching and pastoral role.

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

Collective Worship is a focal point of the school's daily life. It is planned by the headteacher, teaching staff and parish team and based on the school's Christian values. Full emphasis is given to the seasons and celebrations of the Christian calendar. All learners enjoy worship and actively take part in planning, delivery and evaluation. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are members of the Worship Evaluation Group, taking a pride in this responsibility. This is evident in the children's enthusiasm in which they approach worship, and the continuous waiting list of pupils for its daily delivery. Governors take an active role in both the delivery and effective ongoing evaluation of worship. The parish church team has recently opened a Prayer and Quiet Room in the school which is widely used by all stakeholders. Children appreciate the quiet given over to reflection and write and share their own prayers. Pupils enjoy the telling of Bible stories and can recall these with empathy and understanding. This is evidenced in the monthly worship in school, 'Open the Book', where members of the church team act out stories from the Bible in a lively and interactive way, for pupils, parents and friends. All pupils sing with enthusiasm and much joy, demonstrating their understanding of the time spent in God's presence. An after school 'All Age' service takes place at the month's end and is very well attended. The church minister explains that by bringing the church into school members of the local community are able to enjoy worship with a large number of children and their

families. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the life of Jesus, and can explain the nature of the Trinity, with God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as evidenced by members of the school council. The school logo depicts St James, the fisherman, and one Year 5 child explained the significance, 'We are all part of this special family - the badge joins us together.' There is a very active link with St James' church. Pupils and parents attend worship in church on a regular basis for celebrations and services, strengthening the whole village and school community.

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

RE has a high profile within the school's curriculum. Outstanding teaching and rigorous assessment ensure standards are exceptionally high, in line with core subjects. RE is given full status as a core subject with high levels of attainment and progress. The teaching of Christianity is given prominence. Planning, monitoring and assessment are well organised by the subject leader. She plans a rich and varied curriculum which meets statutory requirements. The subject leader, staff and governor responsible for RE use a cross section of pupils' books, plus pupil interviews, in order to properly assess standards and ensure continuing good practice. Pupils reflect upon the thoughts, feelings and actions of others during RE and worship. Teachers use innovative techniques to make learning fun, as well as challenging all learners. Excellent examples are the use of 'hot seating', in the lesson observed, following the acting out of Jesus and his disciples in a boat on the stormy sea. A Year 1 child is asked to take the part of the boatman who wakes Jesus to help in the storm. When asked about the experience of rowing the boat and how he felt about Jesus' personality, the child replies, 'It felt frightening - He is powerful, strong and calm.' The lesson was active and creative, using art, drama, music and guided visualisation. During a second, observed lesson older children are asked to write a diary entry as if they had witnessed one of Jesus' miracles. One Year 6 child writes from the viewpoint of the donkey who Jesus tamed to ride. Pupils are able to relate their ideas and make links to their own beliefs, clearly demonstrating empathy and understanding. They clearly recognise the importance of diversity and world faiths as a result of proactive links with schools, both nationally and internationally. Visitors from other cultures and faiths are welcomed into school. Following a recent presentation on Judaism, children produced vibrant, thought provoking displays to illustrate their understanding.

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

The explicit Christian vision that is articulated so well by the staff, including governors, is demonstrated to excellent effect by the headteacher. Her Christian commitment and love shine out in every aspect of her leadership. The governors and whole staff team aim to live out the Christian vision daily. They readily articulate the impact of Christian values on the life of the whole school community. Whole school planning for continuing staff development, following the appointment of the headteacher, impacts upon the school as a distinctively church school. Exemplary relationships across all ages show the key role that Christian values play within school. This includes the many charities which have benefitted through the school's generosity. Active involvement of the chair of governors, through regular visits, shows the commitment of all governors in supporting the explicit Christian ethos. Governors know the school very well. They monitor performance and achievement, and effectively challenge and support the headteacher and staff. RE is well planned and evaluated by the subject leader. She ensures it is given its core status within the curriculum, thereby continually developing the school's Christian character. Strong partnerships exist between the school and church enriching the lives of both, as evidenced in the active participation of the church minister and his parish team. Joint events are exceptionally well attended and parishioners offer practical support to the life of the school. Parents are very proud of the school and the impact of the Christian values on the lives of learners. They speak highly of

the school's pastoral and all embracing care of all pupils, accurately reflecting the 'inclusive nature and friendliness of everyone in school'. An energetic and committed staff team carry the nurturing and inclusive atmosphere forward, acting as role models for all pupils. The headteacher has established a positive relationship with the local cluster of schools in the area, resulting in joint events and sporting activities. The school council makes an important contribution to leadership and is involved in the many links the school has in the community and abroad. Altham St James' Church of England Primary School is a faith school which encourages all children to do their best in developing a generation of responsible, well behaved and loving citizens.

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