



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### St Paul's CofE Aided Primary School

Crompton Street  
Walkden  
Manchester  
M28 3HP

**Previous SIAMS grade:** Outstanding

**Diocese: Manchester**

Local authority: Salford

Dates of inspection: 5 December 2014

Date of last inspection: October 2009

School's unique reference number: 105645

Headteacher: Yvette Sullivan

Inspector's name and number: Mike Graham

#### School context

This average sized school serves the urban area of Walkden. It is situated in an area with a mixture of rented and private housing. The vast majority of the children are White British. The proportion of children with special educational needs and of those entitled to extra funding through the Pupil Premium are about the national average. There have been several key changes since the last report including a new headteacher, new religious education (RE) co-ordinator and new vicar.

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

- The strong Christian leadership of the headteacher, enthusiastically endorsed and supported by all staff and governors, has an extremely positive impact on the progress and wellbeing of all the children
- Excellent church/school links, with vicar and headteacher to the fore, are empowered and flourish through the commitment of both communities, and are mutually beneficial
- Rapidly improving teaching and learning in RE leads to good to outstanding progress and spiritual development
- Varied, sincere and lively worship, with children prominent in leadership and evaluation, leads to significant impact on the spiritual growth of the whole school family

#### Areas to improve

- Involve the whole school community in a review of the school's mission, and the development of a new mission statement and motto so as to encapsulate the focus on and importance of Christian values
- Provide training for governors so as to strengthen their role as 'critical friends'
- Develop and expand the place of prayer in school to deepen the children's spiritual lives

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

Christian values are well embedded in the life of the school and are making a significant impact. The children understand these values well and know how to apply them in day-to-day life. Achievement overall is now improving rapidly, but attainment and progress over time are disappointing. However, the data indicates excellent standards and attainment in writing. The children are secure and extremely well supported, and the thorough and effective assessment procedures in place show excellent progress this academic year. This relatively recent improvement stems from the confidence and trust built up through loving Christian relationships and good to outstanding teaching. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children is outstanding. They have a keen sense of right and wrong. Relationships in school are based on love and forgiveness, and understanding and acceptance of other cultures and faiths is impressive. A Year 5 child said that learning about other faiths 'helps us to know and respect them'. Another added that understanding about Judaism 'made me feel more confident'. RE makes an invaluable contribution to the Christian character of the school. It provides a convincing foundation for, and teaches about the source of, the Christ-centred values that drive the school. 'Alpha Kids', a weekly after-school club run by two foundation governors, with support from school and church, adds an extra dimension to the excellent teaching of Christianity. There are many other clubs involving the arts, sport, gardening and cookery, which widen the children's experience and enrich their lives.

**The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Everyone in the school family relishes the times of worship, because they see them as 'Your times with God' as a member of staff put it. The worship is sincere, varied and relevant and is very effective in setting the Christian values into the context of Bible teaching, in particular the life and example of Jesus Christ. The impact on all is striking. Children and adults respond with enthusiasm in quiet reflection and prayer and in lively singing. Teaching about the Trinity is effective and appropriate. Some outstanding insights were shared by a group of Year 5 and Year 6 children. One Year 6 boy said that the Holy Spirit is 'what Jesus left behind when he went to heaven to be with God'. Children's prayers are frequently used in worship and in Year 6 at the end of each day. Spontaneous prayer is less well developed, but one girl said, 'I prayed to God at home because I wanted my step mother to have a baby, and I had a feeling that God was listening to me. A few months later she told she was going to have a baby!' The planning, leading and evaluation of worship are extremely effective and involve all groups in the school community. It is notable that Year 6 children plan and lead the whole school every week in the celebration worship. The deputy headteacher commented on the teachers' pride and joy in being summoned to the front by a Year 6 child to explain their selections of each class's 'star of the week'. The children's personal and spiritual development clearly benefit from these opportunities. Parents and carers are warmly welcomed to both class-led worship and festival celebratory worship in church. They are thrilled to be included, and one parent said of her daughter's experiences so far, 'She loves it. She loves God too!' All members of the school community recognise the positive impact made by worship and Christian values on the attitudes and behaviour of the children.

**The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

The achievement of children in RE is good. The evidence in books and portfolios of work confirms this, indeed some elements are outstanding. There are, for example, excellent pieces of individual research on biblical accounts of events in Jesus' life. There are also topics about which a group of Year 5 and Year 6 children talked with great excitement and insight. Discussing work on the prophets, one girl linked Amos' vision of the plumb line used by God to judge the lives of his people to the coming of Christ. She said, 'God sent Jesus as a replica of himself. He was like a plumb line.' Overall, teaching and learning in RE are good with outstanding features. Lessons are well planned, with a strong emphasis on learning from

religion as well as learning about it. There is an excellent balance of tasks to suit all abilities, combined with discussions in groups or pairs, 'hot seating' role play and sensitive yet probing use of open questioning. Empathy for the feelings of the people involved in the studies is well developed. A child in Year 2 said, during a discussion about the nativity, 'Mary felt surprised, the angel felt excited, Joseph felt exhausted and Jesus felt loved!' Leadership and management of RE are good, with some outstanding progress made in a very short time. In particular, effective and thorough assessment has now been established and is beginning to have a positive impact on standards. Children's understanding of what they need to do to progress to the next levels is also improving rapidly. RE makes an invaluable contribution to the Christian values of the school, clarifying for the children the source of these values in the teachings and life of Christ.

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

The headteacher, vicar, governors and staff promote and exemplify a distinctive Christian vision for the school. The partnership between vicar and headteacher is especially seen as crucial in the recent improvements. A governor commented, they 'get on so well. They've made a huge difference'. One of the keys to the improvements made is the fresh emphasis on Christian values as the basis for all decisions, and the motivation for the excellence of behaviour and attitudes. The values are lived out to excellent effect throughout school, with friendship, love and care for each other prominent. The headteacher explained how delighted she was that 'the whole school embraced the Christian values'. The recent improvement in achievement in academic subjects as well as in RE is directly linked to this positive ethos. The loving and caring Christianity that drives the school affects the wellbeing of the whole school community. Parents and grandparents are immensely grateful for this. One grandparent commented on the care given to children and families who have suffered bereavement, saying 'St Paul's puts their arms around them'. The leadership team ensures that the vision makes the maximum impact by providing thorough and far-reaching evaluation and strategic planning. This is a team effort, with high quality coaching, in-service training and delegation, all of which supports the development of leadership within school and for the future. However, the governors' role as 'critical friends' is underdeveloped, and the mission statement lacks focus. Partnerships with the church, the diocese and the wider community are strong and mutually beneficial. For instance, the church and school combine in the development of children's spirituality through worship and RE. The vicar leads worship in school weekly and teaches RE at key times. Classes for confirmation are led by church members and two foundation governors lead the Alpha Kids group after school each Tuesday. This group leads children closer to God through play, art and crafts, bible teaching and prayer. These children also lead worship in school, sharing their learning experiences with their friends. Parents and carers are immensely proud of their school and have ready access to staff. The head regularly reminds them that her door is 'always open'. Comments included, 'What a difference the new head has made!' and 'It's wonderful. The nursery is lovely and the RE is impressive'.

SIAMS report December 2014, St Paul's Crompton, Manchester, M28 3HP