

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Tarleton Mere Brow Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

The Gravel, Mere Brow, Preston PR4 6JX

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Blackburn
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Lancashire
Date of inspection	22 June 2017
Date of last inspection	March 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided Primary 19574
Headteacher	Sandra Livesey
Inspector's name and number	Tracy Hallows 831

School context

Mere Brow Church of England Primary School is a small, voluntary aided school with 86 pupils on roll. The school is situated in the village of Mere Brow which is between Tarleton and Banks. The school has increased its roll from 52 to 84 since the last inspection and now includes nursery provision. The majority of pupils are not from the village but drawn from local towns and villages, they are predominantly of White British heritage. The number of pupils identified as having special needs is above the national average. The incumbent was licenced last month following a short vacancy.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Mere Brow as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The headteacher leads with a vibrant Christian vision based on the example of Jesus, the Servant King. She is ably supported by staff and governors. As a result, pupils make good progress academically and spiritually.
- The distinctive ethos with a focus on a positive, open and loving relationships based on Christ's teachings ensures that each member of the school community feels valued as a unique child of God. Consequently, attendance is above the national expectations and behaviour is excellent.
- Christian values, such as joy and forgiveness, permeate every aspect of the life of the school. All staff model the values in their interactions and this is reflected in the pupils' relationships with members of the school community.
- The high quality religious education [RE] that is now delivered in the school leads to pupils who are challenged and excited. They demonstrate a deep knowledge and understanding of the faiths studied.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that evaluation of collective worship includes how it has inspired, challenged or transformed those involved.

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

Distinctive Christian values are deeply embedded in the life of this fully inclusive school. A foundation governor commented, 'The Christian values are the golden thread that weaves its way through every aspect of the life of the school.' The values are an intrinsic part of every aspect of the school day and are also shared with parents and have an impact at home too. The strong sense of the person of Jesus behind the values has a significant impact on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the learners. Pupils of all backgrounds respond to the Christian ethos in the school. The school motto, 'let your light shine', not only encourages pupils to do their best but also to be the light of Jesus in their community. A parent said, 'The school encourages the pupils to shine as lights for Jesus; especially when things are difficult.' As a result, pupils are eager to do their best and this leads to good academic progress and excellent personal development. The whole school community is immersed in Christian love and care. This creates an atmosphere where positive relationships flourish, leading to outstanding behaviour. Christian principles of forgiveness and reconciliation are clearly applied. Pupils say they feel safe and loved and there is a distinct sense of joy in the school. As a result of this, attendance is excellent. The school has established good links with both the Anglican and Methodist churches in their area. It is also part of a 'first in faith group' which includes other schools, clergy and laity meeting to plan worship and joint activities. Through this, the pupils have an increasing awareness and understanding of the diversity of Christianity both locally and internationally. Support for worldwide Christian charities helps to deepen their knowledge and understanding. The pupils are increasingly aware of equality and social justice and are great ambassadors for using what they have to reach out to those in need. Pupils confidently explain that Christians come from all over the world and although the way they do things may be different, 'they all love Jesus, just like we do.' The pupils enjoy their RE lessons. When asked how lessons could be better, a Year 2 child said; 'they can't, they're brilliant!' There has been a significant improvement in RE since the last inspection. Lessons encourage pupils to be creative and to reflect on questions of meaning and purpose in their own lives. As a result of high quality teaching RE now has a significant impact on the Christian character of the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is cherished as a special time in the daily life of the school. It is engaging and inclusive for adults and pupils. There are a variety of formats of worship during the week which ensures that all can engage with a style that suits them. A range of worship leaders provide a rich and varied experience for all. Each act of worship is grounded in distinctively Christian teaching and introduces pupils to Anglican practices such as liturgical colours. Worship has a strong focus on the Trinity. A Year 6 child said; 'I know God is three things; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but they aren't separate they are all one – it's amazing.' The school values are an intrinsic part of worship and this is then taken into the daily life of the school. This enables the pupils to make a link between the values and their Biblical roots. Pupils regularly refer to and use the experiences in worship throughout the school day. A very active 'Simply Hosanna' choir led by a teacher from Mere Brow takes worship into the local community. This gives the pupils a real sense of evangelism. Older pupils confidently plan and lead worship for the younger pupils. They reverently lead the prayers and act out a Bible story using figures. They then encourage their younger peers to reflect on how the Bible story they have told applies to their own lives. Prayer is central to the life of the school. The pupils make use of the informal and formal experiences to pray both inside and outside the school building. One pupil said, 'I like to go into the secret garden if I just need a minute to talk to God, it always makes me feel better.' Pupils have an increasing understanding of how personal prayer deepens their relationship with Jesus, saying, 'Jesus is my friend and I like to talk to Him by praying.' The wide variety of worship experiences throughout the week are a result of the school responding to comments from those involved. However, there is not a formal system for recording the impact of worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The school has effectively addressed the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection and there is now high quality teaching of RE throughout the school. As RE leader, the experienced headteacher ensures that the contribution RE makes to the distinctively Christian character of the school is outstanding. She is now ably supported by teachers who are passionate about teaching high quality RE. Standards of attainment are rapidly improving. The high profile of RE across the school ensures that it provides valuable learning experiences for all pupils as a core part of the curriculum. Foundation governors are passionate about the RE taught in the school. They regularly monitor the subject and its impact on the life of the school ensuring that standards are consistently high. Pupils confidently express their developing understanding of Christianity and a broad range of religious beliefs. The rich curriculum is enhanced with visitors from different faiths which gives the pupils first-hand experience of the beliefs and practices of the religions studied. Year 6 pupils talk with enthusiasm about the visit of a Hindu lady and

Jewish man; 'Meeting real people makes RE much more interesting, you can ask them questions. It's much better than reading a book or looking at a video.' Effective questioning by enthusiastic teachers enables pupils to make links between the beliefs and practices of the faiths studied. Pupils have an awareness of the stories behind Christian festivals that reflects the depth of their understanding. The parent of a Reception child was moved at a comment her young child made, 'You know Mummy, Christmas is not about the presents, it's about remembering that it's Jesus' birthday and He is God's Son.' Scrap books are used effectively to capture non-written activities in RE. These demonstrate the breadth of learning experiences that are provided in RE. 'I can' statements are used throughout the school to assess and this informs teaching and learning. There is a detailed long term planning cycle, based on the Diocesan syllabus, ensuring that pupils cover a wide range of religious beliefs during their time in school. In Key Stage 2 lessons, pupils explore the feeling of Moses on being faced with a burning bush. The depth of the pupils' responses demonstrates their impressive knowledge and skill. They also make links between the Old and New Testament 'I think the fire was God's spirit, the same as when the disciples felt it at Pentecost.' The local Methodist minister enhances the RE curriculum by providing a lunchtime Bible club which is well attended by Key Stage 2 pupils. At a recent session the value of creativity was being discussed. The creation story was read and pupils looked at works of art by famous artists and sculptors. One pupil asked, 'Do you think we are God's work of art?' Pupils consistently ask such thought-provoking questions.

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

The headteacher lives out a vision for her school rooted in distinctive Christian values. Governors contribute to insightful self-evaluation which leads to an excellent knowledge of the school as a church school. Progress for most children is at least in line with national expectations with some making better than expected progress. The caring, Christian atmosphere in the school encourages all to try their best. Christian vision, values and the school motto are embedded through weekly newsletters, the school website and around the school. The headteacher and foundation governors clearly see their work in school as service to God and this is reflected in their actions. All parents comment on the special feeling in the school, saying, 'It may be a cliché but you can really feel God's presence in the school, it's what makes this school so special. I visited a few before I found the right one for my daughter.' The outstanding Christian leadership of the headteacher is clearly a strength. For example, parents testify to the fact that, 'pupils are guided daily on a Christian path by a fabulous headteacher, the Christian ethos radiates around the school.' Leadership of collective worship and RE are retained by the headteacher and as such, have a very high profile across the school and are high priorities for governors. Partnerships with parents, the local church, diocese and wider community make a substantial contribution to the Christian character of school life. Parents comment on the genuine open door policy upheld by the headteacher. One parent said, 'she's there for you whether you want to laugh or cry.' Outreach is strength of the school, the school is much valued in both the local community and further afield. The governors see the school as being essential in, 'putting the foundations of faith in place that will give them the anchor they need in their lives.' Planning systems for collective worship and other Christian activities such as a walk of witness are completed in partnership with local church schools across the benefice and in church worship. Headteachers, clergy, Sunday school teachers and parishioners come together to plan. This creates mutual and substantial benefits for all and strengthens the Christian character of the school. Recent professional development training has ensured that potential church school leaders within the school are given the skills and knowledge they will need to move to senior leadership positions in the future. The school has developed learning experiences for pupils to explore experiences of people of different faiths and to share their uniqueness in a safe and nurturing environment. Multi-cultural enrichment days enable pupils to explore global communities and develop their understanding of Christianity as a world faith. The school goes above and beyond in meeting the statutory requirements for collective worship and RE.

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