

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Newchurch-in-Pendle St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Spenbrook Road, Newchurch-in-Pendle, Burnley, Lancashire, BB12 9JP

Current SIAMS inspection grade **Outstanding**

Diocese **Blackburn**

Date of academy conversion May 2017

Name of multi-academy trust Cidari Education Limited

Date of inspection 24 May 2018

Type of school and unique reference number Academy 144474

Headteacher Pauline Nightingale

Inspector's name and number Carol Berry 324

School context

St Mary's is a very small school of 47 pupils situated in a rural area. Its pupils are drawn from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. There are more pupils than usual (15%) with special educational needs and disabilities. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The headteacher served as acting headteacher from September 2015 and was appointed to the permanent position in September 2016. The school became an academy in May 2017. Following the departure of the last incumbent there was an interregnum. The new vicar took up her post in October 2017. In recent years there have been significant changes to staff and governors.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The vision for a school where God's love is present everywhere results in a warm, secure learning environment. Relationships and behaviour are excellent. Pupils love coming to school.
- Prayer is central to the school community. Pupils of all ages, including the youngest, explain the importance of prayer and make valued contributions to the school's prayer life.
- Compassionate leadership from the headteacher has provided effective support through a challenging time. It has contributed to the school being a highly supportive working environment where teachers are able to be creative and develop their potential.
- Excellent leadership of religious education (RE) results in exciting and challenging lessons which effectively support progress. Pupils think deeply about their own beliefs and values.

Areas to improve

- Plan for spiritual development and reflection on Christian values in the wider curriculum, beyond collective worship and RE. This is to enrich the contribution made by the school's Christian character to pupils' spiritual development.
- Form sustained global partnerships with schools or churches in order to enhance pupils' understanding of their roles as global citizens.

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

Christian values are embedded in all aspects of school life. The values identified as the 'fruit of the spirit' in Galatians make a profound impact on relationships and behaviour management. The influence of these values extends into family life. They make a tangible impact on social and moral education. This is noted by parents who comment on the impact of Christian values on the way their children's characters are developing. Parents appreciate the chance to nominate their children for awards on the basis of the way they have put these values into practice at home. Pupils of all ages are able to relate their behaviour choices to Christian values. A boy in Reception related kindness to the importance of sharing toys. Older pupils readily link the fruits of the spirit to charity work, developing their explanations with reference to the teaching of Jesus and the way he showed God's love through his death on the cross. They make links with their interpretations of parables, such as 'The Good Samaritan', and the example of Jesus in being willing to touch people with leprosy. All members of the school community acknowledge the role of Christian values in creating the school's warm, caring, family atmosphere. As a result, the school provides a secure learning environment where all pupils, regardless of ability, make sound progress.

Spiritual development is well-supported by time for reflection in RE and the way in which prayer is understood by pupils. Christian values make a valuable contribution to spiritual development and staff regularly grasp opportunities for discussion or reflection on values such as kindness whilst teaching different subjects. For example, pupils discussed the importance of caring for God's world when planting in the school garden in science. However, consideration of Christian values and other opportunities for spiritual development are not secured by being incorporated routinely into curriculum planning for all subjects. RE makes a very effective contribution to cultural development, with the result that pupils have profound respect for diversity. A variety of opportunities allow pupils to engage with other cultures. For example, a visitor shared the experiences of Christians in Japan. The recent whole-school visits to a Hindu Temple fostered pupils' enthusiasm for exploring different faiths and cultures. Pupils think as global citizens. This springs from their support for Christian Aid and a curriculum which celebrates the cultural diversity. Pupils understand the need to support those in need beyond their own community and across the world. However, there are not at present any sustained global partnerships to develop further their understanding of the need to work for a fairer world.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is central to the life of the school. It is inspiring and often fun. Pupils sing, and sometimes dance, with enthusiasm to a range of Christian music. Worship is often interactive and pupils engage well, thinking deeply during pair activities or when asked to record their ideas. Collective worship also supports adult members of the community, including parents and staff. A teacher said, 'Worship is often a profound experience. What the children say often goes straight to my heart.' Planning ensures that pupils reflect on an appropriate range of Christian values, festivals and beliefs. The recent series focusing on the nature of God contributed to their excellent understanding of important beliefs about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. During worship on God as Father, pupils recorded their ideas about God on post-its. Responses included 'He is the Good Shepherd', 'He protects and guides me', 'He is the brilliant creator' and 'He listens to me'.

Prayer is important to all members of the school family. Pupils say prayer means 'God is looking after us' and 'you are never alone.' Prayer is supported by reflective tables in every classroom and the well-used interactive prayer table in the entrance hall. The 'Prayer Warriors' group ensures that pupils of all ages have opportunities to pray, even when they cannot yet write their own prayers. Topics for prayer are collected on the prayer board from the whole school throughout the week and the 'Prayer Warriors' meet to pray about these issues every Monday lunchtime. As a result, pupils regularly turn to prayer in times of need and pupils of all ages are confident in praying spontaneously. Parents comment on the way in which pupils pray for family members or in times of difficulty at home.

Leadership of worship is very effective. Pupils play an important part in its leadership and evaluation. The popular 'Worship Squad' plans worship weekly. Using a supportive planning sheet, they think carefully about the topic and how to present it. They then evaluate the worship they have led. Leading worship means that pupils have an excellent ability to recall and interpret Bible stories. Procedures for evaluation include routine reflections on worship from teachers, monitoring visits from governors and evaluation by pupils. This thorough monitoring and evaluation of worship informs the rigorous worship action plan. The partnership with the church makes an excellent contribution to worship. The vicar, and sometimes Christians from other churches, lead worship weekly. Pupils enjoy the visits of the vicar, for example, her 'wind-up Amen'. Parents appreciate the special services held in church on occasions such as Christmas, Easter and Harvest.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Excellent teaching and learning in RE support pupils of all abilities in making outstanding progress. Pupils search out answers to their own questions and apply their learning to their own lives. They are supported in developing skills through carefully planned collaborative activities. Skills such as interpretation of sacred texts, explaining meanings and understanding different viewpoints are important features of lessons. At the start of a Key Stage 2 lesson on the story of Esther, pupils worked in pairs to explore a mosaic from a Jerusalem Church. The newly implemented RE curriculum contributes well to high standards of teaching and learning. It includes an appropriate balance of teaching about Christianity and about other religions. The school has received valuable support from the diocese in implementing the new diocesan syllabus. The new syllabus includes the theological concepts drawn from the 'Understanding Christianity' course. Consequently, many pupils are able to explain what is meant by ideas such as incarnation and the Kingdom of God. Their understanding is supported by the art work displayed around the school which links these concepts to the big story of salvation as revealed in the Bible.

Learning is effectively underpinned by excellent procedures for assessment which are in line with the new RE curriculum. Pupils' work, in both their books and class scrapbooks, demonstrates that they make excellent progress in skills and concepts as they move through school. Pupils are assessed against appropriate RE learning outcomes at the end of each unit of work. This information is used to monitor progress, inform planning and support feedback. Helpful feedback to pupils uses the school's 'pink and green' feedback system. It builds on assessment information to provide extension questions which develop RE skills. The way in which work is differentiated ensures that all pupils work towards challenging RE outcomes. During work on beliefs about Jesus, some pupils interpreted stories about his life and others explored what people with different beliefs might think about Jesus. Leadership of RE is excellent. The recently appointed RE co-ordinator is passionate about developing RE. She has received training which has effectively supported her new role. Monitoring and evaluation of RE takes place on a half-termly cycle. It includes lesson observations and work scrutinies, with the result that she has a sound understanding of the impact of RE across the school.

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

The Christian vision for a school where God's love is present everywhere permeates all aspects of the school's life. Thinking about God's love in terms of the fruit of the spirit is a longstanding part of this vision. It has been integral to the lives of pupils and their families for many years. As a result, all members of the school community have a profound understanding of the Christian vision. They speak with confidence about the tangible impact it has on the life of the school and its transformational impact on individuals. Staff live the vision. A teacher said, 'We carry out the fruit of the spirit. We show it to each other and children see that.' The impact of the Christian vision has been particularly evident in supporting the school through the challenging circumstances of the last few years. Prior to becoming an academy, the school received a challenging Ofsted judgement. The school had significant issues to deal with and staff morale was low. There were significant changes to staff and governors. At the same time, the school was without the much valued support of the vicar. Many members of the community say that faith made an immense difference to the way in which the school community coped during this turbulent period. The school is now a positive working environment where staff feel sufficiently secure and supported to be creative and take risks. Staff say the headteacher's leadership has made a significant contribution to effecting this transformation. A teacher said, 'She is somebody who looks out for you and for your wellbeing. She always gives you support.'

Exceptionally strong partnerships with the church and the diocese support the development of collective worship and RE. Both meet statutory requirements. The RE leader is highly effective and is well-supported in her new role as a leader by the headteacher. The partnership with the church is mutually beneficial and enriches the life of the church, for example, by enlarging their vision and through vibrant worship led by the school. The vicar is a much valued friend of the school. The partnerships with local community effectively support pupils' understanding of their responsibilities to those around them. Pupils are often inspired to compassion and the whole school are proudly supporting the determination of a reception child in walking up Pendle Hill every week this year to raise money for the local hospice. However, there are currently no sustained global partnerships to further develop pupils' understanding of the need to work for justice across the world. Governance is very effective. The multi-academy trust has provided very effective support for the school's Christian foundation. The Chief Executive Officer knows the school well and provides both support and challenge, contributing to the improvements in academic progress and providing the headteacher with practical support. Governors have a sound understanding of their role and play a full part in the school's evaluation cycle. Monitoring and evaluation is very effective and informs the rigorous action plans devised to move the school forward. The school is excited about its future development as a Christian school and is thinking creatively about new and inspiring ways to move the school forward.