



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Margaret's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Heywood Road,
Prestwich,
Manchester M25 2BW

Previous SIAS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Manchester

Local authority: **Bury**

Dates of inspection: 11 February 2016

Date of last inspection: September 2010

School's unique reference number: 105323

Headteacher: Kathryn Perry

Inspector's name and number: Nigel Castledine (652)

School context

St Margaret's is an average sized primary school set in a semi-urban environment with extensive school grounds. It serves an increasingly mixed community of families from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Around one quarter of the children come from ethnic minority families. The proportion of children with special educational needs or disability is high. For disadvantaged pupils, the proportion is well below average but is increasing. The school is linked with the two local churches, both of which are a significant distance from the school.

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

- Positive and caring relationships between all members of the school community reflect Christian teachings and enable the children to flourish in the school's happy and productive learning environment
- Sustained and effective leadership from the headteacher, supported by the governors and senior leaders, has maintained a strong focus on the quality of pupil care and achievement at St Margaret's
- Well-planned outdoor learning fosters an affinity for each child with God's created world and provides for times of reflective thought and prayer

Areas to improve

- As a school family, select and celebrate explicit core Christian values to shape a clear Christian context that inspires every aspect of school life and work
- Formalise governor evaluation of St Margaret's distinctive Christian ethos to ensure it impacts positively on every aspect of school life and influences future development plans
- Extend the children's understanding of the Christian teaching of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit through its wider inclusion within collective worship

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

At the heart of school life is the Christian belief that every child is made in the image of God, and individually precious. This belief influences the school's emphasis on care and nurture which enable every child to thrive. However, whilst Christian distinctiveness is evident, there is insufficient emphasis on key specific Christian values. This has held back the school community's awareness of the potential wider impact of its Christian ethos. It also reduces the wider influence of a Christian context for all aspects of school life. Both national and school data show that pupil achievement has been sustained at above national average levels. Because learning is exciting and fulfilling, children therefore enjoy school life, with attendance figures above national averages. The school utilises its extensive grounds to enhance learning opportunities and to provide outdoor areas for spiritual refreshment. The outdoor areas include plenty of space for children to cultivate vegetables and fruits, and create wild habitats. These help the children to remember and reflect on their responsibilities in caring for God's created world. The pupils speak of their pleasure in achievement and the positive ways in which the teachers and support staff help their learning. The Christian ethos of the school encourages children to be polite, to behave well and to demonstrate thought for others. This is supported by the behaviour policy which emphasises a Christian approach to forgiveness and restorative justice. Respect for all within the school's rich mix of faiths, ethnicity and ways of life is universal, and is modelled for the children by all the staff team. Very rare incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively, with trends carefully monitored by senior staff and governors. These expectations of all members of the school community are Christian in their approach. However because this provision is not upheld by explicit and shared Christian values, its roots in gospel teaching remain indistinct. Children are helped to develop their spirituality and reflect on personal belief within their religious education (RE). This is exemplified in the link made between worship in Lent and a class RE project, selecting forty appropriate ways to observe Lent. As a core area of the curriculum, RE positively influences the life and collective worship of the school. RE is also an integral part of pupils' global studies within the International Primary Curriculum. This assists pupils to gain a growing understanding of Christianity as a major world faith. It also influences the ways in which the school family focuses its Christian concern for others. Fund raising regularly takes place for international charities such as the Red Cross. The school community has also responded to charity appeals in the locality. This is epitomised by the school's Harvest Festival proceeds being donated to the Barnabas charity for the homeless and socially deprived. Children want to show Christian service to others and willingly take on roles such as school councillors, reading buddies, playground and lunchtime helpers.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Daily worship is regarded as being of great value and is central to the life of the school community. This is because its relevance helps to focus minds on the spiritual and explore concepts of truth, meaning and purpose. This supports all in reflecting on their own personal beliefs alongside consideration of big questions of life such as 'Why did God make me?' Worship is planned in termly tranches which aid the consideration of faith through Christian teachings and values. These link to RE themes as well as to social and emotional aspects of learning. Worship outcomes are evaluated by both children and adults with their comments ensuring that worship remains relevant and inspirational. Whilst maintaining the centrality of Christianity in worship, due respect is given to the other faiths of the school community. The views of those with no particular personal faith are also respected. Worship contains elements of Anglican tradition, with the use of traditional prayers including the Lord's Prayer and the Grace. Carefully chosen worship songs are sung with enthusiasm. Worship has insufficient emphasis on God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit to give meaning to the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The Christian calendar is followed, marking out the seasons and major faith celebrations of the year. The school worships in the parish church at Christmas, Easter and Harvest. Such services are always well attended by parents and families. Faith learning events, such as 'Experience Easter', give opportunities for members of the local churches to help the children with reflective activities.

The churches are also used to give children opportunities to experience Christian ceremonies such as a wedding or baptism. The children's prayer and reflection group is regularly and enthusiastically involved in leading the worship, which includes their own prayers and reflections. All classes also get the opportunity for their children to experience leading Christian worship through song, Bible story, drama, prayer, music and poetry. As well as the children, leaders of worship include school staff, the parish priest and occasional visitors. During times of worship, children show reverence and respect and are very ready to join in the prayer and reflection. This is enhanced by the opportunities there are for prayer through the school day. These take place as a group at lunchtime and the end of the day, as well as individually in the quiet of reflection areas.

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

The dedicated and perceptive leadership of the headteacher has ensured that the high academic standards of the school have been maintained over a sustained period. She has a clear and accurate view of the school's development. Her work has been aided by the senior staff team and the governing body. However the school's Christian distinctiveness lacks the necessary clarity and emphasis that stems from explicit and shared core Christian values. Consequently, the Christian ethos lacks the sharp focus that would highlight and reinforce its impact on the academic standards and pupil support at the school. The governors are supportive and knowledgeable on matters pertaining to the Christian ethos of St Margaret's as a Church of England school. They do not, however, have a formalised approach to evaluating the influence of the school's Christian context on the quality of education and pupil nurture. The school has taken the necessary steps to act on the two development points from the last inspection. These focused on extending the educational provision for the children to enhance their spiritual growth. Due recognition is given to the professional development of all staff and governors in order to ensure high standards of church school provision. This is provided through appropriate local authority and diocesan courses. The sense of parents being an integral part of the St Margaret's school family is clear in their overwhelmingly positive responses to questionnaires on school life. They reflect parents' experiences of the school in supporting their child and the ease of conferring with staff. They also speak positively of the value placed on faith that parents have experienced at St Margaret's, alongside the respect given to non-Christian beliefs. The Christian ethos and prayer life of the school is often shared and discussed by pupils with their families. Being part of the diocese is celebrated by the Year 6 children who take part in the leavers' service in Manchester Cathedral. The school meets statutory requirements for collective worship.

SIAMS report February 2016 St Margaret's CofE VC Primary School Prestwich M25 2BW