

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Accrington St. John with St. Augustine Church of England Primary School	
Maudsley Street, Accrington, Lancashire, BB5 6AD	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Blackburn
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Lancashire
Date of inspection	19 January 2017
Date of last inspection	June 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 119445
Headteacher	Mark Proctor
Inspector's name and number	Lesley Brookbanks 771

School context

St John with St Augustine is an average sized primary school. The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives extra funding due to social disadvantage is above the national average. The number with special educational needs or disability is in line with the national average. Most are of White British background with a below average proportion who speak English as an additional language. Since the previous denominational inspection there have been significant staff changes including a new headteacher. The school has strong links with its church and parish although the church is currently without a vicar.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Accrington St. John with St. Augustine as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Distinctively Christian values are at the very heart of the school's work and influence the day to day actions of all who work and learn there.
- The headteacher, governors and staff have a shared Christian vision and are totally committed to the self-evaluation and continuous development of the school's outstanding Christian character.
- Relationships between all members of the school community are firmly rooted in its Christian ethos and lead to the exemplary behaviour of its pupils.
- Religious Education (RE) has a high profile and strong subject leadership resulting in high expectations and excellent progress.
- There are very strong and mutually supportive links between the school, the church and the local community which make a significant contribution to the school's Christian character.

Areas to improve

- Improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of the range of faiths studied so that it is as good as that based on Christianity.
- Develop an outdoor prayer space to further enhance pupils' spiritual development.

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

This is a school where identified Christian values are truly lived out by all members of the school community. Christian values of love, joy, gentleness, kindness, self-control, patience and peace underpin every aspect of school life. Pupils know, understand, and fully embrace these. They recognise how Christian values make a difference to their school by showing great respect and care for one another. They are unfailingly well mannered and polite. Pupils from each class who demonstrate the school's Christian values are named and celebrated each week. In addition, the pupils' Flame worship team look for and celebrate exemplary behaviour and award 'What would Jesus do?' wristbands. A Key Stage 2 pupil commented, 'Jesus lived by and showed Christian values all the time and we should too.' The Christian character of the school is celebrated very well through interactive prayer spaces as well as in high quality display. These are creative and rich in questions which inspire pupils to engage in personal prayer and reflection which effectively supports their religious and spiritual development. A large values mural in the playground is designed and painted by pupils. This supports and challenges them in thinking and making right choices. Parents speak highly of the school and how Christian values influence their child's positive actions at home. Relationships at all levels are exceptional ensuring pupils know they are loved and matter to the adults in school. Consequently, they feel safe and happy and identify who they would talk to if they need to share a worry. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils is given high priority. As a result, RE and worship have high prominence. Pupils have a growing awareness and understanding of multicultural Christianity and celebrate diversity throughout their learning. This is carefully planned for in RE and across the wider curriculum. The school's positive approach to behaviour management and support for vulnerable pupils and families is exceptional and rooted in Christian love. Its high level of success is reflected in above average attendance and the good progress made by all pupils. Many enter school with attainment below national expectations. However, all ability groups achieve effectively because the school knows its pupils extremely well and meets their individual needs appropriately. Where needed, intervention and outreach support for pupils and families has a significant and sustained impact on their wellbeing. Pupils are aware of the importance of Christian giving through support for a range of local and global charities. Often charities are chosen because they are close to the heart of the school community such as Epilepsy Action, Cold Cots and the local foodbank.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship inspires the whole school community. It is at the heart of the school day and promotes the Christian distinctiveness of the school exceptionally well. Pupils in this school really know Jesus. A child explained, 'If we didn't have the Bible we wouldn't understand why Jesus was so important and how he sacrificed himself for us.' High quality planning of Christian themes includes a strong emphasis on Bible teaching and Christian values. Pupils have excellent knowledge and understanding of Anglican practice, church seasons and festivals and the nature of Christian worship. For example, the symbolism of the Trinity is regularly used in worship through prayer and the lighting of three candles. This understanding is effectively supported through high quality work in RE. As a result of this emphasis, pupils articulate good understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are enthusiastic, reverent and respectful in their responses to worship. Pupils regularly plan worship independently and in small groups. This means that they have a high level of ownership and involvement in the delivery of worship. The pupils' Flame worship group has an important role. They accurately summarise this saying, 'our ideas are listened to and other children enjoy them, we make a difference'. The Flame group carry out regular evaluation of worship which means that their views are shared and often acted upon. They meet with governors to discuss developments and actively encourage parents to attend weekly school services in church. Monitoring and evaluation of worship is regular and purposeful and also involves staff, parents and governors. The governor specifically linked to worship joins the school for worship every week. She regularly talks to pupils and staff. As a result of her active involvement, she is fully informed about developments in worship and monitoring and evaluation. This enables her to participate fully in the review of worship as well as keep other governors very well informed. Prayer is an integral part of school life which is given high importance by all members of the school community. Pupils have very good understanding of the importance of prayer and know The Lord's Prayer and Anglican responses. They explain how 'prayer is our time to speak to God'. They give many examples of different times when they pray and how it helps them, particularly in difficult times. Pupils highly value times of personal prayer and reflection, especially their engaging interactive classroom prayer spaces. However, the school's use of outside spaces to enhance pupils' spiritual development is not as well developed. Class prayer boxes are actively used and enable prayer requests to be shared and valued. Parents of all faiths and none appreciate that worship gives pupils a sense of belonging and enables them to reflect on their beliefs.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Pupils are unanimously enthusiastic about RE. This is because they enjoy the wide range of creative, practical and

imaginative approaches to learning planned for them. Drama and role play enable them to express the feelings of people from the Bible and empathise with them. Creative approaches are evident in high quality display as well as pupil's exemplary work. Pupils of all abilities talk about being challenged to think deeply, reflect and explore 'big questions'. They give many examples, such as identifying Bible stories which reflect the fruits of the spirit. They share ideas openly and honestly. One pupil explained, 'If ever I lose sight of God, I'll carry on trying to find him like the shepherd who lost his sheep'. The impact of RE on pupils' spirituality and social, moral and cultural development is exceptional. Teaching and learning is extremely good and often outstanding. RE lessons are well planned and structured. This ensures that pupils learn effectively. A recent multicultural week focused on faiths other than Christianity and explored a range of cultures. This enables pupils to understand and respect diversity and something of the range of faiths and culture in the UK and beyond. Pupils learn about multicultural Christianity in RE and across the curriculum. However, pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity is of a recognisably higher standard than that of the other world faiths. RE is exceptionally well led and managed. During the recent long-term absence of the subject leader, the deputy headteacher led RE through a period of great change. These developments have resulted in rapid improvement at all levels. Effective and consistent feedback and marking and robust systems for assessment and tracking now ensure that all children make good progress. Standards in RE are at least in line with national expectations and often above. The school has worked in partnership with advisers from Blackburn Diocese to deliver training and promote rapid improvement in RE. The number of pupils attaining at greater depth in all classes has improved significantly during the last two years. RE has the status of a core subject in a highly-focused school improvement plan. This means that everyone knows what is to be done and enables ambitious targets to be met successfully. Monitoring and evaluation are firmly embedded with staff, governors and pupils fully involved. The RE link governor is a regular visitor and is highly proactive and informed. As a result, she has detailed understanding of developments and can report progress knowledgeably to all governors.

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

The leadership and vision of the headteacher in driving forward developments as a church school is exemplary. A strong and enthusiastic team of staff and governors ably support him. Everyone involved with the school, including parents, are highly committed to its Christian vision. In summary, this is for God to be seen working in all aspects of school life underpinned by distinctively Christian values. All members of the community understand the school's Christian values. Parents especially welcome the invitation to be involved in a values day organised by the Flame worship team. This helps them to witness how wholeheartedly pupils understand Christian values and see their impact on the school's Christian ethos. There is a strong focus on continual school improvement where church school issues, RE, worship and wellbeing are prioritised. All statutory requirements for RE and worship are met through effective and proactive leadership which leads to continual improvement and no complacency. Both areas for development from the previous inspection have been fully addressed. These were to develop an assessment system and enable children to reflect on their experiences and beliefs. Self-evaluation outcomes are used successfully to continually drive the school forward in all aspects of its Christian distinctiveness. Governors are proactive and know the school very well. They are actively involved in monitoring and evaluation and provide both challenge and support for the headteacher. This results in a shared commitment to the school's future development. There is a consistent emphasis on supporting the development and leadership role of all staff. The school enjoys strong and effective links within the local and wider community, the church and Diocese. The Flame worship team are excited to collaborate with a similar children's group in another Anglican school. They visit each other's school to share ideas and plan joint worship. This enables both schools to be outward looking and share good practice. Many pupils attend a special service called 'messy church' and periodic Sunday services at the parish church. Parents speak highly of the school and value its openness. They feel supported, particularly in times of great need. They say that, 'the care, love and support in this Christian school promote important values for life and helps our children shine'.

SIAMS report (January 2017) Accrington St. John with St. Augustine, Lancashire, BB5 6AD