

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Rishton Methodist Primary School

George Street Rishton Blackburn BB1 4JF

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Methodist District	Blackburn
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Lancashire
Date/s of inspection	1 December 2016
Date of last inspection	8 November 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 119396
Headteacher	Janet Neale
Inspector's name and number	Gillian Simm 881

School context

Rishton Methodist Primary School is a smaller than average school (174 pupils) in an area of high social and economic deprivation. The number of children eligible for Free School Meals is above the national average (33%). The headteacher was appointed in January 2014 and a new deputy head was appointed from September 2016. There have been several other staff new to school since the headteacher took up her post and pupil numbers are growing. 5% of pupils are from ethnic minority groups and 4% have English as an additional language. The school is situated next to Rishton Methodist Church.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Rishton Methodist Primary School as a Methodist school are good

- The school's Christian vision is at the heart of everything the school does and results in a caring learning environment which is a fulfilling place to learn and work.
- The school successfully promotes and reinforces its Christian values through collective worship, opportunities for reflection, Religious Education (RE) and its behaviour policy.
- Collective worship is engaging and motivational and creates a special time for all.
- There are excellent links with the church. The minster and foundation governors support the school and the local community, and enrich collective worship.

Areas to improve

- Promote the Methodist character of the school more explicitly so that the whole community understands how this is shaping its Christian distinctiveness.
- Continue to develop and extend pupil participation in the decision making and self-evaluation processes of the school thereby giving all pupils a voice.
- Provide a variety of development opportunities to ensure that leaders are well equipped to sustain and develop the school's distinctive Christian character.

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

The school's mission statement is to 'develop, educate and nurture the whole child to his/her potential within the context of Christian beliefs, practice and values'. This is clearly displayed in school, on the school website and at the beginning of all key policies. The school's six core Christian values were chosen by the whole school community and are extremely well understood and used by all members of the school family. The core values were chosen and have been adapted to be of relevance to the needs of the children. For example, perseverance was included to link with the school's 'growth mind-set' approach to learning and their desire for pupils to have high aspirations. The pupils apply them to their relationships and to their behaviour choices resulting in a calm and respectful atmosphere. Children are clear that the values 'are for everyone not just the children'. Their understanding of the values is developed continuously through RE and reflections on behaviour as well as in collective worship. For example, during work on Diwali, pupils were asked to reflect on 'who was a good friend in this story?' The Christian ethos of the school supports the children so that they know they are valued and enjoy their education. Consequently, attendance is good and many barriers to learning are broken down contributing to good progress and attainment. The recent appointment of a learning mentor is also having a positive effect on achievement and demonstrates the school's commitment to meeting the needs of all the children. Staff model Christian values in the relationships that they create amongst themselves and with the children. One member of staff described it as 'being part of a family' whilst a parent commented 'you can tell that the staff care for one another as well as for the children'. Since September 2015 the Methodist Circuit has funded a school chaplain to work within the school. Parents and staff speak very positively of her high visibility and involvement around the school, describing her as 'a breath of fresh air'. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children has a high profile in the school and many opportunities are planned into the curriculum, collective worship and RE. Initiatives such as Forest Schools, Churches Together and the 'Higher Futures For You' programme allow children to have experiences beyond their locality and develop high aspirations. Opportunities for reflection are everywhere. Each classroom has a reflective area, collective worship includes time for reflection and pupils are able to reflect on their behaviour in the consequence room. Reflective journals have recently been introduced into RE lessons. These are enabling teachers to understand children's experiences and beliefs in a way that informs future planning. In one RE lesson, the teacher made explicit links to the school's Christian values by encouraging the children to think of how they could show friendship to someone in need at Christmas time. By the end of the lesson the children had several plans in place including how they could continue to help that person beyond Christmas. The RE syllabus that the school has adopted helps to impact on Christian distinctiveness by fostering understanding and respect towards the different faith perspectives. This syllabus, however, provides only limited opportunities for pupils to learn about the life and teachings of John Wesley. The KS2 children are given a voice through the school council and the newly formed ethos group however, at present the KS1 pupils are not represented in these groups.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is firmly at the core of daily school life and is based around themes developing pupils' understanding of the school's Christian values. The children obviously enjoy this time and the headteacher commented that pupils now enter collective worship 'with an air of expectation and a willingness to participate'. The school chaplain and newly appointed worship co-ordinator are involved in planning the worship with the growing involvement of the Ethos Group. The 'Roots and Fruits' materials are used as an aid to planning and this, along with support from the School Chaplain, ensures there are many links to Bible stories and teachings. A candle is lit to help pupils focus and remember that worship is a very special time. It is blown out at the end and one child commented that 'this is so the smoke can go up to heaven'. All teaching staff lead collective worship over the course of each half term and they feel this is a special time for the school to come together as a family. One member of staff commented that 'in our busy lives it is also a time for us to reflect upon the Christian values and ask ourselves, "am I doing that?"' Children are now involved in collective worship and every week one class plans and leads collective worship based on the theme for that half term. Parents have several opportunities to take part in collective worship including a weekly celebration assembly which acknowledges children's achievements both within and beyond school. Every week the children take part in collective worship in church and special worship days are carried out throughout the year in co-ordination with the church. As a result of this, staff have noticed that pupils are now 'feeling much more comfortable in church' and this has led to more families attending worship on a regular basis and some children asking to be baptised. Pupils are developing their understanding of the purpose of prayer. One child said 'it is about speaking to God'. Another said that 'it makes us not worry so much'. The children know some prayers that they say at lunchtime, in collective worship and at the end of the day. Although some children were familiar with the wording of 'God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, they were less sure what it meant.

Leadership of collective worship is good and individual worship sessions are evaluated by the member of staff who led the worship as well as a number of pupils from Key Stage 2. However, the current level of evaluation is not sufficiently comprehensive to provide a full picture of the impact of worship.

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

The dedicated Christian leadership of the headteacher sets a clear direction for the school and she is supported extremely well by staff and governors. The school's vision for a caring school where Christian values are at the heart of everything has resulted in an environment where everyone feels nurtured and supported. There is much evidence to show that the school's mission statement to 'develop, educate and nurture the whole child' is having a positive impact on raising standards. The headteacher has correctly identified areas for development and a high priority has been given to the development of RE and collective worship. A new, but enthusiastic subject leader for RE and collective worship has identified needs which are being addressed and this is already having a positive impact on approaches to teaching, learning and assessment in RE. He is well supported by the headteacher and school chaplain. The appointment of a learning mentor has helped to reduce barriers to learning and ensure all pupils meet their potential. The governing body knows the school well because of the effective sharing of information by the senior leaders and their insightful challenge. They have ensured opportunities for training and development have focused on the school's priorities during a period of change. However, more professional development opportunities for senior staff are needed to ensure they grow and develop as Christian leaders. The link governor plays a strong role in the life of the school. Links with the church have been strengthened since the last inspection and the partnership with the Methodist Church is now very good and mutually enriching. Pupils attend collective worship in church every week and joint events throughout the church year enhance the worship programme. Although the style of worship regularly reflects Methodist traditions these features are not promoted and so pupils do not perceive the significances of the wider Methodist community of which they are a part. Recently the Methodist Circuit has provided a school chaplain who has a strong involvement in the life of the school. One governor commented 'the school is now seen in the same light as one of the churches within the circuit'. Many children from the school also attend events such as Messy Church and film nights organised by the church. Through the Churches Together initiative links with other church schools in Rishton are strong and benefiting pupils and the whole community. Parents are supportive of the school and recognise and value the caring ethos. They enjoy the regular occasions for them to share in school worship, particularly the class-led and celebration worship. Many are coming to know the church through their involvement in collective worship. Governors feel that the school is now 'not self-conscious about being a church school'. Development points from the last inspection have been largely addressed although more work is still required in developing a more integral approach to deepening pupils' understanding of Methodist history and tradition. The statutory requirements for collective worship and RE have been met.

SIAMS report [December 2016] [Rishton Methodist Primary School] [BB14JF]