

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### **Stansfield Hall Church of England/Free Church Primary School** Todmorden Road, Summit, Littleborough OL15 9PR

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Manchester</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Local authority	Rochdale
Date of inspection	7 December 2017
Date of last inspection	December 2014
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 105810
Headteacher	Richard Walthall
Inspector's name and number	Frank Driessen (675)

#### **School context**

Stansfield Hall CE/Free Church is a smaller than average joint Anglican and Methodist primary school situated in a rural area of Rochdale. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is above the national average as is the proportion eligible for pupil premium. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as a foreign language is well below the national average. Pupil mobility is high with 23% of pupils starting in year groups other than Reception. The school recently achieved the Stonewall School's Champion Award.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Stansfield Hall CE/Free Church Primary School as a Church of England school are good**

- The very enthusiastic headteacher and deputy, strongly supported by staff, lead the school with great drive, keenness and warmth. This creates a highly inclusive, welcoming and family-centred Christian ethos which impacts positively on pupils' learning and ensures good progress for all.
- The exemplary commitment to diversity and equality has created a culture of tolerance and respect for all.
- The excellent work of the leader of pastoral support, the Lego lunchtime club facilitator and the leader of the 'Treehouse' support room ensures the valuing of its children and families remain at the heart of the school's Christian mission.
- Strong and mutually beneficial relationships with parents, churches and the community create an inclusive sense of Christian belonging.

#### **Areas to improve**

- Establish a more systematic cycle of scrutiny and robust self-evaluation, involving all stakeholders, to secure the continuing development of the school's Christian distinctiveness.
- Communicate the school's distinctive Christian values more explicitly including through the website and policy documentation.
- Embed class reflection areas as freely accessible quiet spaces where pupils can explore high quality resources and ideas for personal prayer. This will deepen pupils' understanding of the big questions raised by collective worship and promote their spirituality, faith, belief and values.
- Support pupils in developing the leadership skills to independently plan and deliver acts of worship. This will boost their confidence and enhance their spiritual growth.

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

This is a good school which is marked by a calm and purposeful atmosphere. The caring relationships between pupils and adults are characterised by Christian values of love, forgiveness and respect. There is a real sense of community and a passion for equality that has forged a highly inclusive and loving Christian family. All pupils are cherished as unique individuals. Many pupils and parents do not, however, fully articulate the Christian values when talking about relationships or link them to the Christian vision. Nevertheless, relationships are excellent and the positive impact of the staff enhances the self-esteem of the pupils. Pastoral care and support for families is outstanding. In return, parents have a great confidence in and respect for the school and all it does for them. Effective pre-emptive strategies and highly inclusive support networks for both pupils and families have been firmly embedded by a dedicated staff team. They actively ensure that barriers for learning are minimised for all pupils. As a result all learners, including those who are vulnerable and those having special needs, make good progress from their starting points. The use of different 'crews' to target particular issues within identified groups of pupils is also highly effective. A parent commented on the transformational affect the school's approach had upon his son who had settled down considerably since arriving from his previous school. Pupils love coming to school and attendance has risen as a consequence.

Pupils' spiritual development is encouraged through reflection on the awe and wonder of God's world. This includes the use of outdoor initiatives such as Forest Schools and Wild Crew. The emphasis on respect and tolerance towards all makes a strong contribution to the school's Christian character and to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC). Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the impact its values has had upon their children and wider family life. One parent said, 'There's a lovely family feel to our school'. Another added, 'We love the school and all the staff. The confidence our children have is all down to the school'. Pupils are able to articulate their understanding of why particular behaviours occur and, as a consequence, are empathic and emotionally literate. They are able to care, to understand and, importantly, to forgive. An active school council and prefects help at lunchtimes. They also devise and present special acts of collective worship and discuss practical ways of making the school a better place for their peers. As a consequence, relationships are excellent at all levels and there is a strong emphasis on mutual support and teamwork. Support for international charities such as Christian Aid enables pupils to develop an understanding of the global dimension of Christianity. Their good understanding of different cultures and faiths supports a caring school. Pupils are able to relate extremely well to the needs of others not only in the school but also in the local and national communities and have a respect for diversity and difference. These are obvious strengths of the school.

Pupils enjoy religious education (RE). One commented that 'We learn many different interesting things' whilst another added 'RE is fun and makes us think' because of the 'big' questions they are asked. One pupil observed that 'Bible stories teach us how to live our lives'. They recognise the importance of lessons learned through the teachings of Jesus. An outliving of this is seen in the way pupils support a range of local charities separate from the school situation. These include bag-packing at the local supermarket, supporting homeless people and donating toys to children who have none.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Pupils are very positive about worship and value it well. It is a key focal point for each day that engages pupils and sets the tone by which they should behave. This is because Christian values are promoted and explored over a period of time. Themed around the Values for Life resources, acts of worship reflect the teachings of Jesus Christ through Bible stories and scripture and are distinctively Christian in character. They are inclusive and valued by all pupils including those of other faiths or of none. A range of leaders including school staff and the Anglican and Methodist ministers support worship. This gives pupils a richer experience of the worship time together. The school council plans and leads worship on special occasions. These include Remembrance and charity events such as Children In Need. Pupils, however, are only occasionally involved with the overall planning and leadership of the yearly programme. The worship focus is effectively aided by the altar at the front of the hall upon which is a cross and Bible.

Achievement is celebrated weekly and enables all pupils to develop feelings of self-worth. Learners experience opportunities for prayer in worship and church celebrations. There are, however, few opportunities for this experience to transfer and become embedded in school life. Class-based reflection areas are common across the school but their use as an aid to pupils' spiritual development appears under-utilised. Pupils benefit from the school's good relationship and enthusiastic involvement of both incumbents. Working with the headteacher they enable the school to explore and develop the Christian values which contribute effectively to pupils' SMSC. Both ministers lead worship regularly. Because of the closer proximity of St James, pupils attend the Anglican church

more frequently than the Methodist church in order to celebrate Christian festivals such as Easter, Harvest and Christmas. The churches and leaders also provide support for pupils' knowledge, experience and understanding of Anglican and Methodist traditions. This is enhanced through celebrations at other local churches such as St Chad's Year 2 Banner Service and Manchester Cathedral's Year 6 Leavers' Service. Pupils enjoy the times they attend church, as do parents. This enables everyone to celebrate being part of the extended church family. Class-based worship provides an opportunity for pupils to explore and reflect upon the current half term value. One pupil shared how he thought 'Our Bible stories teach us how to live our lives better'. Older pupils are developing their understanding of the nature of the Trinity. They are able to share their views on God as Father and Jesus as Son but are less clear about the character of the Holy Spirit. Monitoring of worship takes place on a termly basis through discussion with pupils. Changes of content have come about as a consequence of this feedback, such as the use of different worship songs.

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

Teamwork is at the heart of the school's promotion of its Christian vision. This is further underpinned by the strength of the school's inclusive nature. The head teacher and deputy set high expectations. They lead by example and humour to inspire and motivate the staff and give the school its strong sense of Christian mission. 'There are no wallpaper children here. Everybody matters' was the simple but effective statement of the head teacher who is seen by parents as 'living the values he aspires to'. He is a dedicated advocate for the children in his care and brings to life equality, inclusion, and mutual support within the school. Because of this approach, diversity is tremendously valued with disadvantaged and vulnerable groups exceptionally well supported thereby demonstrating the impact of the Christian message. All members of the school and governing body support and promote the school vision, which positively influences relationships, attendance, behaviour and learning. The governors are very committed and active in the life of the school. They have gone some considerable way to evaluate and promote the distinctive Christian ethos of the school as a church school. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and are supportive yet challenging through robust discussion. This approach, however, needs to be placed on a more formal footing. The views of parents are well-valued but, as yet, they have not been systematically consulted concerning the effectiveness of the school as a church school. Christian leadership is well developed through the head teacher's close involvement with the Rochdale Anglican Federation, which supports the distinctive nature of the local family of church schools. The development of leadership skills through devolved responsibilities and training is evident but without an emphasis on their development within a church school. Requirements regarding the provision of RE and collective worship are met. Pupils have access to a newly developed curriculum that excites and challenges them. A parent commented, 'The children's enthusiasm seems to help them learn much better'. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities. These broaden pupils' experiences and help develop individual skills and talents.

Parents support both school and church events very well. There is much enthusiasm for what the school is achieving and the impact of its Christian foundation on their children. 'The right strategies are in place,' said one parent. In particular, parents say that the school's distinctive and inclusive Christian nature gives their children a tolerance and respect for others. Relationships with the local churches are very strong. The Methodist minister and Anglican incumbent make important contributions to the worshipping and pastoral life of the school. They also support and enhance the delivery of RE lessons. The Anglican church is used as an effective curriculum resource. Pupils say that Father Ian and Reverend Ruth discuss the important things of the Bible that help them live out their lives. One pupil said, 'Through their talks about God and Jesus we learn how to live our lives properly'. There is regular support through prayer. Church and school celebrations and services are advertised in the school newsletter. Progress reports on the school are delivered to both the PCC and the Methodist Circuit Meeting. The school's distinctive church identity is strengthened by these effective partnerships. Community cohesion is well enhanced through a variety of community-based activities including the out-of-school involvement of the school choir. The pupils support the school's wide range of charitable works well with one child pointing out that 'it's important for everyone to have the same things so no one goes without'. Stansfield Hall CE/Free Church school is very much at the heart of its community and demonstrates the outworking of Christian values in action for the benefit of all stakeholders.

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