

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Matthias Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Wordsworth Road, Hackney, London, N16 8DD	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	London
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Name of federation	Primary Advantage Federation
Date/s of inspection	28 November 2016
Date of last inspection	September 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 100267
Executive Principal Headteacher	Sian Davies Orlene Badu
Inspector's name and number	Pamela Draycott 161

School context

The school is in a federation of six schools. Each has its own headteacher and school committee overseen by an executive principal and governing body. The percentages of pupils from minority ethnic groups, mainly Black Caribbean and Black African, and those who speak English as an additional language are high. Likewise, the percentages for whom the school receives extra funding due to social disadvantage and those with special educational needs are high. Most come from Christian backgrounds with a small minority from other faith traditions. There are longstanding links with St Matthias church which is situated next door.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Matthias Primary School, Hackney as a Church of England school are good

- The school benefits from its collaborative membership of the Primary Advantage Federation which impacts positively on its management, life and work as a church school.
- Based on key values explored within a Christian context there is a purposeful and calm learning environment where pupils are valued as individuals.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good and relationships are strong. This reflects the school's Christian values very well.
- The varied worship programme and religious education (RE) have both improved since the previous denominational inspection. They make a good contribution to supporting and extending the school's Christian ethos and to the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of all pupils.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that SMSC development opportunities are clearly planned for and appropriately implemented across all areas of the curriculum, explicitly linking this with work around British Values and the school's Christian ethos.
- Engage pupils more regularly in taking leading roles in acts of worship in school.
- In line with the whole school focus on improving writing, provide regular opportunities for extended writing activities in RE, drawing on a range of styles and genres.

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

The school's Christian ethos impacts positively on supporting the learning, progress and personal growth and wellbeing of all pupils. Its values, explored within a Christian context, are kindness, forgiveness, respect, resilience, celebration, service and collaboration. These are clearly demonstrated through pupils' thoughtful and positive behaviour both in classrooms and around the school site. Relationships are strong and based on the principle of 'Love Thy Neighbour' taken from the teaching of Jesus. This is a clear reflection of Christian belief and practice recognised by both pupils and staff. The importance of faith clearly underpins the school's life and work. St Matthias primary school is a happy and welcoming place where pupils, including the most vulnerable, make good progress from their various starting points. Academic attainment and attendance are improving. These are both now above the national and local authority averages. This is a clear expression of the value placed by staff on each pupil with their various needs, gifts and talents. There is a consistency of expectations with regard to behaviour and attitudes evident which supports pupils' learning well. There is a purposeful and calm learning environment in evidence around the school. This is well supported by good displays which appropriately celebrate pupils' achievements and the school's Christian foundation. Based on an expression of its Christian love and concern for all, the school provides effective support for its most vulnerable pupils and their families. A number of whom are not eligible to claim state funding for instance because of their immigration status. The school provides this care and support, for example, by employing a home-school liaison officer.

The school's Christian and inclusive foundation strongly supports the good SMSC development of pupils. The worship programme and RE curriculum are key drivers in this alongside some opportunities taken in other curriculum areas. However, explicit planning for this so that opportunities are not missed is not clearly in place. Neither is the link between SMSC development opportunities, British Values and the school's Christian values clearly expressed across the different policies and practices to support these areas of school life and work. Charitable giving is clearly linked by pupils as expressing the school's Christian foundation and especially to Jesus' example of care and concern for all. Pupils rightly recognise the importance of RE and see that, 'it helps you learn about what different people think and believe' which is 'good because it means you can respect others who think differently from you'. The RE curriculum, extended through RE days provides a range of positive opportunities to explore Christianity as a world-wide faith.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is a much valued feature of the school's daily life. 'It gives you time to think and pray and focuses you on being together and thinking about God,' as a Year 6 pupil stated. The programme is well planned and includes appropriate opportunities to consider the school's Christian values as well as biblical teaching and Christian festivals. Many pupils are able to make clear links between Jesus' teaching and their own attitudes and beliefs, recognising his importance for Christians. For example, a Year 4 pupil said that 'worship is important because it shows respect to God and helps you think about what is the right thing to do.' Pupils respond willingly and participate actively in worship by answering questions, focused paired discussion, singing and joining in prayer. However, their role in leading acts of worship in school is under-developed. The programme is varied and includes weekly worship in church and a Friday celebration assembly. During this time the whole school celebrates a range of achievements, including RE pupil of the week. This contributes well to the strong sense of belonging that there is amongst the school community.

Pupils take an active part in prayer, including reading their own prayers. They regularly say The Lord's Prayer and can explain something of its significance for Christians. They also know the school prayer and write and use their own prayers confidently. Through worship pupils become familiar with traditional Anglican practices such as a lit candle which 'represents Jesus'. The weekly service in church also supports well the school's Christian foundation. Pupils have a good, age-appropriate understanding of the Christian concept of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and of key times in the Christian year. A lower Key Stage 2 pupil remarked 'God the Father, made everything, Jesus, the Son died on the cross and the Holy Spirit is God in the world today.' Effective monitoring and evaluation of worship by senior leaders is appropriately acted upon to improve provision and the experience of those taking part. An annual pupil survey includes questions which reflect on the worship programme. Comments for improvement made by pupils have been carefully considered and implemented leading to ongoing development.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

RE is given a high priority throughout the school. There is an appropriate balance between teaching which focuses on Christianity and that which focuses on other world faiths, including for example Hinduism and Islam. Staff create an atmosphere in the classroom which enables pupils to speak confidently and share ideas. The subject leader

supports staff very well in developing their subject knowledge and in providing a good range of strategies to encourage discussion, debate and reflection. This effectively supports pupils' spiritual and moral development as do the regular RE days which explore and extend specific topics related to key aspects of the RE curriculum. These days have included a focus on Muhammad Ali as an inspirational person of faith as well as a day where different faiths were explored. Most recently they had a day on Ruby Bridges who as a six year old child was part of the American civil rights movement of the 1960s. This led to a professionally produced book on her life made by the pupils. Such involvement contributes well to pupils' learning and also indicates the importance placed on RE by both staff and pupils. Whole school initiatives, such as its focus on improving writing is being applied to activities in RE. For example, plans are beginning to be worked on which encourages extended writing in RE based on the genre of writing being focused on by a particular year group in literacy. This practice has yet to become embedded.

The standards achieved and progress made in RE are in line with other 'core' subjects across the school. These are at least in line with, and sometimes higher than, national averages. Assessment procedures, following whole school and federation practices, give clear steps for pupils to improve their learning further. This is beginning to inform teachers' planning appropriately. The parish priest is the link governor for RE and worship. He periodically monitors practice and is meeting more regularly with the RE subject leader. Together key areas for development in RE have been identified and firm plans put in place to address them. The parish priest sometimes visits classrooms and has classes visit the church. Most recently this has engaged two classes well in learning about Christian baptism, its significance and symbolism. This is impacting positively on developments in RE. For example, pupils from these classes enthusiastically and confidently shared their learning with others in school.

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

This improving church school is ably led by a headteacher whose vision of service to its pupils and their families clearly expresses the school's Christian foundation. In this she is well supported by colleagues both within the federation and the school. There is a consistency of approach to learning and teaching and to managing behaviour which ensures that the school's Christian values are well known by staff and pupils. The successful approaches to attendance, inclusion and behaviour is well rooted in the school's Christian vision. The governing body and the school committee are knowledgeable and appropriately supportive of the school's Christian distinctiveness. Issues identified for improvement in the previous denominational report have been carefully addressed and enhance both provision and practice. The school knows itself and recognises its distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school well. This means that its self-evaluation is accurate and leads to clear steps for improvement. Arrangements for RE and worship meets statutory requirements. Both areas are well led and managed. Enthusiastic and focused leadership of RE fittingly promotes the dissemination of good practice. The subject leader attends senior leaders meetings once every two weeks to outline RE developments. This is supportive of the subject leader and ensures that senior leaders keep abreast of developments in the subject area. This practice is a clear indication of the importance placed on RE by senior leaders and its positive impact on school life and work. Effective induction and on-going training of staff includes a good focus on working within the church school sector. This is helpful in supporting the professional development of staff and in identifying possible leaders for church schools.

Links with the parish church are good and appropriate use is made of support provided at Diocesan level through courses and through link adviser provision. Relationships with parents is strong and they are appropriately informed about and engaged in their children's education. Parents overall are supportive of the school's Christian ethos which they rightly see as impacting positively on attitudes, behaviour and progress.

SIAMS report [November 2016] St Matthias CE VA primary school, Hackney, London, N16 8DD