

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### St Matthew's Church of England School

16-18 Old Pye Street

London

SW1P 2DG

**Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding**

**Current SIAMS grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: London**

Local authority: Westminster

Date of inspection: 19 May 2016

Date of last inspection: December 2010

School's unique reference number: 101138

Headteacher: Rachel Jewitt

Inspector's name and number: Jayne Pavlou 628

### School context

St Matthew's Church of England School is smaller than the average-sized primary school with a Nursery, serving the parish of St Matthew's, Westminster. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average with over 30 different first languages currently spoken by pupils. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, as is the number of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding. Pupil mobility is extremely high, although the school roll is increasing. The school makes provision for both a breakfast club, managed by the Governors and an after school programme.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Matthew's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The value placed upon each individual, along with the provision of a nurturing and supportive learning environment positively impacts the well-being of the whole school community.
- The strong and mutually beneficial partnership with the Church makes a positive contribution to the school's Christian ethos and character.
- A high degree of understanding and respect for diversity amongst the pupils impacts the quality of their relationships with one another, resulting in exemplary behaviour.
- The aspirational and determined leadership of Headteacher, ably supported by her senior leadership team significantly impacts the achievement of all pupils.

### Areas to improve

- To revisit the well embedded Christian values, enabling all members of the school community to deepen their understanding of and express more confidently how the values link to biblical teaching.
- To strengthen the teaching of Religious Education (RE) by reviewing the provision in Early Years Foundation Stage, ensuring that both learning objectives and pupils activities have a sharper RE focus.

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

The school's inclusive Christian ethos is evident to all upon entering the school and is reflected in the school's motto 'Belonging, Believing, Achieving'. Pupils, staff, governors and parents alike, speak of the warmth of welcome that all receive and the value which is placed upon every individual. One church pastoral assistant summarised this well by describing the 'profound sense of belonging' that members of the school community experience. This, in conjunction with the provision of a strong, nurturing and supportive learning environment makes a positive contribution to the well-being and achievement of pupils who work hard and make good progress from their starting points. The commitment from senior leaders to establish and embed strong pastoral support systems, along with robust policy and practice has resulted in significant improvements in attendance and a reduction in exclusion figures. The carefully selected Christian values adopted by the school underpin the school motto and shape the quality of relationships within the school which are exemplary. All members of the school community take pride in their school and recognise the importance of the school's Christian character. A wide range of opportunities through the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities such as the St Nicholas Guild Club run by the church pastoral assistants, promote and support the pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Further exploration of the Christian values through collective worship also allows pupils time to reflect and question more deeply. However, although these chosen Christian values are deeply embedded in the life of the school, many, but not all members of the community are able to explain how they directly relate to biblical teaching. Religious Education provides pupils with opportunities to discuss similarities and differences between the different faiths represented in this diverse school community and this has created a culture where pupils display a high level of respect for one another and for their beliefs. Parents recognise this, describing how the school 'acts like glue' between all members of the community.

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

Collective worship is central to school life and makes a significant contribution to the day to day running of the school. This is summed up well by the parish priest who describes how collective worship 'spills through into the day'. Worship is carefully planned by the collective worship leader, headteacher and clergy. Themes for the week are biblically based, incorporate the school's Christian values and follow the church liturgical calendar. As a result pupils develop a good knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith including an age appropriate understanding of more complex Christian beliefs such as that of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The school is very well supported by the parish priest and his pastoral assistants, who together provide a very visible Church presence within the life of the school. A weekly 'child friendly' Eucharist service is held in school for Key Stage 2 pupils and their families. Pupils are actively involved in these services and are encouraged to take responsibility for leading aspects of the service such as leading prayers and reading the Bible which they do with clarity and confidence. Pupils are also given opportunities to share their views on worship. Recent pupils' questionnaires demonstrate the difference that worship makes to the pupils' lives, such as the example given by one pupil who shared that in worship 'I learn how to keep friendships'. Governors also attend and monitor worship which feeds into the school's comprehensive monitoring programme. Prayer is an important part of school life and regular opportunities for both personal and collective prayer are given. Pupils particularly valued the opportunity to pray and reflect in the 'wave of prayer' area created during Pentecost. Pupils clearly delight in singing and this is given an important place both in worship and in the wider life of the school. The school choir regularly sings at the DfE carol service and Home Office. Earlier in the school year, they were delighted to receive an invitation to participate in the Commonwealth Service events at Westminster Abbey where they met members of the Royal family.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

Religious Education has a high profile within the school and pupils clearly enjoy the subject. Standards of attainment are generally in line with national expectations with most pupils working within the expected level. Where teaching is best, the work is appropriately pitched and carefully planned, providing

challenge and support to meet the differing needs of the pupils. However RE provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is not always as sharply focused as it needs to be and consequently opportunities are missed to deliver lessons with a clearly defined RE learning objective which sometimes limits the progress pupils made by pupils. Teachers' marking is helpful for pupils and not only affirms what has been done well, but also poses relevant questions in order to extend pupils' thinking. The RE curriculum contributes well to both the school's Christian values and the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The teaching of Christianity is effective and this is evident in the pupils' secure knowledge of the Christian faith. The curriculum provides a good balance between helping pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding and also to reflect on the significance of religion in the world today. Consequently pupils demonstrate a high degree of understanding and respect for diversity and this significantly impacts the quality of the relationships evident in the school. The RE leader is a member of the senior leadership team which reflects the profile that RE is given within the school. RE books are monitored by the whole leadership team each half term and the RE link governor also feeds into the monitoring process for RE. The school enjoys a strong partnership with the diocese and the RE leader regularly attends diocesan training to support and equip him in his leadership role. As a result, teachers are kept abreast of current initiatives within RE policy and practice.

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

Governors and senior leaders articulate a clear Christian vision for the school. Through the aspirational and determined leadership of the Headteacher, ably supported by senior leaders, the outworking of this vision has a positive impact upon pupils' achievement. Governors have taken time to review the school's mission statement and the accompanying Christian values which underpin it. The relatively new school strap line 'Belonging, Believing, Achieving' summarises the school's vision in such a way that all members of the school community have some understanding of its meaning. This vision, underpinned by the outworking of the school's Christian values, creates a nurturing and supportive learning environment in which pupils and adults flourish. Leaders have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. This is demonstrated in its accurate self-evaluation and strategic improvement planning. Governors are supportive of the school and are involved in monitoring its distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school. Both RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements. The Headteacher recognises the importance of equipping senior leaders to work successfully in a Church school and as a result leaders have benefitted from diocesan training. The school works hard to establish and develop strong partnerships with the parental body of the school and has successfully deepened the level of engagement with parents in order to support pupils' learning. This has had a very positive impact on narrowing the gaps in pupil attainment. A strong and mutually beneficial partnership with the parish Church successfully provides a 'cohesive Christian presence within the community'. The support provided by the priest and his pastoral assistants make a significant contribution to the school's Christian ethos and character.

SIAMS report St Matthew's, Westminster May 2016