



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

### St Michael's on the Mount Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Park Lane  
Bristol  
BS2 8BE

**Previous SIAMS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: Bristol**

Local authority: City of Bristol

Date of inspection: 21 June 2016

Date of last inspection: 19 July 2011

School's unique reference number: 109148

Headteacher: Stuart McClelland

Inspector's name and number: Patricia Morris 626

#### School context

St Michael's on the Mount is a smaller than average primary school with 174 on roll. Children come from a diverse range of ethnic groups, the majority being of white British heritage and African descent. The percentage of children with English as an additional language is well above the national average. The number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly below the national average. The proportion of children supported by pupil premium is above the national average. Mobility is high with a number of children joining or leaving the school throughout the year.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Michael's on the Mount as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Core Christian values are made explicit and deeply embedded in the life of the school generating a strong inclusive environment.
- An excellent understanding and respect for diverse faith communities celebrated within a Christian ethos enables all children to thrive in a rich culture of learning.
- The highly developed interpretation of spirituality and opportunities to engage in high quality experiences empowers children to develop a personal spirituality.
- The very strong commitment and dedication of the school's leadership team ensures that the school is continually developing its Christian character.

#### Areas to improve

- Improve opportunities for governors to be more formally involved in the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship so that they have greater understanding of the impact of the Christian ethos.
- Embed the work of the newly formed worship committee to expand children's contribution to its monitoring and evaluation.
- Strengthen the growing partnership with the local church to develop further links within the local community in order for children to develop a sense of belonging.

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

A set of four distinctive core Christian values are clearly expressed and deeply embedded in the life of the school. The core value of unity is at the heart of everything the school does. This generates a real sense of inclusiveness and respect within the whole school community that reflects a cohesive atmosphere. Numerous photos showing a variety of activities are displayed around the school and the overarching value of unity is consistently reflected. Children identify the effect of values on their daily lives saying 'we follow them like rules'. One display shows photographs accompanied by letters from parents affirming values in action at home. The many diverse faiths within the school are celebrated within the Christian ethos and are a valuable resource in developing children's appreciation of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. There is an extremely high degree of respect for diversity and difference within other faith communities. The Christian character has a very high profile and as a result behaviour and manners are of a very high standard. This is apparent in the respectful way children are allowed to address adults by their Christian names. Relationships are excellent and are consistently attributed to the Christian character and values of the school. Many Christian signs are visible around the school which children understand reflect the importance of being a church school. Christian displays are extremely reflective with big questions such as 'what do people believe about life?' and 'how should we live?' One interactive display invites children to record 'the gifts I see in others'. The Christian character and values of the school have a significant impact on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of all children. There is an excellent comprehension of spirituality shared across the school community with many opportunities for children to engage in high quality experiences that develop their own personal spirituality. For example, children speak positively of 'calm, reflective areas that really work' where they can hold one of the many crosses or put a pebble in a bowl if they are worried. Children are excited and challenged by religious education (RE). It makes a significant contribution to children's SMSC development and plays a major role in determining the Christian character of the school. Children show confidence in expressing their views in depth using a very good range of vocabulary. This was highlighted in a lesson where children worked in small groups and were asked to question the leper whom Jesus healed. The high quality questions and thoughtful answers based on Christian values reflected children's maturity and sophistication.

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

Worship is at the heart of school life and is inspirational in promoting Christian values and the ethos of the school. Children say 'worship is a special time when we come together as a school and think about God'. Worship is thoroughly planned and underpinned by Christian values. The headteacher, RE co-ordinator, clergy and a governor liaise regularly to plan the worship programme and see it as integral to children's identity and journey of faith. The impact is seen in all aspects of school life including attitudes, behaviour and relationships. The school have worked very hard to ensure that worship is inclusive. While collective worship is explicitly Christian, a focus table holds artefacts from different faiths generating a real inclusiveness with all children feeling part of worship whatever their faith. Worship includes Bible stories and children readily make links with their own lives. For example, after hearing the story of the lost sheep, one child stated 'we are all special and worth something' while another child said 'that story encourages me to never give up'. Children recognise seasons of the church year and many Christian festivals as well as confidently articulating festivals celebrated in other faiths. The partnership with the local church is growing increasingly stronger and children regularly visit for worship and to support RE lessons. The opportunity to display children's artwork about Pentecost in the church café is one example of how substantial links with the local community are being promoted. An annual programme of visits to places of worship for other faiths is a highly valuable contribution to children's understanding and appreciation of different faith traditions. As one child said 'it really helps us to understand each others faiths'. Prayer plays an

important role in worship with children spontaneously coming out to the front and making up their own prayers. They understand that prayer can be used to say thank you or 'to ask for help if you are going through hard times'. Children have a good understanding of the Trinity as a result of thoughtful discussions. They know that it is three parts in one and have developed their own ideas to represent the Trinity in an innovative display. For example, a picture of a kite, colourful and full of life, to represent the Son, wind to represent the Holy Spirit and the string holding it together as God. Children enjoy contributing to worship and are increasingly taking responsibility for particular aspects. The recent introduction of a children's worship committee plays an important role in the way they plan and lead worship. They have successfully led the development of an activity based outdoor prayer space to support other children and which they lead during lunch times. Worship makes an excellent contribution to children's spiritual development. Good quality reflection time encourages children to be insightful and fosters personal growth. Regular monitoring and evaluation takes place in the form of written reports by staff and talking to children, successfully leading to determining improvements.

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

The headteacher, ably supported by the senior leadership team and governors, provides exceptionally effective leadership. Leaders have worked extremely hard in developing the Christian character of the school to be inclusive of the many diverse faiths present within the school community. Inclusiveness is a strength of the school and parents comment on the family feel and nurturing atmosphere where 'children are treated as individuals and encouraged to be themselves'. Leaders clearly articulate the impact of Christian values on children and on the whole life of the school. They have an excellent understanding of the school's performance and distinctiveness based on thorough self-evaluation. The governing body have a wide range of expertise. Many are regular visitors and play an active role in school life generating a sound knowledge of worship and effective practice in RE. The school are well supported by their partnership with the Diocese leading to an increased profile of RE and spirituality. Religious education is exceptionally well led by a forward thinking co-ordinator. The enquiry-based scheme means that children are challenged through focussed questioning to encourage deeper thinking contributing to higher standards than in other core subjects. Value driven lessons permeate all curriculum areas where the enrichment of cultural diversity is celebrated. Marking acknowledges children's deeper thinking and challenges them to extend their ideas through drama and art. The partnership with the church is growing increasingly stronger and there are many links with a wide range of local churches. Children are given a wealth of experiences to enable them to appreciate how fortunate they are in comparison to others. For example, they perform the nativity story each year at the local hospital, inviting children to join in, and an inspirational visit from an African Zulu choir encouraged them to help raise money to support the building of classrooms in Africa. Parents contribute to school life and support the school through cooking and gardening activities with children. They feel they are given opportunities to give their opinions and appreciate the availability of staff at the beginning and end of each day. Parents value the integrated way children work together and say 'children are lucky to have this opportunity to grow up with other cultures and share core values such as tolerance and respect which will go with them into their future'.

SIAMS report June 2016 St Michael's on the Mount CE VC Primary School Bristol BS2 8BE