



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### St James' C of E Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Tyrer Avenue  
Worsley Marshes  
Wigan  
WN3 5XE

**Previous SIAMS grade:** Good

**Current inspection grade:** Good

**Diocese:** Liverpool

Local authority: Wigan

Dates of inspection: 26 May 2016

Date of last inspection: March 2011

School's unique reference number: 106437

Headteacher: Jacqueline Moore

Inspector's name and number: Gail Fullbrook 530

#### School context

St James' is a smaller than average primary school. The proportion of children from minority ethnic groups is just below the national average but is rising year on year. The school serves a community of high deprivation where families and children have multiple needs. The percentage of children eligible for pupil premium and with special educational needs is above the national average. The headteacher was appointed in September 2015. At the same time a significant number of staff joined the school, including the deputy headteacher. The governing body was also reconstituted in 2015. OFSTED in March 2016 found that the school continues to be good.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St James' as a Church of England school are good

- The school's Christian values shape the strategic vision of the effective headteacher who is supported by a committed staff team.
- Prayer plays an important part in the life of the school and nurtures the children's spiritual development.
- The secure partnership between church and school places the school at the heart of its community.

#### Areas to improve

- Formalise and embed a robust process of monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the school's Christian vision and values, so that leaders have a clear understanding of the difference they make and ways in which they can support future developments.
- Develop a program to support the introduction of the newly agreed Christian values that makes clear links between the values, attitudes and behaviour, and the biblical teaching that underpins them.

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

St James' is a family orientated, nurturing community where Christian values are recognised and understood. The school's commitment to inclusion, and to the personal well-being of children and staff, is firmly rooted in the Christian faith. Consequently children feel valued, safe and respected. Parents are appreciative of the support the school gives to the children and their families. Children are proud that their school is a church school and say that they enjoy learning about Jesus. The Christian character of the school informs the commitment of staff to providing the support and encouragement needed for each child to flourish. As a result, children make good progress socially and academically and achieve well. Relationships within the school, and with parents and the wider community, are strong. The school regularly goes above and beyond what might be expected of them in signposting parents to organisations that will give additional support. This results in effective procedures, informed by Christian values, to address issues such as attendance and punctuality. The school attributes its success to the belief that, 'God loves us all and is with us each day to rejuvenate and guide us'. Teachers routinely include opportunities to develop understanding of core Christian values within lessons. This ensures that spirituality, and the children's Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development, form a continuous thread through the school day. Spiritual and emotional development are recognised as being as important as academic achievement. This is particularly relevant given the multiple and complex needs of many children and families within the school community. Children speak freely about Jesus and the ways in which his teaching influences their exemplary behaviour and attitudes to learning. They are less confident when asked about specific Bible stories that underpin their understanding. Children are keen to share ways in which they, 'walk in the way of Jesus,' through bringing in food for the local foodbank and their support for a number of local and national charities. The school encourages the children to make links between their personal successes and the school's core Christian values. A significant percentage of children come from families of different faiths and cultures. Their knowledge and understanding frequently enriches lessons in personal and social education and Religious Education (RE). For example, during an RE lesson a Muslim child talked about her faith community and its importance to her. Similarly, at playtime, a child shared with friends, her understanding of what it is to be a refugee. However, teaching in RE is overly factual with few opportunities for children to reflect on the importance of faith to the lives of believers. As a result, the contribution made by RE to the Christian character of the school is limited.

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

Collective worship plays a central part in the life of the school. Opportunities for personal prayer and reflection are offered and children respond well to such times of quiet. Both adults and children talk positively of the ways in which worship helps them to make good decisions in their lives. One child spoke of wanting, 'to love people like Jesus did,' whilst another talked of his response to the way in which Zacchaeus changed his life after talking to Jesus. Whole school worship is well planned and frequently led by children. It follows the Church year and is biblically based. Children are familiar with a range of traditional Christian greetings and prayers. They are encouraged to ask questions and explore teaching that puzzles them. This results in an excellent understanding of key events in the life of Jesus such as the importance of the Easter story to Christians. The purpose of prayer is well established and children have a strong sense of Jesus being with them when they pray. Prayers are said regularly during the day and children record their personal prayers in the school prayer book and class reflection spaces. Children respond well to encouragement to pray for people they know who are facing difficult times. They also initiate requests for school prayer cards, 'You were remembered in our prayers today with love from St James' CE School,' to be sent. References to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit are routinely included within worship and as a result, children have an age appropriate understanding of the Trinity. They talk with enthusiasm of their images of each form and a particularly perceptive child spoke of the Holy Spirit being like the blood that runs through him giving life and energy. The headteacher and incumbent plan whole school worship, with staff

taking responsibility for mid-week worship. It should be noted that although worship takes place daily, children do not always recognise the circle time worship that takes place within classrooms as worship. Monitoring and evaluation of worship takes place informally and, as a consequence, areas where worship could be developed and improved are not routinely identified or acted upon.

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

The headteacher, well supported by staff and governors, is relentless in ensuring that the school's Christ centred ethos is underpinned by the wholehearted commitment of all. The aim that children will develop a Christ-like, 'freedom of mind and strength of spirit' is tangible in conversations with staff and children. The excitement and enthusiasm of the children for the wide range of opportunities offered both within and beyond the curriculum is evidence of the success of the school. Consequently children are keen to learn and achieve well. Following a period of consultation a number of distinctively Christian values are being established. Children readily make links between the values and the ways in which they live their lives, although currently they struggle to recall associated Bible stories. Decisions at all levels focus on what needs to be done to enable all children to flourish. A significant proportion of children benefit from the additional support given to ensure that their progress is at least in line with that of their peers. Parents welcome the ways in which the school encourages their engagement in aspects of school life, particularly those relating to their child's learning. Conflict resolution is a strength of the school and staff and parents benefit from the strategies used. The school holds the NHS Wigan gold award for its approach to issues of mental health. Parents recognise the importance of the school's commitment to encouraging children to share their feelings and to pray when they have concerns. The school has strong ties with the local church, the vicar being a popular and welcome visitor. A number of church members give extensive support to the school, many helping with the weekly after school Christian Wayfinders club. Sponsorship of a child in a school in Ruiru, Kenya, helps the children to learn more about life in a culture different to their own as well as to recognise the importance of Christian giving to others in need. Diocesan training, and the opportunity to visit and work with other church schools, is supporting the school in strengthening its Christian character. Children gain benefit from taking part in local community and Christian events with their peers from other schools. The school is recognised as the Christian hub at the centre of the local community. Governors make clear to prospective staff the importance of the school's Christian character. Staff new to the school receive guidance on the ways in which they are expected to support the distinctiveness of the school. The leadership of collective worship is given high priority. However, insufficient support has been provided to ensure that all teachers are able to provide the highest quality of teaching in RE. RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements.

SIAMS report May 2016 St James' CE VC Primary School, Wigan WN3 5XE