



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### **Dolphinholme Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Abbeystead Road

Dolphinholme

Lancaster

LA2 9AN

**Previous SIAS grade: Good**

**Diocese: Blackburn**

Local authority: Lancashire

Date of inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> November 2014

Date of last inspection: 9<sup>th</sup> March 2010

School's unique reference number: 119530

Headteacher: Catherine Winter

Inspector's name and number: Susan Cliffe (Trainee)

QA Assessor: Lizzie McWhirter

### **School Context**

Dolphinholme Church of England Primary School is a small voluntary aided village school with 77 pupils on role. Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils are taught in mixed age classes. Early Years Foundation Stage are taught as a single age class. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The number who receive pupil premium is below average. The headteacher has been in post for three years. The parish church is within walking distance. The school received the Blackburn Diocesan 'Church School Distinctiveness Award' in March 2014.

### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Dolphinholme Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding**

- The Christian character of the school permeates all of the life of the school and enables the school to prosper academically, socially and spiritually.
- The dynamic, outstanding Christian leadership of the headteacher drives school improvement and is well supported by staff and governors.
- There are strong, supportive links between church and school which make a significant contribution to the Christian character and the spiritual development of the school community.
- The quality provision for religious education (RE) and collective worship enables the

children to reflect and think deeply about spiritual questions.

### **Areas to improve**

- Identify the core Christian values which lie at the heart of the school and make these explicit for all members of the school community.
- Increase involvement for children in the planning and leading of collective worship so that they can have a greater impact on informing its development.
- Refine religious education assessment procedures for whole year groups to ensure that standards are rigorously tracked and that high levels of achievement are maintained.

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

The Christian character and distinctiveness permeates all of school life and is encapsulated in the school's mission statement, 'With God at the heart of everything we do.' The moral, social and cultural development of the children is outstanding and, as a result, relationships are excellent within school. For example the school council comments that, 'everyone is made to feel welcome, smiling is encouraged and fallings out are sorted quickly.' Consequently, children have a very positive attitude to school with high levels of attendance and no exclusions. They work in a calm, supportive, purposeful atmosphere which leads to outstanding attainment, progress, teaching and learning. The headteacher states, 'children are encouraged to love God and themselves and to celebrate their gifts through hard work and success.' Pupils' spiritual development is outstanding and as a result they express their thoughts with confidence. 'I like challenging questions,' states one child. The behaviour of pupils is exceptional and consequently they have a very positive attitude towards school which is appreciated by parents. Christian values are referred to at times as those of conflict, worry and illness and in worship. However, at present, these values are not explicit or clearly articulated by all members of the school community. RE has become a clear priority for the school contributing significantly to the shaping of the Christian character of the school and pupils' personal development. It is woven, whenever possible, into other curricular areas such as science and art thereby enriching provision. Children have become increasingly aware and knowledgeable about cultures and beliefs other than their own; consequently there is greater empathy and respect. Children enjoy a link with a Chinese school and study other world faiths thereby realising that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith. The Christian ethos of school naturally leads to a desire to support charities such as Shoe Box Appeal, Christian Aid and Harvest. There are many distinctively Christian areas around school, such as the worship table in the hall and the prayer tree display. These provide focal points which develop the children's spirituality. Pupils say that they often use these as a way to communicate with God.

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

Collective worship is valued greatly by the whole school community and has improved since the last inspection. As a pupil explained, 'I love worship. It is something to look forward to.' Collective worship is firmly based on Christian values, the person of Jesus Christ and Bible teachings. It is well planned and delivered. However, currently there are not enough opportunities for pupils to be involved in leading and planning thereby restricting the development of worship provision. Children produce detailed evaluations of the acts of worship which are insightful. During worship, a respectful atmosphere is created promoting reflection. They children sing with joyful enthusiasm whilst appreciating that they are communicating with God. The school council report that they particularly enjoy taking part in church services and parents are also becoming more involved in these. The school community celebrate major Christian festivals and special events such as Harvest, Easter, Christmas and

the end of terms- church-school links are now a strength of the school. Since the last inspection, Lenten projects have been used to provide focused, inspirational worship. 'The Stations of the Cross' theme was particularly successful in bringing The Passion to life. All teaching staff lead worship and consequently staff feel more involvement and children enjoy experiencing a variety of approaches to worship. Worship led by visitors is a regular feature and parents are becoming increasingly involved in the spiritual life of the school and church. Prayer is an important facet of school life and the children enjoy having, 'Space to think.' The vicar leads worship once a week and enjoys a warm rapport with the children. She is involved in planning with the headteacher leading to high quality worship. The Diocese is also used as a resource and the children's love of singing was harnessed on a 'Music and Worship Day' which celebrated the power of praise through music. The knowledge which the Junior children have of the Trinity shows an impressive degree of understanding. One pupil states, 'We have learnt about the Trinity being three in one during worship. God made everything, Jesus saved us and the Holy Spirit lives in us all.'

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.**

Children are extremely positive about RE and it enjoys a very high profile. RE displays are a feature of many areas of the school thereby maintaining its high profile. A school councillor states, 'RE is brilliant and we learn lots. Teachers 'funny' the lessons.' The superb RE scrapbooks show children exhibiting a wide range of higher level skills leading to an understanding of the impact of religion on believers. RE lessons encourage consideration of deep questions and children are able to apply their knowledge and skills to great effect. The curriculum is rich and gives the children many opportunities to think deeply. When writing a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Psalm, a child writes, 'You are the real B.F.G.; Big, Friendly God.' The children particularly enjoy learning through drama as this 'brings RE alive.' Teaching and learning are excellent and are reflected in the high quality of work in pupils' books of which they are rightly proud. Marking and feedback to pupils is effective contributing to high standards within RE with pupils making rapid progress. Children feel that teachers help them to improve and pupils appreciate this guidance. However, formal assessment, although detailed for individual pupils, needs to be monitored across year groups to track standards. Christian values are explored through RE and the meaning of the values are explained clearly and meaningfully. RE makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They have a growing understanding of major faiths such as Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. One child explains, 'it is important to learn about other faiths because it increases respect.' They are very excited by the new links established with a school in Fuzhou, China. The profile of RE has risen greatly since the last inspection leading to excellent standards. Leadership of RE is good, led by a well informed co-ordinator who communicates well with staff. She believes that the Diocesan syllabus allows pupils to, 'flourish and focus.' She is ably supported by the Diocese and the vicar who delivers RE lessons when appropriate. Such involvement adds to the richness of the RE provision.

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

The dynamic, outstanding leadership of the Christian headteacher has ensured that the Christian vision for the school is shared, agreed and expressed by the school community. The Christian character is central in promoting wellbeing; the chair of governors explains, 'God and children are at the centre of all we do.' The governing body take their role very seriously becoming increasingly involved in self-evaluation. The chair leads enthusiastically resulting in well-informed, challenging and supportive governors who children see as regular, caring visitors. The Christian leadership has had a considerable impact on the excellent standards of achievement. RE currently meets statutory requirements and is delivered to Key Stage 2 by the headteacher reflecting its high priority along with collective worship which she co-ordinates. The Christian vision informs all areas of the curriculum. A pupil noted, 'even in science we talk

about big questions like creation.' Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children is a strength of the school; subsequently children are keen to take on extra responsibilities as members of the newly formed school council. Nurturing relationships are evident across the school community with parents stating that older children show care for younger ones and that behaviour is exemplary. Parents, the local churches, the diocese and the local community are seen as partners and the school is a vital part of village life. Parents feel their opinions are valued and children are inspired by the many visitors invited into school. Church links are well developed and the school community appreciates the benefits of this strengthened relationship. A parent comments, 'links between church and school are seamless.' The school now possesses the Blackburn Diocesan 'Church School Distinctiveness Award' which reflects the leadership and management strengths of this church school. Great efforts have been made to foster a good understanding of national and global communities through links with China and charitable works such as 'Operation Christmas Child'. The school has rightly identified this as an area for further development as this understanding is not fully embedded. School provides well for staff to develop professionally and to grow as future leaders. This contributes to the school's excellent capacity for sustained improvement.

SIAMS report November 2014 Dolphinholme Church of England Primary School, Dolphinholme, Lancaster LA2 9AN