



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Matthew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Duddeston Manor Road,
Birmingham,
B7 4JR

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Birmingham

Local authority: Birmingham

Dates of inspection: 26th May 2016

Date of last inspection: 18th January 2011

School's unique reference number: 103404

Headteacher: Paulette Osborne

Inspector's name and number: Helen Gilbert 633

School context

St Matthew's is a one-form entry primary school serving the inner urban area of Nechells in Birmingham. The percentage of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is one of the highest in the city. Pupils are drawn from a diverse range of minority ethnic groups and the majority come from Muslim homes. Sixty-five percent are of Somali heritage. The number of pupils who do not have English as their first language is much higher than average. The school enjoys a well-established partnership with St Matthew's church.

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

- The clear vision and strong determination of the head teacher to ensure that the school motto '*With God nothing is impossible*' empowers pupils from all backgrounds to achieve their best.
- The outstanding support and leadership of the senior team and the governors who model the Christian values of respect, tolerance, peace, forgiveness and friendship.
- The excellent relationships between the school, its parents and the wider community that are based on understanding and mutual respect.
- The confidence and self-belief of pupils who live out what it means for a multi-faith community to live and work together in harmony.
- The encouragement, advice and support that the school provides for parents.

Areas to improve

- Ensure a more active role for pupils to plan and lead worship and to work with school leaders and foundation governors in evaluating its impact and shaping its development in the future.
- Build a strong working relationship with the new incumbent that will continue to strengthen the existing links between church and school and enhance pupils' understanding of Anglican practices.

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

St Matthew's Christian character is explicitly stated throughout the school and on the school website and the teachings of Jesus underpin all that the school does. Visitors come face to face with the words *'You are the light of the world'* as they approach the building. The school motto *'With God nothing is impossible'* empowers both pupils and staff to aim for the highest achievements in all areas of life. Staff, governors, parents and pupils talk very readily about the distinctive Christian values of respect, tolerance, peace, forgiveness and friendship because these are deeply embedded in the life of the school and spill out into the wider community. Although the majority of pupils come from other faith backgrounds, families hold St Matthew's in high regard as a faith-based school because they have seen the impact it has had on the achievements of their children. As a result of rising standards, the school was ranked in the top one hundred improving schools in 2014 and was graded as outstanding by OFSTED in 2015. Parents attribute the character and success of the school to its Christian values and the moral framework that it promotes. They praise the level of inclusion and integration of such a diverse community under the umbrella of St Matthew's, saying, *'I'm excited about the school,' 'children are in a safe place and this gives peace,' 'we are all family.'* They talk about how the school develop children's confidence, *'Because of this school, she can face the whole world.'* Those whose children have experienced challenges speak with gratitude about the support and advice given by the school. A number of parents travel some distance to bring their children here but say that *'the school is worth travelling for.'* One parent who had transferred her children from another school spoke of the *'transformation'* they saw. They are very appreciative that they themselves are also supported through school-led initiatives such as English classes and cookery classes. Throughout the day behaviour is very good indeed and there is an extremely positive climate for learning in classrooms. There is an understanding that pupils will learn together and support each other on their learning journey. The leadership team are determinedly building on this success and there are well-planned initiatives in place to further enhance the attainment of higher ability pupils in mathematics. Religious Education has a very significant impact on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Without exception they say they love RE. They are excited about learning about different faiths and visiting a range of places of worship. They understand that Christianity is a faith that is practised across different cultures. They see respect and tolerance for all beliefs and an understanding of commonalities as something of vital importance. RE lessons are lively and challenging and pupils achieve the same high standards as those in other subjects. Pupils are stretched in their thinking through challenging questions. Many children bring their own sense of spirituality into school and this is greatly enhanced through the emphasis on prayer and quiet reflection. There is a strong relationship with the local parish church. The ministry assistant and foundation governors are currently maintaining this because the church is in an interregnum and the associate vicar is on maternity leave. The weekly prayer time with staff is a particular strength of the relationship between church and school. The church also operates 'Messy Church' which is attended by a number of pupils. The school is helping pupils to develop a strong sense of social justice alongside their understanding of British values. They support many charities and readily link this to the teachings of Jesus and well as the injunctions from other faiths to show kindness and care to others.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is thoroughly planned with a different theme for each half term and these are reflected in the classroom worship areas. Bible stories have a central place and are reinforced through the high quality displays in the hall and around the school. As a result pupils from all backgrounds are able to recall a good range of these stories and also the messages that they teach. All teachers are involved in leading worship as well as the parish clergy and members of Birmingham City Mission and so pupils experience a range of worship leaders and approaches. Normally, clergy come into school each week to lead worship and pupils participate in worship

in church each half term. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities to participate through partner discussions, songs, prayers and the preparation of class presentations. As a result they are all challenged to reflect on the stories they hear. They firmly believe these teachings influence their self-belief, attitudes, relationship and behaviour. Pupils of all faiths and none feel included and there are no withdrawals from worship. The majority of pupils see themselves as children of God. The singing element of worship is very well led and as a result pupils participate with great enthusiasm and their singing is of a very high quality. Through worship pupils are also introduced to the seasons and major festivals of the Christian calendar. Children from all backgrounds understand the significance of Harvest, Christmas, Lent, Easter and St Matthew's day. They have a good appreciation of the significance of St Matthew and also share a common understanding of God as creator and recognize that Christians believe in God as Father, that Jesus is the son of God and that after his death the Holy Spirit came. As a result of excellent provision pupils place a great value on worship and can articulate what it means for them individually and as a community. *'It's a time to be all together.'* *'We learn more about the Christian faith.'* *'We learn about different types of Christians.'* *'We hear stories that take us along the path of Christian faith.'* *'We connect together and this brings peace.'* *'We learn to say sorry and forgive – what Jesus taught.'* *'We sing in harmony and it connects us together.'* Prayer is central to worship, both formal prayers such as the Lord's prayer and more informal prayers. This is enhanced through the prayer and worship corners in each classroom. Pupils are very confident about writing prayers and talking to God as a way of expressing their thoughts and feelings. The school keeps careful records of acts of worship and gathers some feedback from pupils but has identified this as an area that needs further development. Pupils say that they would like more opportunities to evaluate, plan, lead and shape worship in the future.

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

The head teacher has a very clear vision for developing the school as a distinctive church school that is based on the teachings of Jesus. She believes that enabling all children to achieve their very best is at the heart of this, shows great determination and sets high standards. In order to move the school forwards effectively she has developed a very strong leadership team who share the same vision and determination. Senior staff model outstanding teaching. Initiatives are in place, which continue to move teaching and learning forwards. There is a robust cycle for monitoring and giving feedback and performance management is rigorous. As a consequence of this all teaching is at least good and in many cases better and all groups of pupils are making good or better than expected progress. School leaders and governors recognise the strengths of the school and the areas for further development very well. Governors understand the balance of support and challenge. There is a wide range of Christian experience on the governing body. They frequently visit the school and are not afraid to ask searching questions. As a result they are able to evaluate the school's success and also its impact and influence as a distinctive Church of England school. Governors visit worship regularly although they say their role in evaluating the impact for pupils is an area for further development. They are very aware of the importance of staff development and succession planning. They have therefore invested in the development of a highly skilled team who demonstrate distributed leadership. The head teacher and her staff are actively engaged in supporting other schools on their learning journey and the head also serves on the diocesan board of education. As a result members of the leadership team have many opportunities to develop as Church School Leaders both in their own school and through supporting others. As a result of the excellent leadership in RE the school achieved the gold quality mark for the subject in 2015. The school has forged strong relationships with outside bodies including the parish, the diocese, Birmingham City Mission and the Hope Youth Corps and these make a significant contribution to the personal, moral and spiritual development of pupils. The school has enjoyed a very good relationship with St Matthew's church. Currently there are no clergy in post but the ministry assistant and foundation governors are leading this partnership well. Pupils embrace the many opportunities to develop their own leadership skills. The school's Young Leaders are proud of being elected

to office and are confident that they represent other pupils well and that their voice is heard. They are particularly proud of the changes they have brought about to the school meals service. They talk with enthusiasm about the wide range of charities they support through an array of fundraising activities and readily link this to the teachings of Jesus to treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves. House Captains are similarly proud of their responsibilities, as are the school's Young Parliamentarians.

SIAMS report May 2016 St Matthew's CofE Primary, Birmingham, B7 4JR