

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools' Report

### **St Matthew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Duddeston Manor Road

Birmingham

B7 4JR

#### **Diocese: Birmingham**

Local authority: Birmingham

Date of inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> January 2011

Date of last inspection: 21<sup>st</sup> May 2008

School's unique reference number: 103404

Headteacher: Ms Paulette Osborne

Inspector's name and number: Ian Carnell (Inspector number. 602)

#### **School context**

The school of just over 200 pupils serves an inner urban area of Birmingham. The majority of pupils are from ethnic groups other than white British and 60% are from Muslim families. A small number of pupils are in the early stages of learning English. The school is situated in close proximity to the parish church. A new headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection.

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

St Matthew's, a very effective and highly inclusive school, has built the trust and confidence of an exceptionally mixed community in the area and its Christian principles are much respected and valued. These principles are embedded in school life and have a strong positive influence on the children's attitudes and values. Pupils make good progress and behave as highly valued individuals, responding to the secure family atmosphere.

#### **Established strengths**

- A shared ethos, based firmly on Christian values, which encompasses all faiths and the cultural diversity of the local community.
- The vision and inspiring leadership of the dynamic head teacher, supported well by all staff, clergy and governors.
- Christian signs and symbols around the school, providing opportunities for spiritual reflection.
- The strong positive attitude of the whole school community working together for a common purpose.

#### **Focus for development**

- Strengthen the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the school's Christian character in the setting up of the proposed focus group representing members of the school and church communities.
- Continue to develop the planning and evaluation of collective worship in order to sustain the effectiveness of worship in an Anglican school.

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

"With God nothing is impossible" states the school motto and this statement of faith is lived by the whole school community, regardless of colour, creed or ethnic background. The school is highly sensitive to the beliefs and traditions represented there but as one governor put it, "We are very sensitive, but Jesus is not sidelined in this multicultural school." Parents agree that the pupils at St Matthew's, whatever their background, are well integrated into a caring community and "embrace and understand other religions whilst not compromising the Christian character." One parent stated, "As soon as you walk through the school door you know that the children are loved." Parents, staff and governors speak of a tangible feeling of love and care that pervades the whole school and reaches out into the community in a culture of transparency, confidence and security. A grand parent of one of the children described St Matthew's as "salt and light in the community". Members of staff provide excellent role models, valuing each individual as a child of God. Pupils understand what living in a community means, both inside and outside their school for example they are proud to talk about their support for charities such as Children in Need. Mutual support between pupils is shown, for example, by the way older children volunteer to look after the younger ones during

playtimes, escorting them to the local parish church for worship and siblings often sitting together for lunch. The close proximity of the parish church gives a clear indication of the religious character of the school, enhanced by the words "You are the light of the world" emblazoned across a wall overlooking the main entrance. This ethos is reinforced in every classroom, where an interactive worship table is located, complete with a child's version of the Bible, a cross and a copy of the Qur'an. The school website is explicit in informing visitors that this is a Church of England school and stating that they aim to "afford pupils a full place in society where differences are valued and equality assured."

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

Worship is integral to all aspects of school life and pupils recognise the importance and significance of meeting together regularly for worship. Staff and children enjoy taking part in the daily act of worship led by the head teacher, other members of staff or a member of the clergy. Storytelling, music and prayer are used very effectively to enhance the experience of collective worship, where pupils are thoughtful, responsive, attentive and enthusiastic. A lighted candle is used as a focal point with other Christian artefacts being introduced as appropriate. One child explained that the lighted candle helped her to concentrate more on God. Prayer is central to school life and the School Prayer is said by all at the close of the school day. This centrality of prayer is exemplified on the worship wall in the main hall where the Lord's Prayer is written in various languages such as modern English and Arabic, helping children to understand more fully the concepts behind it. The vicar and some members of the church come in to pray for the school on a fortnightly basis and at times of stress. Most pupils, irrespective of their own particular faith, can describe how they derive inspiration from prayer, stating, "prayer helps you live your whole life." Around the school there are prompts for prayer with which the pupils eagerly interact such as a partly built model house with bricks to add which states, "As you put another brick in the wall to help build this house, say a prayer for someone who shares your home." Pupils show good levels of understanding about the church year and celebrate the main Christian festivals with services in the parish church. There is a high degree of sensitivity to other faith groups who all attend the daily acts of worship with none being withdrawn. This is testimony to the success of the school engaging with parents and the local faith communities to secure trust and approval, thus enabling all of the school to experience worship together. Through the thorough self-evaluation process, the school has rightly identified the need to develop a planning, monitoring and evaluation system for collective worship to be used by all stakeholders.

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

The leadership and management of this school are extremely effective. The head teacher, senior management team and foundation governors have a very clear Christian vision for the school which is clearly outlined in the school prospectus and website and regularly shared with all stakeholders. The head teacher displays excellent leadership qualities, putting into practice all the aims of the school and, as a result, every child feels valued, cared for and special whilst at the same time challenged and stimulated. One child explained that he enjoyed being at St Matthew's because "people listen to your problems and so we stick together no matter what!" The head teacher describes the school's Christian vision and what that means for all the school community to the parents of all new pupils to the school, encouraging them to affirm an allegiance to its principles. Members of staff feel valued and involved in the school's development, contributing well to the happy and supportive atmosphere, which, in turn, has a very positive influence on pupils' overall development. Staff appointments and induction are guided by the need to ensure that the school's Christian purpose is upheld by those new to St Matthew's. Foundation Governors are very active and are aware of their pivotal role in challenging and supporting the school and they plan to form a focus group to support the Christian character of the school. One governor had spoken in an RE lesson to give testimony about her Christian faith. Links with the church are particularly close and the clergy have effective and valued pastoral roles in the school. All concerned appreciate the support and training offered by the Diocesan advisors to support, encourage and advise the staff and governors. The head teacher and staff have made very good use of the National Society's Toolkit to produce a detailed review of the distinctiveness of it being a Church of England School. The areas for development from the previous report have been met.