



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

[National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Blackburn the Redeemer Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Jack Walker Way

Fernhurst Farm

Blackburn

BB2 4JJ

Diocese: **Blackburn**

Local authority: Blackburn

Dates of inspection: 20th March 2014

Date of last inspection: March 2009

School's unique reference number: 133987

Headteacher: Alison Ashworth-Taylor

Inspector's name and number: Ruth Wall (548)

School context

The Redeemer is a larger than average school situated on the outskirts of Blackburn. Children attending come from the local and wider community. The number of children receiving free-school meals is below average whilst the number with special educational and disabilities is average. The school has been a national support school for two years and the headteacher is a national leader of education. The building is also home to St Bartholomew's Church.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of The Redeemer as a Church of England school are outstanding

- A clear Christian vision is at the heart of all that the school does. The conviction with which this vision is promoted by senior leaders and governors, and shared by all members of the school community, ensures the school's success in meeting the academic and spiritual needs of all children.
- The outstanding behaviour of the children reflects the Christian ethos of the school.
- Relationships with St Bartholomew's Church are very strong in promoting a shared Christian vision for development and learning.

Areas to improve

- Extend opportunities for senior leaders to share best practice of Christian distinctiveness, including religious education (RE) and collective worship, with other church schools.
- To provide opportunities for learners to understand and make links between the beliefs and practices of faiths, other than Christianity, through visits to their places of worship.

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

The school's mission 'Believing, loving, caring, sharing, everyone growing in the light of Christ' is evident all round the school and on documentation. This, together with its core Christian values, shapes the thinking of the school and it is understood, articulated and embraced by all members of the school community. Parents say that, during their initial school visit, the headteacher makes very clear the Christian foundation and purpose of the school. They agree that, 'The school teaches our children good Christian values'. The school is highly effective in developing and expanding spiritual experiences that support learning. Children benefit from a rich and varied creative curriculum that goes beyond the classroom. They speak with clarity and conviction about the 'wow' moments when they feel the awe and wonder of God's creation. Behaviour is outstanding and the school attributes this to the focus on Christian values. A teacher explains, 'The children know that the teachers have these values and it naturally filters down to them from an early age.' The Christian character of the school is clearly defined and promoted effectively so as to make a significant impact on the personal development and academic needs of the children. It is also at the heart of all relationships. These strengths within the school's Christian character have been the foundation for its academic success. The school is highly effective in using data to track children's achievement and put in place intervention strategies to ensure they achieve challenging targets. Through a range of activities, including their involvement in the Kenyan Bethany Project, children are made aware that Christianity is a global world faith. They understand the need to help others less fortunate than themselves through their Christian service. The school is both distinctive in its Christian character and inclusive in its approach to diversity. This is a highly cohesive community in which all feel valued regardless of differences.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship clearly holds a very important place in the life of the school. Children benefit from a varied experience of worship led by a range of people. Worship is well planned and covers Christian themes with a strong emphasis on Christian values and on important Christian festivals. This enables children to have a very good understanding of the nature of worship, the Christian faith and Anglican traditions and practice. All staff attend and enjoy worship. 'Worshipping together as a school family brings us all closer together', is how one teacher explains it. Children in the worship group respond with maturity to their responsibility of preparing the place for worship, managing the ICT and participating with readings and prayers. They regularly plan and lead significant acts of worship and evaluate the quality of each week's worship with the other children. They say they enjoy worship because, 'we're all together', 'it's fun', and '...it helps you to picture Jesus and learn more about him.' Key Stage 2 children appreciate their worship response logs in which they consider and express their feelings thoughtfully. In response to requests, the music leader has introduced lots of new songs with actions. All members of the community are involved in regular evaluation of worship. A governor says, 'It is always a pleasure to lead worship, the children are always attentive and responsive.' A parent comments, 'It's what makes our school special'. In the worship observed, children listened attentively to the account of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. A video film clip was used to great effect and children showed thoughtfulness and sensitivity in their response to questions. The singing by the whole school was outstanding and the choir sang beautifully, which served to enhance the worship experience. The prominent place of prayer across the school ensures that worship is a spiritual experience of real significance. The school appreciates the benefit of sharing a building with the church and having a flexible multi-purpose worship area. This enables them to worship with the community and church members regularly, including in well attended Sunday family services.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Children make extremely good progress in religious education (RE), as is evidenced in

portfolios and children's written work. Standards are in line with those attained in other core subjects, which are high in relation to national expectations. RE is very well led and managed by the subject leader who demonstrates clear purpose and sense of direction in leading initiatives to continually raise standards of attainment. Teachers have a shared commitment to improving standards and recognise RE as a core subject. Children have a thorough knowledge of the Bible and the life of Jesus. The school's monitoring and evaluation show that an excellent balance is achieved between learning about and learning from religion. Planned themed weeks, together with the study of Islam and Judaism, support children's cultural development. One child explains that learning about different faiths 'helps us understand better.' Leaders acknowledge that children's knowledge and understanding of faiths, other than Christianity, would be further enhanced by visits to their places of worship. Inspirational teaching and challenging questioning encourage children to think deeply about the subject matter. In the Key Stage 2 lesson observed, a calm and trusting atmosphere was created as children studied images of art depicting the death and resurrection of Jesus. The teacher and children shared their personal feelings and thoughts, resulting in outstanding discussion, reflection and creative poetry. '...darkness surrenders and the vibrant colours of Christ have been released from the shadows. Victory', is one child's insightful response to the challenge. RE makes a very significant contribution to children's spiritual development. This includes the whole-school 'Trinity Day', described by the headteacher as 'a most successful RE day', where specially designed activities helped children in their understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The issue raised at the previous inspection has been addressed as a result of focused school development. A system for assessing children's achievements is now fully embedded and used effectively to track progress and determine next steps in learning. Teachers say, 'we get excited when we see children progressing on their journey of faith.'

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

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors provide outstanding management and leadership of the school as a church school. They are highly effective in articulating the Christian ethos and in promoting and establishing that ethos throughout the school and beyond to the community. The headteacher works tirelessly and is passionate about the school. She is extremely well thought of by the whole school community. Governors have a very good understanding of their role. They monitor and evaluate the work of the school rigorously, ensuring that church school issues are identified and addressed through the school's improvement planning. Collective worship and RE are led with commitment and a genuine desire to continue to seek ways to improve further and share best practice with other church schools. The vicar, as link governor for RE and worship, is fully involved in the process of monitoring and evaluating with the subject leader. Leaders and governors have been successful in ensuring that the academic needs of the children are met. In doing so they have recognised the importance of the school's Christian character in creating an ethos which supports effective learning. The school values its relationship with parents and seeks their views on church school issues through the annual questionnaire and in evaluation of worship. The strong link with St Bartholomew's Church contributes a valuable dimension to the school's Christian ethos. The school is also nurtured and supported very effectively by the diocese. The professional development of the staff is a high priority and their considerable expertise is used to support other schools. The 'Superstars' lunch time Bible study groups are well attended and support the Christian ethos of the school as children 'grow in faith and understanding of the gospel' through taking part in a range of fun activities. Children value their role in decision making through the school council and have, as the headteacher explains, 'a huge involvement in day to day running of the school'. They speak with pride about their charitable fund-raising initiatives, designing the 'secret garden' and the monthly newsletter they produce.

SIAMS report March 2014 The Redeemer Church of England Primary School, Blackburn BB2 4JJ

