



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### St Gabriel's C of E Primary School, Middleton

Tonge Roughs  
Aspinall Street  
Middleton  
Manchester  
M24 2BE

**Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding**

**Current inspection grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: Manchester**

Local authority: Rochdale

Dates of inspection: 5 November 2015

Date of last inspection: 6 May 2010

School's unique reference number: 105808

Headteacher: Karen Race

Inspector's name and number: Gillian Rhodes 657

#### School context

St Gabriel's CofE Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by pupil premium funding is well above average. The percentage of pupils with disabilities or special educational needs is above average. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is below the national average. The school has close links with St Gabriel's Church where there is currently an interregnum. The school benefits from the support of a retired vicar from the church.

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

- The headteacher's vision, which is rooted in distinctively Christian values and shared by the whole school community, for the school and its pupils to develop to their full potential
- The sensitive and caring relationships, based on the Christian value of trust, fostered and demonstrated by school leaders and staff to the children and their families
- The significant impact of the centrality of Jesus and of prayer in collective worship on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

#### Areas to improve

- Embed the practice of pupils planning and leading worship to enhance confidence and a sense of responsibility
- Develop a systematic long term plan for worship themes to ensure they provide opportunities to inspire pupils' spiritual and moral reflection and social actions.

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

At St Gabriel's distinctively Christian values underpin all aspects of school life. The belief that all people are created and loved by God underpins 'a Christian ethos which welcomes and affirms'. The school's core Christian values are respect, trust, hope, forgiveness, perseverance and friendship. They are expressed by all members of the school family through the mission statement, logo, school prayers, policies and displays. The Christian values of respect and perseverance are linked to the school's work as a Rights Respecting School and children explain that 'along with rights come responsibilities'. The school's success in rapidly reducing the number of pupils regularly absent demonstrates the impact of perseverance. The emphasis on respect also ensures children feel safe in school and they explain that 'because we feel safe we can learn'. Respect, trust, friendship and forgiveness provide the foundation for the excellent relationships and behaviour demonstrated throughout the school family. Each class draws up and displays a class charter which effectively establishes an agreed code of conduct for all pupils. Through the Christian value of hope school leaders and staff are ambitious for the academic achievement and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils. The majority of pupils enter the school with levels of attainment below the national average and by the end of Key Stage 2 school performance data shows they attain at or above the national average in maths, reading and writing. There is a strong emphasis in collective worship and in RE on creativity. Children learn about and express the wonder of God's creation through music, art, drama and creative learning activities. Children's experiences and understanding of diversity and difference are enriched through visits to places of worship both Christian and those of other faiths such as the Manchester Jewish Museum, a local mosque and a Buddhist cultural centre. The Rochdale Year 2 Banner Service and the Manchester Cathedral Year 6 Leavers Service are highly valued cultural and spiritual experiences for the children. School Councillors are proud of how they planned and designed playground toys and activities so that playtimes are happy and positive social experiences. They recognise that they develop understanding of the lives and difficulties experienced by others through the events they hold in support of local, national and international charities such as Macmillan Coffee Morning and Red Nose Day. The topic 'Water' focussed on how water is used in religion and on the problems in parts of the world where water is scarce or unclean. This increased understanding led to pupils raising money for the charity Water Aid. St Gabriel's has links with two Christian schools in Africa and another St Gabriel's school in Barbados. Children exchange prayers and information and make greetings cards at Christmas and Easter to send to their international friends. These links ensure that children have a good understanding of Christianity as a multicultural world faith. In RE pupils demonstrate very sound knowledge of the practices of Christianity and other world faiths. They discuss the impact of religion on the lives of believers but there is less emphasis on this in their recorded work.

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

Collective worship is the focal point for the Christian ethos and character of this school. Bible stories, often in the form of child-friendly film clips, are regularly included in the lively, fun worship. This ensures children have excellent knowledge and can relate the teaching to their own lives. Children talk about how 'we learn to live our lives like Jesus'. The headteacher and other worship leaders inspire learners to marvel at God's world and to respond positively to stories of faith and Christian commitment. Themes for worship highlight and develop children's understanding of the school's core Christian values of respect, trust, hope, forgiveness, perseverance and friendship and are directly linked to school expectations for attitudes to learning and conduct. Themes include seasons of the Church's year and Christian festivals. Worship also emphasises news and issues in society with a strong focus on pupils taking responsibility for their own conduct and the welfare of others. School Councillors highlighted how worship in Anti-bullying Week used Bible stories such as the Lost Sheep to illustrate responsibility to each other. A long term overview would ensure worship themes are planned more systematically to inspire spiritual and moral reflection and social actions. Learners

understand the importance of prayer and explain how the prayer tree in the school hall encourages them to write prayers of thanks, hope and concern. These prayers are regularly used in school worship and taken home to be shared with families. A Year 5 pupil explained that a candle is lit at the start of worship 'to remember that Jesus is the Light of the World and that without him our world would be a dark place'. Children explain that this gives them reassurance and hope at difficult times. An understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is developing. The children are familiar with worship in St Gabriel's church through the regular visits and services held there. Parents enjoy being involved in the services which celebrate Christian festivals and feel that these links with the church can provide important milestones in their own spiritual development and support in times of difficulty. Children thoroughly enjoy taking part in the varied worship activities and older pupils are excited by the new opportunities they have to plan and lead worship. Evaluation of worship involves a range of stakeholders.

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

The headteacher, governors and staff of St Gabriel's share a clear vision for all children as unique children of God. Christian values of respect, trust, hope, forgiveness, perseverance and friendship are demonstrated by all adults who enrich the lives of learners through care, sensitivity and empathy. These values are mirrored by the children in their positive relationships with each other. The inspirational work of the headteacher in promoting international links, eco issues and the Rights Respecting Schools programme stems from a deeply held Christian faith and commitment to putting Christian values at the heart of the life of the school. The school environment, both indoors and out, is planned specifically to highlight the wonder of God's creation and develop a sense of awe, reverence and respect in the whole school family. Effective, systematic self-evaluation by school leaders, governors and pupils recognises the many strengths of St Gabriel's as a church school and results in effective action planning and strategies for improvement. Governors visit school regularly and have excellent knowledge and understanding of how well the school is doing. The Chair of Governors provides highly valued and significant support to school leaders. The involvement of the Chair in the local governors' forum is of mutual benefit to the school and local community. Governors were involved in a recent review of the school's Christian mission statement and continue to monitor regularly its core Christian purpose. Using the International Primary Curriculum and the principles of Rights Respecting Schools, leaders have devised a curriculum informed by their Christian vision to meet the specific development needs of the school's pupils. Children are valued and given the best chance to develop personally and educationally. School leaders and staff work tirelessly to build and strengthen mutually beneficial links with parents and families. The open, approachable welcome parents, grandparents and families receive at social events, worship in school and in church and on a day to day basis in school is recognised and praised by parents who describe the care their children receive as 'seamless'. This in turn ensures parents are supportive of the work and Christian character of the school. Involvement in school life often provides an entry for parents and children into the local church community. During the current interregnum, the pastoral role of the retired vicar who leads school worship in church and is a familiar presence in school and the local community is particularly important. He maintains and reinforces the excellent links between church, school and home. The school is a focal point in the community and its links with the church raise the profile of the church and the role it plays in supporting local children and families. Parents explain how the Christian character of the school helps them to feel able to approach the local church for support in times of difficulty. The school welcomes visits from diocesan clergy including the Bishop of Middleton. The involvement of the headteacher in local and diocesan development in RE ensures the subject is given a high profile in school and that staff are able to access professional development opportunities which lead to high quality teaching and learning. Christian leadership training is offered to staff who undertake leadership roles or who aspire to leadership in the future.