



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St George's Church of England High School

Cherry Tree Road
Marton
Blackpool
FY4 4PH

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Blackburn

Local authority: N/A

Dates of inspection: 4 and 5 February 2016

Date of last inspection: January 2011

School's unique reference number: 140759

Headteacher: Dan Berry

Inspector's name and number: Jo Fageant 104

School context

St George's is an over-subscribed, average-sized 11-16 secondary school. In April 2014 it became the founding and only secondary academy within the diocesan 'Cidari' multi-academy trust. The headteacher is a director of the trust. The school is located in an area of very significant deprivation; amongst the most deprived in England in relation to several measures. Almost all students are of white British heritage. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well above the national average.

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

- Biblical teaching and the school's 15 Christian values, known as gifts, are acknowledged by students to give them guiding principles for life
- A Christian commitment to the value and potential of every individual leads to outstanding pastoral care and spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development as well as a relentless focus on improvement.
- The worship life of the school, overseen by the Chaplain, includes prayer, readings from the Bible and Christian symbolism. It embeds a rich experience of Christianity in the day to day life of the school community.

Areas to improve

- Ensure strategies for the evaluation of all new and ongoing initiatives focus on impact. They need to demonstrate how well intended outcomes on the lives and learning of students, and professional development of staff, are fully achieved.

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

St George's is unstinting in the support, care and challenge it provides for all members of its community. This arises from a consistent focus on the three elements of its mission statement: *Believe, Achieve, Care*. A variety of Biblical teachings and 15 Christian values are at the heart of these aspirations and of all the school does. Students speak readily of the significance and impact of the values/gifts with obvious understanding of both their Christian meaning and the relevance to their own lives. One student summed up the views of others when saying, 'values have helped me be the person I am.' Through its 'colleges' and tutor group arrangements a 'family feel' of belonging has been created. The resulting supportive, trusting relationships contribute to exemplary pastoral support. The chaplain is an important and valued member of the pastoral team. This provision richly exemplifies the school's belief that it has a responsibility to make clear everyone is loved by God. The same motivation is applied to guiding students' academic attainment and progress. Improved tracking of progress enables insightful support to be established such as the highly successful accelerated reading programme. Although improvement is not consistent across all subject areas or student groups no students leave school without being in education, employment or training. Whilst the school's commitment to each individual has improved attendance and reduced exclusions it is not complacent about the continuing challenges of all these areas. Excellent provision is made for students' SMSC development in recognition of the need to develop resilience. This is addressed through spirituality days and a tailor-made comprehensive SMSC programme linking with Christian values/gifts. Students understand how these help them deal with the challenges of life. Many also speak of the great value of their religious education (RE) course and the ways in which it exemplifies the school's mission statement. It challenges them to understand and develop respect for the different faces of Christianity as well as lives influenced by other religions. Some speak of how their learning about 'situation ethics' helps their decision making. These and other opportunities show how well the school has addressed the last inspection's challenge to enrich students' cultural awareness. Students' understanding that everyone is valued is demonstrated in their strong assertion that there is very little bullying. Those who might be singled out for attention say they feel accepted. All are confident that everyone can find a way to express concerns and be certain they will be dealt with. Anti-bullying ambassadors recognise how their role reflects the school's values. Christian students are happy to be recognised as such and the Christian union commands respect. Community spirit is demonstrated in the way students take on roles of responsibility because they are ways of helping others and the school community as a whole.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The value of collective worship is understood by everyone. In both college and tutor group contexts students and staff engage with themes they describe as relevant and inspiring. In surveys many parents report that students talk about collective worship at home. Worship is distinctively Christian, always including Biblical teaching and prayer. It deepens understanding of the school's Christian values/gifts in ways which are widely recognised to have a positive impact on attitudes, behaviour, relationships and charitable action. It makes a strong contribution to students' SMSC development. They recognise the Christian ideals of loving one's neighbour and treating others as you would like to be treated. The chaplain works with others, including student spiritual captains, to plan themes. She creates excellent resources which help staff as well as students engage and plan. Students participate actively, including taking leadership responsibilities, in tutor group worship. They behave with respect and a sense of reverence in larger groupings and more formal settings. Students develop a good understanding of the Church year, the importance of Jesus and Anglican traditions including worship addressed to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. College Eucharist services enable participation in a variety of ways and through taught Eucharist services students come to understand their meaning and significance. Not everyone seeks opportunities for their own personal prayers. However, the importance accorded to it is demonstrated by the way in which students expect prayer even when away on school trips and at the Year 11 prom. They speak of understanding the Lord's Prayer, the Grace and the school prayer, all of which are used regularly. Students also sometimes contribute their own prayers. Worship is enriched by the leadership of staff and visitors from different Christian traditions. Students are clear that the school does not force religion on them but they value the Christian perspective it offers. Traditional Anglican morning prayer, led by the chaplain, is available every day for staff and students. Small

numbers attend but not always the same people. These times are valued as a worshipful and focusing start to the day. Members of the school community are aware that prayers gathered from prayer boxes around the school are used in this context. Spiritual captains keep records of worship and governors visit to monitor consistency. Students readily offer reflections on what worship means to them. However, there is insufficient formal evaluation of the impact of worship involving all members of the school community to ensure that everyone's views influence future developments.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The school is fortunate to have a team of five enthusiastic specialist teachers all of whom are committed to the challenge of continuing improvement. Led with determination and expertise by a member of the senior leadership team, they celebrate one another's strengths and skills to work cooperatively for the benefit of all students. Planning is shared and adapted to suit the needs and abilities of different students so everyone makes progress. Attainment at GCSE is in line with the national average and is better than other core subjects within the school. The team has been in the forefront of planning, marking and teaching initiatives which go on to be adapted for whole school use. Teaching within the department is consistently good and often outstanding, using a rich variety of strategies to engage interest. An enquiry approach challenges students to think deeply and apply a variety of skills in their learning. The RE curriculum has been carefully developed to be relevant and engaging with a strong focus on supporting students' personal and SMSC development. It links with the school's values and strengthens understanding and appreciation of the school's distinctively Christian ethos. As such, senior students describe RE as 'more than just a lesson.' They appreciate the way 'teachers really care, they nurture us and really help us to learn, not just for exams.' They appreciate how this develops in them a good understanding of Christianity and how religious beliefs impact on people's lives. They value greatly the opportunity lessons offer to explore and express their own opinions and beliefs and to listen to those of others. Innovative homework ideas enable students to take responsibility for their learning. They have a good understanding of how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve. This is because marking, in line with what has become whole school practice, takes the form of a written conversation based on clear success criteria which help students to reflect on and evaluate their progress. Detailed records enable teachers to track progress and put appropriate support in place when students need additional help and/or challenge. As a consequence, students make at least good and, in some cases, outstanding progress from their starting points.

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

Leaders are clear that every member of the school community is uniquely valued and loved by God. As a consequence, they feel a responsibility to strive relentlessly to support learning and personal and spiritual wellbeing. This commitment informs everything they do and is demonstrated in the exemplary pastoral care for staff and students. It can equally be seen in the improving strategies to track students' academic progress in order to provide appropriate support as needed. Similarly, observations of lessons, undertaken with a coaching approach, help to determine a focused training programme for staff. However, plans and surveys used for evaluation do not always include criteria and questions focused on impact. Leaders have embedded a strong emphasis on SMSC development in all areas of the curriculum and throughout the pastoral system. Students and staff link all subject areas with Christian teaching through carefully selected Bible verses and spirituality days. The status and support accorded to RE and collective worship mean that both are able to be innovative and highly effective. Good behaviour, the orderly learning environment and obvious community spirit are attributed to how well the Christian values/gifts are understood. Governors know the school well and challenge appropriately. They take a keen and active part in promoting and challenging its effectiveness as a Christian school and have been instrumental in improving the provision for collective worship. The school benefits greatly from and is strengthened by the significant number of staff who have undertaken church school leadership training. The resulting shared vision gives great importance to the role of the chaplain and develops mutually beneficial links with local churches and the wider community. Students respond actively through social and charitable action focused locally and internationally. An inspiring example is their work with local adults with learning difficulties to create a beautiful garden. Despite pressures to attend to other matters, leaders are never distracted from their Christian vision in guiding their aspirations for the school.

SIAMS report: St George's School, Cherry Tree Road, Blackpool, FY4 4PH