



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### Haslingden St James' Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Regent Street  
Haslingden  
Rossendale  
Lancashire  
BB4 5HL

**Diocese: Blackburn**

Local authority: Lancashire

Date of inspection: 1 May 2014

Date of last inspection: 2 December 2008

School's unique reference number: 119452

Headteacher: Mrs Linda Roberts

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Lizzie McWhirter MA 244

#### School context

Haslingden St James' Primary School serves a community on the edge of the Rossendale valley. Currently there are 164 pupils on roll, 80% of whom are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the vast majority are of the Muslim faith. The proportion of pupils not having English as their first language is 73%. The headteacher has been in post for four years and leads a strong, committed team.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Haslingden St James' as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The headteacher's Christian vision and dedication is embraced by all, ensuring the Christian character of the school permeates all school life.
- The Christian environment enables positive attitudes amongst pupils, who become confident learners and achieve well, especially in collective worship and religious education [RE].
- The strong sense of a family community, underpinned by core Christian values.

#### Areas to improve

- Embed the new RE syllabus, ensuring that questful, challenging RE leads to all learners achieving highly.

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

Haslingden St James' sustains an excellent learning environment, where pupils are proud to belong, feel valued and achieve well. This is because the school's commitment and mission, to provide high quality education for all children within a Christian environment is at the very core of its being. Moreover, the school's motto of, 'Growing in God's love, learning as we go' is rooted in its chosen sevenfold values of endurance, forgiveness, friendship, koinonia, peace, thankfulness and trust. As the pupils put it, 'We're a

church school because the school accepts any religion and we're all together as one'. Data shows that attendance has improved greatly over the last three years, not just because the school has robustly implemented its attendance policy, but also because the school promotes faith and views all children with paramount importance. The school has worked especially hard with the Asian families it serves. A good example is opening doors earlier, which has really made a difference. There have been no exclusions. Whilst the children have been well below expected attainment when they arrive in school, over time pupil progress has risen to be in line with the national average, with pupil premium children out performing other groups of pupils. Levels of challenge for all pupils have been addressed, meeting the needs of all children. Behaviour is impeccable and relationships are exemplary in this school where Christian values are seen everywhere throughout the school. Learning is aspirational here, not just academic, with Haslingden St James' valuing a wide range of achievement. Pupils say they value their teachers and their friends, with some pupils aspiring to be teachers because of the excellent role models they have seen. Pupils here thrive and feel able to make a positive contribution. Pupils experience the Christian values of service and generosity through fundraising activities, which also enhance global awareness. Such activities enable pupils to gain an understanding of their place in the community and their responsibility to others, with Class 4 enjoying a close link to a school in Pakistan. Pupils show respect for the diverse community they are a part of, enhanced by visits to the local mosque. They acknowledge the importance of world peace, saying 'we believe in the same things no matter where we are'. A good example of valuing diversity is that, 'hand in hand, we say hello in different languages'. Bright, prominent, interactive displays, together with quiet prayer spaces in classrooms greatly enhance pupils' spiritual development. Pupils say, 'every class has an RE and worship area as we are a church school, it's really important'. It is the desire of some older pupils to rejuvenate the school grounds, providing spaces for reflection. Parents say that 'Pop in and play' sessions every Wednesday afternoon help them to 'grow with the school' and understand more by being involved in activities. Parents speak highly of the importance of 'growing in God's faith and doing everything with God overarching'. They especially value the fact that 'we all live very close and the older ones, especially at lunchtime, do look out for children in the school and at home; and the teachers definitely look after them'.

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

The attitude of pupils to collective worship is excellent because the quality of worship offered to them is making a real difference in their lives, contributing greatly to their spiritual development. Prayerful and meaningful worship takes place in school and sometimes in church, with a focus on the church year, Christian values and The Bible. An excellent example is pupils recalling the story of Moses, who had 'complete, absolute faith in God', saying 'God is always beside you, no matter what, and if you keep on trying, you get where you want to be'. Pupils value prayer, saying 'we pray to keep ourselves close to God'. Everyone prays The Lord's Prayer every day, mindful that 'we're not as perfect as God, but we can try and forgive each other'. Pupils are keen to be involved in worship, especially drama and they regularly plan and lead worship 'three times a month'. Year 6 pupils lead the Christmas service in the parish church, and one Y6 pupil wrote and led worship based on the Old Testament story of Cain and Abel, with its focus on making right choices. Pupils build on the excellent role models they see leading worship, with the staff commenting, 'No adult could have done a better job'. The evaluation of worship is well embedded in detailed records, with pupils using Worship Evidence Comment Books. The evaluation feeds into whole school planning and is supported by link governors to maintain the school's Christian character. Half termly pupil evaluation always has a focus on 'What impact will it have on your life?' Floor books on worship, values and Christian distinctiveness all show how integral these are to the pupils' lives. A good example is when pupils visited Blackburn Cathedral during Olympic year, holding the Olympic torch reminded them of their Christian value of endurance, and 'to never give up in life, through the bad times and good times'. Pupils are able to attribute different symbols to the members of The Holy Trinity, such as a dove to represent The Holy Spirit. Pupils value the importance of key festivals affirming their faith, saying, 'we celebrate different times like Eid and Easter'. In all these ways, worship is constantly enriching pupils' lives and the lives of parents and staff and other members of this worshipping, welcoming and witnessing community.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding**

Religious education is important in this school and pupils clearly enjoy their RE lessons in this school. The teaching and learning is of a consistently high standard. Pupils make very good progress, with the majority achieving Level 4 or above, and some pupils reaching Level 5 or 6 by the end of Year 6. An excellent example of this very good progress is that in 2011 the school received the Blackburn Diocese Church School Distinctiveness Award for creativity in RE. This key subject has high status in the school and is well led and managed by an enthusiastic subject leader. Questful, challenging RE affects the way pupils live and think, with pupils saying, 'We learn about different religions, but the one we talk about most is Christianity and we mostly talk about God'. Pupils have a good level of theological literacy, and are very comfortable employing challenging questions about faith and life in order to understand more about faith. Assessment is well embedded as assessment outcomes are monitored termly by the subject leader and the headteacher and this information is used effectively to track pupil progress. Such termly tracking procedures, together with pupil portfolios, indicate that some children are attaining a higher level in RE than in other core subjects. Pupils know how to improve in their work, saying, 'we get tips from the teachers to get to the next level' and 'if our teacher writes a question for us, we have to answer it'. Teachers ensure children are challenged and they have high expectations of the children, setting quality tasks. RE has really moved on apace, and consequently, pupils have really benefited from its increased rigour and quality. There are more lesson observations and more monitoring. In addition, the sharing of work plans and pupil book scrutiny in staff meetings takes place termly, with development points fed back to staff and acted upon. Excellent examples of the creative approach to RE include Y5 and Y6 pupils using enquiry methods such as a conscience alley to determine Jesus' thoughts on the way to his last supper as well as 'using Kagan structures to see what other people think' when re-enacting the events of Palm Sunday in the school grounds. On a quest to find out about God and the big questions in life, Y2 pupils explore Pentecost, through a multi-sensory approach, reflecting on values such as trust and endurance to empathise with how the disciples were 'empowered by God', attributing The Holy Spirit as like 'having a little bit of God inside them'.

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

Haslingden St James' Christian foundation is effectively promoted by the inspirational vision, dedication and commitment of the headteacher, clergy, governors and staff. It is also welcomed by parents so that the school's Church of England foundation is celebrated and secured. The pursuit of excellence in all school activities is demonstrated by a highly successful drive to improve achievement and maintain high levels of attainment in all pupils. Given their starting points, all pupils make very good progress. Collective worship and RE have an equally high status in school and meet the statutory requirements. Christian leadership, succession planning and roles and responsibilities are excellently supported through professional development where diocesan training is seen as a priority. Indeed, the school works closely with the diocesan senior adviser to schools, with the impact of this reflected in all school life and practice. The RE subject leader supports and challenges colleagues to continually raise standards. Governors are strongly committed to the robust and effective strategic development plan. As a result, all areas from the previous inspection have been addressed and the school's leaders have clearly identified areas for development which include embedding the new diocesan RE syllabus. Parents feel valued and welcome and included in their children's education with pupils having a voice through the school council. Thus everyone works together as a team, which is how pupils explain Haslingden St James' value of koinonia or fellowship.

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