



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Mellor St Mary's C of E Voluntary Aided Primary School

Brundhurst Fold
Mellor
Blackburn
BB2 7JL

Diocese: Blackburn
Local authority: Lancashire
Date of inspection: 9 October 2014
Date of last inspection: April 2010
School's unique reference number: 119529
Headteacher: Christine Taylor
Inspector's name and number: Ruth Wall (548)

School context

St. Mary's is a smaller than average sized school in the rural village of Mellor. There are 142 children on roll. Eligibility for free school meals is well below the national average as is the number of pupils with learning difficulties and or disabilities. There are few children from minority ethnic groups and very few children do not have English as their first language. St Mary's Parish Church is in close proximity to the school. The school has achieved an International School Award. The headteacher has been in post for 14 years.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Mellor St Mary's 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 shared by all members of the school community ensures the school's success in meeting the academic and spiritual needs of all children.
- The consistently high quality of collective worship and religious education (RE) makes a significant impact on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils.
- Relationships with the church are very strong in promoting a shared Christian vision for development and learning.
- The outstanding behaviour of the children reflects the Christian ethos of the school.

Areas to improve

- Establish experiences to broaden children's knowledge and understanding of faiths, other than Christianity, through visits to their places of worship.
- Develop the role of the governors in embedding a more structured approach to self-evaluation and monitoring of the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school.

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

The school's mission statement 'Where everyone belongs and does their best - with Jesus in our hearts, work and play' is evident on all documents and communication. This, together with its focus on three Christian values, 'peace, love and forgiveness', shapes the thinking of the school. Children speak with clarity and conviction about the Christian values they have learnt about and that are important for their lives. An excellent example of this was demonstrated in the power-point presentation given by a group of Year 6 children on, 'What it means to be part of a church school'. A parent said, 'Children feel part of a community and family, knowing how to interact in a friendly and caring manner'. Children's efforts and achievements are acknowledged and celebrated. In consequence, their behaviour and attitude to learning are excellent and, consequently, attendance is very good. The school's Christian character results in a secure and caring environment where academic attainment is well above the national average and their progress is very good. 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. There is a broad and rich curriculum which contributes fully to the children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. Activities include the work of the eco-committee in promoting a responsibility to, and appreciation of, God's creation. Children are made aware that Christianity is a global world faith through a range of activities including 'Sparkle' the swallow's 'travels round the world in search of Christianity'. Children 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. A parent said the way teachers showed respect for her family's Muslim faith was 'brilliant' and made her daughter feel 'valued'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

High quality worship planning includes Christian themes, with a strong emphasis on Christian values and important Christian festivals. This enables children to have an understanding of the nature of worship, the Christian faith and Anglican traditions and practice. Worship makes a significant impact on the lives of pupils. Children are able to explain their developing understanding of God, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They say that Bible stories challenge them to think about their own behaviour. They make reference to the parable of the 'Prodigal Son' and say, 'We try to show forgiveness too even when it's not easy'. Children benefit from a varied experience of worship led by a range of people including the vicar, members of St Mary's Church and other Christians. Music is a strength of the school and used effectively to enhance worship. The school orchestra makes an outstanding contribution to worship in school and church. Children demonstrate their understanding of the worship themes through their involvement in a variety of activities including readings, role play, prayers and singing. Parents say they enjoy attending services in school and in St Mary's Church on Sundays. Governors speak of the impact of worship being evident in the large numbers of children who respond to being confirmed. Parents say that the vicar had done an 'amazing' and 'fantastic job' in preparing children for confirmation. Children reflect, 'I felt very close to God... it was very peaceful' and, 'I felt I was coming into God's special family'. In response to the focus for development raised at the previous inspection the school now have clear monitoring procedures for worship which include regular informal discussions with adults together with children's written monitoring reports. A special memory for one child was when a teacher washed his feet during worship time. There is a clear understanding of the significance of this being Christ's teaching of humility and service to others.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Children make extremely good progress as is evidenced in portfolios and children's written

work. The subject leader monitors religious education (RE) thoroughly using observations, book scrutiny and cross-checking of standards. This monitoring ensures that all children are experiencing creative and challenging RE and that there is an excellent balance between learning about and learning from religion. Teachers have a shared commitment to improving standards. Children have a thorough knowledge of the Bible and the life of Jesus. The study of other faiths and a global outlook are fully embedded in the school curriculum. The school believes this gives children a deeper understanding of their own and other cultures and prepares them for life in our diverse global society. Leaders have rightly identified the need 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. RE makes a significant contribution to children's spiritual development. In lessons children demonstrate that they feel safe and confident enough to discuss their own difficult life issues when considering how they can use Christian values effectively. Children speak positively about their enjoyment of RE. A 'wow' moment for one child was visiting Blackburn Cathedral which she said was 'amazing – so big and grand'. Others explain how they are encouraged to ask challenging questions about God and faith. A variety of effective teaching and learning strategies are used, including role play, art and craft and multi-media resources. Marking in RE is now consistent and focussed, showing how the school has moved on since the last inspection. A system for assessing children's achievements is now fully embedded and used effectively to track progress and determine next steps in learning.

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

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are highly effective in articulating the distinctive Christian vision and ethos and in promoting and establishing that ethos throughout the school and beyond to the community. The headteacher's Christian faith is evident in all aspects of her leadership. Foundation governors are knowledgeable and have a clear understanding of their role. They seek the views of all stakeholders in reviewing the Christian distinctiveness of the school. This includes the mission statement and aims. They are proactive and successful in supporting, challenging and monitoring the work of the school as a church school but recognise the need to develop a more structured approach to their self-evaluation. Leaders and governors have been successful in ensuring that the academic needs of all the children are met. In doing so they have recognised the importance of the school's strong Christian character in creating an ethos which supports effective learning. Issues raised at the previous inspection have been fully addressed. The vicar and church members make a valuable contribution to the life of the school. They play an important part in supporting RE, in leading worship and, the headteacher explains, 'are sensitive and approachable people - accessible to everyone in times of need'. The well-being of all members of the school community is excellent. RE and collective worship are led with commitment and a genuine desire to continue to seek ways to improve further. The school is committed to the professional development of teachers including succession planning for the future leadership of a church school. The school values the often 'inspirational' training it has received from the diocese. Children are proud of their role in decision making through the eco council. They say they feel comfortable in expressing their views and are confident that their suggestions are taken seriously. The school values its relationship with parents and seeks their views on a range of issues. Parents say that they are kept fully informed and that staff are very approachable. A parent commented, 'This is a school that is very good at showing love – in deed'.

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