

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### Bury Church of England High School

Haslam Brow, Bury, BL9 OTS	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Manchester</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Bury
Date/s of inspection	14 & 15 March 2017
Date of last inspection	January 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 105365
Headteacher	Revd Craig Watson
Inspector's name and number	Fiona Ashton 860

#### School context

Bury Church of England High School is a smaller than average sized voluntary aided secondary school. It is oversubscribed and the governors have increased the admission number to 162 per year. The school is currently exploring academy status. Both the headteacher and the head of religious education (RE) have been appointed since the previous inspection. The number of pupils for whom the school receives extra pupil premium funding is significantly below the national average. The same is true of children for whom English is an additional language. However, the percentage of children with a statement of special educational needs is higher than average.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bury Church of England High School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The school's stated intention to encourage pupils to 'Believe, Achieve, Inspire' drives the decisions that are made throughout the school so that pupils are academically and socially confident and spiritually mature.
- Governors, the headteacher and all staff model Christian values in the decisions that they make and the guidance that they provide.
- Adults and pupils create a caring school that is deeply rooted in the openly Christian ethos of this learning and worshipping community.
- Collective worship is excellent and enables the community to pray together formally and informally. Worship allows individuals and groups to gather, reflect and grow in their own faith and spirituality.
- Religious education is very well led, academically successful and enriches the lives of pupils and their understanding of religion beyond the classroom.

#### Areas to improve

- To embed in all aspects of the school the newly adopted motto of 'Let your light shine' (Matt 5:19), so that it impacts upon the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the school community.
- To keep under review the leadership structure of the school so that it remains outstanding at upholding the school's mission as a church school.
- In RE, develop further the Key Stage 3 curriculum in the light of national programmes of study and at Key Stage 4 to reflect the changed requirements of GCSE.

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

Achievement in this school where pupils are encouraged to 'Let your light shine' (Matt 5:19) is high. It is particularly good for those pupils with low starting points and additional needs. Pupils appreciate that achievement and self-belief are promoted by the school and that everything is done to 'make sure that you're OK, that you can learn and that you're happy'. Evident in academic outcomes, this is also seen in the provision and support that is available for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC). This is successfully developed through the well planned, highly effective and well regarded Archbishop of York Young Leaders Award, deep learning days, chaplaincy and local and international links. The school celebrates its Christianity visually and through acts of worship and charity. In the school hall there is vibrant artwork, prepared with the help of a professional Christian artist but executed by pupils. It brings to life the motto 'Believe, Achieve, Inspire' and explains the theological, philosophical and practical meaning of it. Similarly, in the chapel, a wooden pyramid helps pupils to focus on the Trinity, a mirrored cross encourages reflection and ribbons that can be tied to a mesh cross ensure that individuals have 'different ways to pray that suit them'. Relationships based upon honesty, respect and the Word of God are a strength of the community. This ensures that pupils and staff are secure in their personal and faith identity and points to the school's deeply embedded Christian values. Staff and pupils value their interaction and open conversations. One member of staff described the quality of relationships throughout the community as 'unique'. This is echoed by parents one of whom stated that the school 'knows children and gets the best out of them. No child is lost.' The quest for truth and reconciliation underpins the school's behaviour policy. It is used as part of issue resolution and is significant in achieving the school's excellent pupil behaviour and very low levels of exclusion. Pupils appreciate and respond positively to being encouraged to reflect upon their behaviour and that of others. Incidents of bullying are rare and when they do occur, they are swiftly addressed. Parents, in particular, appreciate the level of support, encouragement and success that the school provides in these circumstances. There is a wide recognition that when bullying occurs, it is from naivety rather than malice. The school's extensive links with Christian communities across the world, including four partner schools in Pakistan, South Africa, France and Moldova ensures that the breadth of Christianity as a world faith is exceptionally well understood. This is achieved through exchange visits by pupils, staff and governors as well as joint learning and cultural exchange projects. In RE, the curriculum is highly effective in meeting the needs of learners so that they are academically successful. Additionally, it contributes towards their overall wellbeing. Beginning in Year 7 with a unit of work about what makes the school 'Christian', RE makes an outstanding contribution to the wider Christian distinctiveness of the school through its engagement with worship, charity and PSHE.

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

An area for development following the previous SIAS inspection, collective worship is now excellent. Staff roles have been developed to support and facilitate the spiritual development of pupils and, to a lesser extent, staff. This has an enviable impact upon the school allowing for numerous voluntary prayer opportunities in addition to formal collective worship. Pupils experience collective worship in key stage, year and form groups. It is led by members of the leadership team, pastoral staff, visiting clergy and the pupils themselves. It is inclusive, prayerful and offers all involved an opportunity to reflect on their place in God's world and how they might, in the words of the new motto, use the day ahead to, 'let their light shine'. As a result of a proactive process, the school has very strong links with clergy and worshipping communities in each of the deaneries that it serves. This enriches the collective worship and sacramental life of the school and ensures that pupils have a broad and encompassing experience of the breadth of the Anglican tradition. Pupils recognise the diversity of the Church as normal. Prayer is central to the life of this school community. It is considered a 'normal' response and pupils pray with confidence. Worship themes are carefully planned to reflect the liturgical calendar. Impressively, themes are linked to the school's stated motto of 'Believe, Achieve, Inspire'. Worship is underpinned by Christian values and discussed by many pupils long after worship has ended. Exceptional Year 7 worship was observed when Jesus' turning over of tables in the Temple was identified as 'righteous anger'. This was explored through such diverse social and political themes as war and mental health and with such impact that a pupil could later speak with confidence of being righteously angry about mistreatment of the planet. In a Year 11 form worship, the same theme was explored through Amos 5:24 'Let justice flow like a stream and righteousness like a river that never goes dry' and explained through the actions of Rosa Parks. The well-established school prayer is widely known and used and represents the school's long tradition as a Church of England school. The early morning prayer group 'Awake', is very well attended. It provides staff and pupils with a highly valued period of thoughtful reflection to start the day. Those who attend pray for each other, the school and the wider world with independence and confidence. Students from PAIS, an international organisation supporting the spiritual development of young people, lead the Madhouse (Make a Difference) experience. This is another significant opportunity for pupils to experience global Christianity and to consider how belief translates into practice. Collective worship is thoroughly evaluated involving visiting clergy, pupils and staff in the process. The outcomes of evaluation are impressively used for future planning. The worship learning assistant, by communicating effectively with governors, the headteacher, staff, clergy and pupils, is pivotal to this process and ensures that already excellent collective worship continues to improve.

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

RE is outstanding because it is led by a talented, committed and determined head of department who monitors, supports and develops colleagues in their teaching of RE. Thus, the RE team is well informed of recent national developments within RE but has not yet considered their implications for the learning of pupils, particularly at Key Stage 3. Teachers of RE, including non-specialists, work collaboratively to enhance their personal classroom practice and to ensure that pupils' learning needs are met. This leads to RE teaching that is always good and frequently outstanding. Pupils speak appreciatively of the support and guidance that they receive in RE. This includes clearly and expertly differentiated tasks and the regular and helpful assessment of learning. The department has very good mechanisms for ensuring that pupils at both key stages understand their progress and makes good use of verbal feedback opportunities. Homework is used to good effect and pupils recognise it as having a clear purpose in supporting their learning. Pupils across the years spoke of high expectations in RE and one pupil expressed it as 'hard work but, it is a good hard'. This sense of challenge in RE, promotes the exceptional progress that is evident by the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils all take a full course GCSE and their achievements are significantly better than nationally and consistently among the very best in the school. Children with additional needs are exceptionally complimentary about the encouragement that they receive in RE, 'My teacher knows how to get the best out of me.' Through their learning in RE, pupils have an excellent understanding of Jesus and Christianity. A Year 9 pupil spoke with theological insight and accuracy about the importance of the Resurrection for Christianity. RE lessons create a sense of awe and wonder for many pupils who are encouraged to explore deeply aspects of faith and morals. Difficult issues such as divorce are tackled with sensitivity. Pupils use religious vocabulary accurately. In addition to Christianity, Judaism is taught at Key Stage 3 and Islam at Key Stage 4 with pupils demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of the beliefs and practices of their community neighbours. Thus, religious understanding, tolerance and community cohesion are promoted. Already exciting, visits to places of worship both Christian and non-Christian, are further enhanced through collaborations with pupils from other schools to understand how Christians worship in churches and Muslims in mosques. Older pupils appreciate RE as giving them the opportunity to reflect upon, and challenge, a range of beliefs and values. For example, in Year 9, pupils spoke of being challenged to understand better the plight of asylum seekers: 'They're here for a reason, not just to take.' In Year 11, power and conflict resolution are approached in the light of current conflicts but examined in the context of what would Jesus do? What should a Christian do? These conversations continue into pupils' homes and parents are proud to share in their child's learning. RE is consistently shown to be an outstanding strength of the school in parental and pupil surveys.

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

The governors and headteacher provide a clear sense of purpose to Bury CE High School. The headteacher's vision of each pupil as a 'beacon for the Kingdom of God in the school community and beyond' is becoming a reality. This is articulated clearly and understood by the whole school community. It shapes policies and development planning all of which are underpinned by Christian values. The headteacher, new in post since the last inspection, has engendered a greater sense of explicit Church identity in the school. This permeates all activities including governance, leadership and worship. Through careful alignment of governing body sub-committees with key areas of the school, governors maintain a very good level of knowledge and insight into the standards of the school. Following the last inspection, the remit of the premises committee was extended to ensure that the school's distinctive Christian ethos could be thoroughly and efficiently monitored and evaluated. This has been a highly effective strategy leading to governors who are facilitated in making informed decisions that are appropriate and faithful to the school's Christian character. Governors seek external quality assurance from both the diocese and the local authority to ensure that the challenge and support that they provide to the school is robust. Individual departments and teams are encouraged to use external awards to develop strategies to support young people. For example, RE holds the RE Gold Quality Mark and The Prince's Teaching Institute has recognised strengths in English and maths and whole school leadership. Future church school leadership is accessed through the range of specifically Christian staff development opportunities that are promoted. Teaching staff are supported to develop and extend subject expertise. There exist impressive opportunities for all staff to develop in their roles. Members of the support staff explained how they are, according to the needs of the school, enabled to work to their interests and strengths. This leads to affirmed colleagues who are enabled to better support pupils in the knowledge that each person is a child of God. Staff appreciate that while not everyone is a Christian, all staff are supportive of, and supported by, the Christian values of the school. Robust staff induction and a buddying system help to create this supportive culture. By investing in staffing and resources governors have ensured that the school meets the demanding Statement of Entitlement for RE in Church of England Schools. Leadership extends to the pupils for whom there are an impressive range of roles available to pupils of all ages. The sophisticated structure of the school council ensures that pupils have both an excellent understanding of democracy and, an appreciation of their pupil voice. School councillors see themselves as having a voice for values and as agents of change. They take responsibility for the termly charity weeks. The head boy and girl are proud to represent the school at external events such as the Holocaust and Remembrance Day services and the town's Stop Hate Crime Event. There is excellent pastoral support for both staff and pupils in this school where everybody matters and where spiritual development is considered essential.

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