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National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Michael at Bowes Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Junior School

Tottenhall Road
Palmers Green,
London
N13 6JB

Previous SIAS grade: Outstanding

Diocese: London

Local authority: Enfield

Date of inspection: 12 May 2015

Date of last inspection: July 2010

School's unique reference number: 102026
Headteacher: Maria Jay

Inspector's name and number: Pamela Draycott 161

School context

St Michael at Bowes is a large Church of England voluntary aided junior school. Its pupils mainly come from the adjacent community infant school. Around 50 percent of pupils come from families who identify themselves as Christian. These are from different denominations including Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Pentecostalist. Around 45 percent come from other religious family backgrounds, the majority being Muslim. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs or who speak English as an additional language are above average. The percentage for whom pupil premium funding is received, due to social disadvantage, is likewise higher than average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Michael at Bowes as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The prominence given to the school's inclusive Christian ethos and values which act as a driving force for school development. These are effectively linked to good progress and a commitment to ensuring the well-being of all pupils and staff.
- Pupil behaviour is of the highest standard which stems from very strong and positive relationships. These are grounded in the school's Christian values and effectively supported by being a 'Rights Respecting School'.
- Pupils are treated as individuals, precious to God, and as such pupils develop self-confidence and positive views of themselves and others. This supports them in making good progress across the school.

Areas to improve

- In religious education (RE) provide more opportunities for pupils to choose activities and ways of

working in order for pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning.

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

St Michael at Bowes is a very welcoming and inclusive Christian school serving its community. Consequently, it successfully strives to ensure that its pupils develop well academically and personally. Pupils make good academic progress from their starting points on entry. This is based on the school's aim of, 'Helping each other live successful lives in the world of tomorrow'. This is expressed through its values of 'respect, caring, co-operation, fairness, honesty and resilience'. These values are explicitly linked to Jesus' teachings, particularly from the Beatitudes. The school's Christian values are successfully linked to its status as a 'Rights Respecting School' and its commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child' (UNCRC). Pupils and adults know that the values are underpinned by Christian teaching and many can talk in detail about these links. The school enables pupils to take responsibility for themselves and others and to show moral and social responsibility. This is based on showing care and respect for others, 'just as Jesus did'. The school celebrates a wide range of achievement, including recognising those who display Christian values in their life and work. There is a broad and balanced curriculum which is supplemented by a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. RE focused visits to churches and other places of worship successfully support the school's Christian ethos and contribute extremely well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils recognise the contribution that RE makes in helping them develop an understanding of a range of faiths. They link this explicitly to the school's Christian values of caring and respect which encourage tolerance and appreciation of difference and diversity. RE consequently makes a significant contribution to the school's inclusive Christian ethos. There are displays around school based on its Christian values. The values are spoken of frequently and are explicitly linked to school policies such as, for example, its behaviour policy. These values contribute effectively to pupils' well-being, regardless of their ability or background. Strong and mutually supportive relationships based on respect reflect the school's Christian values very well. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they speak of the school's 'caring and respectful family feel'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Daily worship is linked to the school's inclusive Christian values, the Church's year and school priorities. It is very well planned and delivered, indicating the high importance placed on it. Pupils and staff have very positive attitudes towards worship which is valued and enjoyed. Worship contributes effectively to helping pupils explore Christian values and a range of spiritual and ethical issues. Through worship pupils know a range of biblical stories and are aware of key Christian beliefs about Jesus Christ. They show a basic age-appropriate understanding of Christian beliefs about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Elements of Anglican worship such as lighting candles and saying the Lord's Prayer are embedded in school practice. The use of an opening sentence with a response less so. Whilst being recognisably Christian, worship is inclusive of pupils from different faith backgrounds. One Muslim parent praised the way in which prayers were open and inclusive. Thus, they supported her child's own faith development. Pupils behave respectfully during worship. They are involved in leading and evaluating the worship programme. Worship makes a significant and positive contribution

to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Opportunities for joining in prayers and reflecting on spiritual issues takes place through worship and at other points in the school day. There is a reflection space which some pupils choose to use during break times. Pupils recognise the relevance of prayer and see it as important to them and their school.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE has a very high profile as a 'core subject' within the school. Pupils' attainment is at least in line with, if not better than, other core subjects. Pupils make good progress in RE in all year groups. The RE curriculum has a very good balance between learning about Christianity and other world faiths. This is really appreciated and supported by pupils, staff and parents. Teaching is at least good and often outstanding. Pupils are enabled to learn about religious beliefs and practices as well as apply this learning to their own lives. RE is very well led by a knowledgeable and committed subject leader. He has rightly identified the need to develop assessment approaches still further, based on developments to the curriculum since the previous denominational inspection. The school appropriately links RE content with other aspects of the curriculum through its topic work. Very clear links between RE and the school's Christian ethos and values are made. Lessons are appropriately challenging. 'Big questions' are often asked. Pupils engage very well with and enjoy the challenge of addressing these. For example, during a very good Year 5 lesson pupils skilfully discussed whether or not they agreed with the statement 'Seeing is believing'. Pupils can draw on previous learning and apply it to new situations as shown in a very good Year 3 lesson based on Jesus' saying, 'I am the Bread of Life'. The level of discussion is above age-related expectations. Their written work in RE is not as detailed or expressive. Teachers provide a range of activities and approaches to enable pupils to learn in RE which are generally well matched to pupils' differing abilities and needs. Learning is teacher directed. Pupils follow instructions carefully and very well. They are rarely given choice of activities so that they can take more responsibility for their own learning. Termly progress tracking in RE takes place and is used well to support learning. Pupils know what they do well and what they need to do to improve.

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

The commitment and vision of the headteacher, ably supported by her staff and governors, leads to highly effective leadership and management of the school as a distinctive and inclusive church school. Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. This shows itself in its accurate self-evaluation and strategic improvement planning. Governors are supportive of the school as a church school and are appropriately involved in school life. Governors' involvement includes monitoring RE and worship. Both areas meet statutory requirements. The key issue for improvement from the previous denominational inspection was to ensure clear 'next steps' in marking and assessment in RE were improved. This has been addressed. Parents speak extremely highly of the school and the way in which it sees all its pupils as individuals. They rightly see this as one of the ways in which the school shows its caring Christian and nurturing character. The school has strong and longstanding links with St Michael at Bowes and St Cuthbert's churches. Both these churches have had periods without clergy since the previous denominational inspection. This has been a

difficulty but appropriate links have been maintained. The school is committed to the professional development of staff and effectively supports those who wish to develop their career within the church school sector. Links with the adjacent community infant school and with other schools in the area and within the diocese have developed well since the previous inspection.

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