



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Michael's Church of England High School

Rowley Learning Campus
Curral Road
Rowley Regis
West Midlands
B65 9AN

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Birmingham

Local authority: Sandwell

Dates of inspection: 25 March 2015

Date of last inspection: 13 November 2009

School's unique reference number: 104019

Headteacher: Mike Wilkes. Chaplain: The Revd Ian Shelton

Inspector's name and number: Huw D Bishop NS344

School context

There are 1160 full-time students on roll at the school, including a provision for students with physical disabilities and complex medical needs. The number of students with special educational needs, including statements, is above average. Most students are of White British Heritage with 3.5% having English as an additional language. In 2014, the school was identified by the government as being 34th within the top 200 of improved schools nationally; also, by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, for being in the top 20% of schools nationally for sustained improvement in achieving 5 A*-C grades including English and mathematics at GCSE. When last inspected by Ofsted in May 2014, it was judged to be a good school.

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

- The outstanding Christian vision and leadership of the headteacher as an excellent role model for students, colleagues and parents.
- A highly distinctive Christian ethos which is embedded in all aspects of school life, owned and proclaimed by the school community
- The significant partnership with the parish church and the parish priest's commitment in particular, which nurtures a clear focus for Christian and Anglican identity and mission within a diverse area of high deprivation.
- The very strong respect and understanding of Christian belief and practice articulated with such maturity by students within the context of Christian action.
- The impact of outstanding practice in religious education which permeates through the entire learning experience for students and enables their effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Areas to improve

- With the strong connexions that already exist with the parish church and chaplaincy, develop the formal evaluation of collective worship, to inform planning and its specific contribution to students' personal spirituality.

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

St Michael's is a strong faith community where everyone recognises and promotes its distinctive Christian character. Students are happy, safe and valued and identified Christian values impact strongly on the quality of relationships within school and the way students show care and concern for each other. Students identified values associated with St Michael, including courage, compassion, honesty, achievement, leadership and service, all bound within a spirit of Christian love and action. Students start their school journey with standards below that found nationally and now leave with standards at least in line and sometimes above the national averages. This can be attributed to the school's strong commitment to personalised learning and achievement and developing God given talents through every learning opportunity. This is acknowledged by students who say that *'everyone in this school is incredible; everyone has a role to play'*. Students' behaviour is outstanding, they listen to and hear each other and this is characterised by Christian care, tolerance and mutual respect. Religious education makes a significant contribution to the school's Christian character and all students follow the subject through to GCSE. Attainment and progress in religious education is well above the national average. However, the real success is evidenced in the way students benefit from the way themes from the learning programme weave through everything they do in school. *'Learning in RE is interactive and relevant'* was the view of a Year 11 student. The school environment richly enhances the distinctive Christian character with many relevant displays and artefacts focussing on its Christian ethos. The centrality of the cross in each 'hub' area is a central reminder of the school's Christian distinctiveness as all students pass through to the various curriculum areas throughout the day. Students say that the impact of the themes considered in the daily act of worship in the hub moves out with them through reflection opportunities in various subjects. The room set apart for reflection is well used by students and the chaplaincy, with students valuing the opportunities given for enjoying moments of calm and peace. Adults within the school are positive role models and the strong relationships across the school reflect its clear Christian practice. Students' confidence in contributing to interactive displays and their ability to articulate thoughts and feelings ensure that their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Various activities in school are used to help students address issues that impact on young people generally within the local community. For example, the school is part of the REWIND Project which addresses extremist behaviour. It is also a Stonewall 'Champion' school highlighting the dangers of discrimination. Several students representing the whole student body, and known as 'Student Voice', make an outstanding contribution to the school both in their practical work of service for others, but also in the way they proclaim the school as a distinctive Church of England school. The school's ethos is clearly founded on Christianity in action. The range of Christian charitable giving is outstanding. This is initiated by the students themselves and is highly organised. The school is in the top 100 sponsor list for Birmingham Children's Hospital. In 2014, they had raised in excess of £9000 for various charities. All together, these elements impact strongly on an outstanding community cohesion from a distinctively Christian foundation. Aspects of the curriculum, reflecting cultural diversity in school are integrated well into lessons, the general life of the school and supported by visits to mosques, churches and synagogues. Regular assemblies, often taken by the students, promote an understanding and respect for the cultural diversity within modern Britain.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is a very important part of school life and celebrates not only Christianity, but other world faiths. All members of the school community value and engage in worship which happens daily. Students believe that the school has struck the right balance in deciding on worship themes and the extent to which worship is specifically Christian. The chosen themes help students to develop an understanding of the importance of Jesus and Christian beliefs to Christians. Students show respect that the occasion is special, listen carefully to the worship leader, readings from the Bible and participate fully in affirmations of faith. They know and use the Lord's Prayer in worship. At St Michael's High School, collective worship can be a joyous

occasion, with younger students using their singing skills well in songs that have relevance and meaning for their personal development. During their induction day at the school, Year 7 students are invited to write a form prayer and design a form shield, reflecting the characteristics of St Michael. The chapel / reflection room provides a quiet space for individual or small group worship and students leave prayer messages in times of personal or special need. Staff as well as students benefit from the ministry of the parish priest. He leads worship in school and also starts the working week for staff with a reflection and prayer during their first briefing. The chaplain is also a key figure in supporting the wellbeing and pastoral care of staff as well as students. The school celebrates Christian festivals with services at St Giles's Church and Year 11 students mark the end of their learning journey at the school with a service in church. Students contribute to these services in a number of ways through reading, drama, music and reflection. Themes explored during collective worship are wide ranging, reflect the school's Christian values and are integrated into lessons and the school's daily life. This supports students' moral, social and cultural understanding as well as their personal development. However, more can be done in the evaluation of collective worship to inform planning and structure, to inspire a higher level of personal spiritual reflection and its importance as part of students' own spiritual journey.

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

The Christian vision, values and distinctiveness at St Michael's School are communicated effectively both within school and in the wider community. The visitor is in no doubt that this is a Church of England school – the visual evidence is strong, but more important is the way it is communicated at various levels and the quality of active relationships. The headteacher, with the strong support from the leadership team and governors, provides exceptional calm and transformational leadership. This is firmly grounded in Christian principles and on the basic premise that nothing but the best opportunities will do for students. A foundation governor described the headteacher's leadership as being *'rightly held with enormous respect in a community where education faces considerable challenges'*. Parents, too, appreciate all that the school does, claiming that its transformational work *'pushes barriers down between church and school, and between young and old'*. As a result, standards of achievement are getting higher and the personal needs of all students are met exceptionally well. The curriculum is driven by what the school perceives to be right for its students and it is underpinned by a strong spiritual, social and cultural element. The school contributes to 'LINKS', a range of projects linking church, school and community through St Giles's Church. It also hosts 'KRUNCH', a Christian child based organisation. Students from St Michael's were involved in the re-instatement of the local war memorial in the church grounds, having researched the lives of local servicemen and women and their links to families locally. Students organised and led the service of re-dedication. Religious education is regarded as a core subject and the outstanding practice which is evident is shared with other curriculum areas. Governors, alongside the school's leaders monitor the school's Christian ethos and the role all staff play to support it. Extensive links with St Giles's Parish Church and other Christian groups are very strong and proactive. The impact of chaplaincy at the school is significant to all members of the community. This is an excellent example of church and church school 'serving' each other in a rich and valued ministry and in mission to the local community. Foundation governors are clear about the importance of on-going quality leadership within the school and they recognise their accountability to ensure this. There is a powerful sense of team work which secures the Church school ethos and gives stability to the community. The school is proactive in the diocese and contributes to diocesan events. The headteacher and chaplain recently supported diocesan training for new clergy about the role of chaplaincy in schools. Together, the school leadership and the governing body have a clear understanding of the future developmental needs of St Michael's as a Church school, with professional development opportunities and succession planning identified clearly to enrich the school's continued growth and distinctiveness as a Church of England school.

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