



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

The St Marylebone Church of England Bridge Academy Free School

17-23 Third Avenue, London, W10 4RS

Previous SIAMS grade: n/a

Current SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Diocese: London

Local authority: n/a

Date of inspection: 14 June 2016

Date of last inspection: n/a

School's unique reference number: 139600

Head of school: Dominic Sunderland

Inspector's name and number: Pamela Draycott 161

School context

This academy free school has a Christian foundation. It serves pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties. Some have other additional needs. It opened in September 2013 and is affiliated to a successful mainstream Church of England secondary school locally. It currently has Years 7 to 9 but will expand annually until its cohort includes Year 13. The proportion for whom extra funding is received due to social disadvantage is very high. The proportion for whom English is an additional language is also well above the national average. Pupils are mainly from Christian or Muslim family faith backgrounds.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of The St Marylebone CE Bridge school as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The school's Christian values are deeply embedded in the formation, development and future vision of this nurturing caring and inclusive special free school. This Christian underpinning commendably energises school life and work.
- Based on the school's Christian service, school leadership is passionate, determined and effective in ensuring that pupils have a positive experience of education and achieve the best they can. This effectively drives forward school improvement.
- Pupils make significant progress in attitudes, behaviour, learning and attainment. This effectively reflects the school's inclusive Christian ethos.
- Religious Education (RE) and the worship programme have a high profile and are intrinsic in the outworking of the school's vision and service.

Areas to improve

- Improve prayer, reflection and quiet space in classrooms/tutor rooms and in the school grounds to further promote religious and spiritual development.

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

The St Marylebone CE Bridge academy free school has a very strong Christian underpinning based on its vision of service. This is helpfully summarised through values taken from Colossians chapter 3 verses 12 to 17 – compassion, kindness, patience, forgiveness, thankfulness, wisdom, peace and gratitude. These values are explicit and very well known by staff and pupils. They are effectively shared and lived out in the school's daily life. The 'Colossians values', as they are referred to, anchor the strong and positive relationships in evidence. Consequently, its Christian distinctiveness is fundamental to raising aspirations and developing very good behaviours and attitudes to support learning and enhance wellbeing. This includes improving attendance which, although below the national average, is high when compared with other schools catering for similar needs. The school is a compassionate, positive and inclusive place. Pupils are very well known and individual strengths and needs are addressed effectively. This is based on an understanding that each person is precious to God. Staff, whatever their role, work for the good of pupils. As an outworking of the school's Christian underpinning, teachers co-operate closely with learning support assistants and with the speech and language therapy (SALT) team. This provides consistent approaches to learning based on individual need, an important contributing factor to the very good progress made by pupils. Classroom display and ways of working support this further. Progress is underwritten by the 'Colossians values', which pupils know are taken from the Bible. Pupils get on well together. They show respect for themselves and for each other as well as the adults in the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong and very well supported through the RE curriculum and worship programme. Trips, including to the school's parish church, and pupils joining in with charitable fund raising enhance provision. They have opportunity to take responsibility for themselves and others through, for example, the school council as well as playing games such as chess and football at lunchtimes. Pupils take part in RE very well, enjoying its challenge. They try to express their own beliefs and ideas whilst taking appropriate account of those of others. They recognise the importance of learning about a range of religions seeing that it helps them 'learn about and respect others'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship plays a very valuable part in school life. It provides positive opportunities to enhance pupils' religious, spiritual and moral development. Worship planning is shared with its affiliated school. The chaplain works part-time across both schools. This provides positive opportunities for collaboration. Themes include, for example, imagination, ambition and shelter. They are effectively adapted so that individual acts of worship meet the specific needs of the school. Bible readings and the Lord's prayer are regular features of worship which pupils respond well to. Despite their speech, language and communication difficulties pupils respond positively to prayer and reflection opportunities. The backbone of the worship programme is the Monday morning 'assembly' which sets the theme. This is extended through discussion, prayer and reflection during tutor time across the week. Appropriate opportunities are also taken in lessons and other circumstances around the school to reinforce the theme. Whilst discussion, prayer and reflection during tutor time happens daily it is not explicitly recognised as a continuation of worship. There is, for example, no mechanism, such as a lighted candle or bell, to mark for pupils and staff the worship element of tutor time. The use of space in tutor rooms and outside for quiet reflection is underdeveloped. Plans are in place to turn part of the grounds into a quiet garden. Worship is appropriately enhanced through a school Eucharist and a non-Eucharistic service held during alternate half terms. Pupils' behaviour during worship is exemplary. They recognise its importance to church school life and comment that the room becomes a 'special place with God who is special'. Pupils recognise the impact that worship has on them as individuals. For example, 'Worship makes me feel calm and relaxed. You forget about any bad things that have happened' and 'Worship helps me remember God'. Adults and pupils evaluate worship appropriately and regularly. Comments are acted upon to bring about improvement. Pupils have a developing understanding of aspects of Anglican worship such as opening and closing sentences with responses. They join in well with these. Different coloured cloths signify different times of the church's year. Festivals, especially Christmas and

Easter, are suitably celebrated. This helps pupils in their understanding of the 'rhythm' of the Christian year. The importance of Jesus for Christians is well highlighted through worship. Whilst worship is explicitly and recognisably Christian in character it is inclusive of those who come from different faith backgrounds. For example, during the Eucharist pupils and staff have the choice of sitting and reflecting quietly or standing to receive a blessing or to take the elements of bread and wine. Staff, governors and pupils, rightly see the importance of school worship in supporting its Christian ethos. Through worship, reinforced by RE units of work, pupils have the very good opportunities to have opened up to them key Christian beliefs such as that of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The effectiveness of RE is outstanding

The RE scheme of work has been developed with support from the Head of Department at the affiliated school. There is a good balance between content focusing on Christianity and that which focuses on other religions such as Islam, Buddhism and Sikhism. The units are extremely well adapted to the learning needs of individual pupils and provide effective support and challenge. Lessons mirror whole school approaches which brings about a consistency that helps pupils make very good progress. Difficult topics are not shied away from. For example, a topic on the role of religion in the world today, and beliefs about life after death form part of the programme. There are some missed opportunities to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of the multicultural nature of Christianity especially when Christian festivals are studied. RE is ably led by the deputy head of school in collaboration with the head of school and the teacher who teaches RE. This results in strong teaching linked to whole school approaches and very good progress. The SALT team is very closely and appropriately involved in planning lessons with the teacher. Pupils and staff see the importance of RE within the curriculum as well as its effectiveness in supporting the school's Christian values. It makes an effective contribution to pupils religious, spiritual and moral development through both the content taught and the activities taken part in. Pupils are given ample opportunity to present their own ideas and listen respectfully to others. Pupils are very well engaged in lessons. Their progress is accurately tracked using the whole school system. Whilst the percentage of pupils who are working at age related expectations is well below the national average their progress is very strong. Clear questioning, structured group work and a targeted range of written tasks effectively supports pupils' learning. Tasks set and written work produced is of a comparable quality with other subjects. Pupils are given opportunities to respond to teacher marking which effectively supports them in extending their thinking.

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

The head of school works collaboratively with other senior leaders, the governors and staff to promote a consistent and ambitious approach to school development and improvement. This is clearly based on the Christian vision of service to vulnerable pupils and their families which brought the school into existence and sustains it. As a result its 'Colossian values' permeate school life at all levels. It means that the school celebrates what pupils can do. It also means that it supports and challenges them in achieving their best so that they can flourish as children of God. The governing body ensures that their decisions are focused on meeting pupils' needs as a reflection of the school's strong Christian underpinning. Senior leaders, including governors, have detailed insight into school performance, which means that self-assessment is useful in driving forward further improvement. RE and worship meet statutory requirements. The school works effectively in partnership, principally through its affiliated school and the teaching schools' network locally. Practical and prayerful support from its parish church through the Rector, governors and chaplain is very strong. Staff are very well inducted into working within the church school sector. They are encouraged to develop professionally through the performance management and appraisal systems and given ample opportunities for attending appropriate courses. Parents are thoroughly supported, through for example a family support worker and regular parent workshops. They are aware of the Christian underpinning of the school's work which they appreciate and support. The school works effectively to encourage those of different faith and non-faith backgrounds to feel included, supported and challenged to be the best they can be.

The St Marylebone CE The Bridge Academy Free School, Third Avenue, London, W10 4RS