



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### St Clement Danes CE Primary School

Drury Lane  
London  
WC2B 5SU

**Previous SIAMS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: London**

Local authority: Westminster

Dates of inspection: 23 November 2015

Date of last inspection: May 2011

School's unique reference number: 101127

Headteacher: Angela Abrahams

Inspector's name and number: John Viner (NS144)

#### School context

St Clement Danes is a one-form entry primary school with a nursery, housed in historic buildings, located in London's theatreland, serving the parishes of St Paul's and St Mary-le-Strand and linked with the church of St Clement Danes. Its 233 pupils reflect the rich diversity of the area. Around half the pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and those supported by additional government funding are above average. A small proportion of pupils attend church. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are above the national average. At its last Ofsted inspection the school was judged to be outstanding.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Clement Danes as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Christian values underpin the school, are evident in every aspect of its work and are lived out in the school's declaration that they are 'our anchor'.
- Collective worship is the heartbeat of the school so that pupils of all faiths and none understand and respect the importance of prayer to believers.
- Religious Education (RE) has a high profile in the school and pupils say it is inspirational.
- The impressive partnership with the churches enriches the whole community.

#### Areas to improve

- Make the school's Christian distinctiveness clearer in public information.
- Ensure that the guidance given to all pupils in RE consistently challenges their thinking at a deeper level.

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

Since the last inspection, the school has identified six explicit Christian values that define its mission and character. These values are now embedded in the life of the school so that parents, staff and pupils can explain their central importance. Pupils know them and recognise that they have a genuine impact on their daily lives. They explain that, regardless of personal faith and belief, these values motivate them and help them to develop positive attitude. Many comment that 'they help me to become a better person' and one pupil summed it up by saying, '(they) make you work hard – if you work hard at the values they work hard for you.' This strong Christian foundation affirms and supports both adults and pupils and inspires the excellent relationships that shine through the school. As a result, pupils are keen to come to school, attend regularly, behave impeccably and demonstrate high levels of mutual respect. They make excellent academic progress and achieve high standards. This is a place where spirituality is valued and pupils learn to express themselves in the language of faith. Pupils' wider spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very effectively. Pupils of all faiths and beliefs attribute their positive personal standards to the principles that the school promotes. They develop well-informed personal values of respect and tolerance and are confident in explaining why this matters. They recognise that the school's Christian character means that they are safe, valued and special. They know that the adults care for them and are committed to meeting their personal, academic and spiritual needs. Pupils universally report that they are excited and challenged by Religious Education (RE). They say that it is fun and that they enjoy learning about their own faith and the faith of others. Pupils talk about faith and belief in a mature and thoughtful way. All are fully aware that Christianity is a world faith, which they appreciate in the context of the school's richly diverse intake.

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

Collective worship is the heartbeat of the school and its impact is evident in the behaviour of pupils and their commitment to worship. Through worship, pupils develop a deeper understanding of the Christian values that the school promotes and, irrespective of their own beliefs, they acquire a deep sense of spirituality. Pupils of other faiths say that worship helps them to appreciate the beliefs of Christian friends and deepens their own faith through quiet reflection. Pupils of no faith value the 'inter-faith dialogue' and enjoy the moments of stillness and calm. Adults and pupils are affirmed by worship. Pupils say that they especially value the opportunities for quiet reflection that helps them to feel calm, especially at times of personal turmoil. Parents of all faiths say how much they value school worship and the church-based school Eucharist when they too speak of a sense of calm and peace that enriches their lives. Worship is a partnership of school and church, wisely planned by the headteacher and parish priest and led by headteacher, staff and parish priest. It is carefully evaluated through a process that includes pupils' opinions. Worship is distinctly Christian. Pupils understand that Christians regard God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The school has continued its strong historical association with the three churches and regular acts of worship take place in each, ensuring that pupils have a secure understanding of Anglican tradition and practice. Even the youngest pupils develop an understanding of the nature and purpose of prayer and there are many occasions when they contribute prayers to worship or class use. The worship themes raise levels of pupils' personal prayer and reflection and there are many opportunities for them to commit their deep thoughts to prayer. Worship is also a time when pupils can begin to understand some of the bad things that happen in life. As the parish priest said, 'if you can hold the pain, it helps the healing.'

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

Standards of attainment in RE are at least in line with and often above national expectations. Pupils make excellent and rapid progress, developing a deep understanding of Christianity and wide range of other faiths. Pupils say that the subject inspires them and many learn

exceptionally well. They develop high-level skills of reflective enquiry and demonstrate them in their mature and well-informed discussion. The curriculum is broad and, while Christianity is the main focus, there is an effective balance of other faiths, organised so that pupils have a progressive and developmental experience. They say that they 'like the way that we skim over some other faiths and then we revisit them at depth.' As a result they understand the key differences between them and are able to compare their teachings, appreciating the impact of religion on the lives of believers. Pupils also say how much they like the way that RE is sometimes interwoven with history as this provides a context for their learning. RE has a high profile in the school and is carefully monitored by senior staff to ensure it is always of good quality. Parents say how much they appreciate the impact that the subject has on their children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. At the moment, most RE is effectively taught by the knowledgeable and skilled RE leader. Because of this there is consistency in the quality of teaching and a cohesion to pupils' experience. Effective use of assessment against diocesan expectations ensures that teachers have a good understanding of their pupils' learning and progress. The school has introduced 'next steps marking', as recommended at the time of the last inspection although the guidance pupils receive does not always challenge their thinking enough. The RE leader, together with the parish priest, provides high levels of expert coaching and support in order to develop teachers' skills so that they too are equipped to lead the subject.

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

Leaders and governors confidently articulate an ambitious vision for the school that is rooted in a clear understanding of its Christian distinctiveness and a shared commitment to living out the Christian values on which it is founded. They proudly share the school's declaration that 'our values are our anchor' and are committed to putting it into practice. Since the last inspection they have engaged all stakeholders in a thorough review that has led to a clear strategic plan for the school's further development as a Church School in a multi-faith context. This has secured the respect of parents of all faiths and none, who have great confidence in the school, respect the headteacher and trust her judgement. Through their astute self-evaluation, leaders and governors know the school exceptionally well, plan effectively for its sustained improvement and place a high value on the quality of collective worship and RE. Leaders and governors are well prepared for the school's future leadership needs. Their leadership is focused on promoting the school's Christian character and values in all aspects of its work, although this is not immediately clear from its website and brochure. There are many excellent partnerships with the theatre, opera and music venues in the immediate area that add significant capacity to numerous aspects of the school. They are of substantial mutual benefit so that pupils are actively involved in local initiatives, sometimes with national and global connections. However it is the partnership with the three churches that is most impressive in its impact on the school's spiritual life and development. The commitment of the parish priest to the school's life and work is inspirational and the chaplaincy he provides enriches the lives of the pupils and their families, irrespective of their own faith or belief. This strong and effective partnership with the parish church of St Paul ensures that the school shines as a beacon of Christian care and enriches the whole community.