

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St John's Church of England Primary School

Simpkin Street Abram Wigan WN2 5QE	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Liverpool
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion Name of multi-academy trust	January 2015 The Keys Federation Academy Trust
Date of inspection	26 January 2017
Date of last inspection	March 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy 141641
Principal	Tim Mooney
Inspector's name and number	Robert Haigh 660

School context

St John's is an average-sized primary school in a large village setting of socio-economic challenge. The number on roll has increased since the last inspection. The vast majority of pupils are White British. The proportion with special educational needs and disabilities is average. The proportion for whom the school receives extra funding is above the national average. The nursery on site is separately managed. St John's, along with three other primary schools, is a member of The Keys Federation Academy Trust. The principal was appointed in 2015. The school holds the Diocese of Liverpool Church School Award I.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St John's as a Church of England school are good

- The principal's dynamic and visionary Christian leadership, supported by an effective staff team and strong governance, means the Christian ethos and a drive for improvement are paramount.
- A belief in the God-given value of each child inspires excellent pastoral care and nurture. In response, pupils' exemplary behaviour and respect for others foster positive relationships in school.
- The strong link between school and parish enriches the spiritual experience of pupils, strengthens the church's contact with families and provides a beacon of Christian witness in the community.

Areas to improve

- Develop the role of pupils in planning, leading and evaluating worship to enhance their spiritual understanding and leadership skills.
- In religious education (RE) embed the new syllabus and extend the enquiry-led approaches to teaching, learning and assessment so the pace of improvement in standards can be sustained.

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

St John's is a happy, friendly and busy community of faith and learning. Everyone involved is engaged in its mission 'to be guided by our faith in God and to care for and have respect for each other.' The four core Christian values of responsibility, trust, respect and truthfulness were chosen by the whole school community and are becoming firmly embedded. Most pupils understand that they are rooted in Christian teaching. Many pupils explain the effect

of these values on their learning, habits and behaviour. They also say they feel safe, loved and protected in school. A Year 5 boy remarked, 'The school helps us blossom'. As a result, pupils' conduct and attitudes to learning are outstanding. The atmosphere in the school's calm, orderly ethos is one of purposeful activity and high aspiration. As a consequence attainment is improving as the legacy of under-performance is being successfully addressed. Pupils' progress shows a similar trend because their learning needs are being more effectively met. The school works closely with disadvantaged pupils to help them overcome difficulties that could hamper their learning. This is a community which lives well together. Relationships throughout are caring and supportive. Parents also recognise that the core values permeate the school. They say this ensures each child is celebrated as a valued individual.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is promoted in RE, worship and increasingly effectively in the wider curriculum. Pupils respond well and are able to express their ideas about faith and its influence in their own lives with increasing confidence. Values and RE displays in classrooms and public areas engage pupils and prompt their spiritual awareness. Pupils are trusted to take responsibility, for example, in the school council, eco team and ethos group. This delegation builds their self-esteem and pride in the school. Music-making and singing are a distinctive feature of the school. The choir and musicians are active locally, an involvement seen as part of their service to the community. Pupils study Christianity and a range of world faiths in RE and during multi-faith week. As a result they have a growing awareness of religious diversity, cultural difference and shared values. Developing pupils' understanding of Christianity as a global faith and creating opportunities for them to visit non-Christian places of worship are recognised as areas for development. Pupils organise charity fund raising, many explaining this as a sign of their intention to bring hope and God's love to the needy.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is central to the life of the school. Pupils and adults value coming together for worship and speak about the inspiration and learning it provides. Worship themes are based on values, faith stories, religious festivals and the Church's year. Worship also regularly includes biblical material and the teachings of Jesus. Pupils are able to make links between these and the school's Christian values. A Year 6 boy said, 'The values show us how we can follow the Jesus way and help each other'.

Worship in school and church provides experience of Anglican tradition. The Lord's Prayer, the Grace and other responses are used. Compline and the Eucharist are celebrated in school and church. Older pupils say this encourages them in their faith and helps them to reflect on and think more deeply about what it means to be a Christian. Pupils value prayer in everyday life. A Year 6 girl said, 'When stress becomes too much in our heads we can calmly speak to God and feel the weight taken away'. They explain that prayer enables them to give thanks to God, ask for forgiveness and remember the needs of others as well as their own concerns. Pupils enjoy contributing prayers to worship and would like to do so more often. They value their classroom reflection areas and approach worship with respect and quiet anticipation. They also sing joyfully with gusto which they say lifts their spirits as they praise God. Artefacts on the worship table reflect the Trinity and pupils say how they remind them of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The regular leading of worship by the vicar and other visitors both in school and at St John's church deepens the spiritual experience of pupils. A Year 6 girl said, 'The church is a quiet, holy place where we feel close to God and each other'. Pupils lead worship in school and church occasionally, but it is largely an adult activity. Increasing the opportunities for pupils to plan, lead and evaluate worship is an area for development recognised by the school.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

A high priority is given to RE as a core curriculum subject and its importance in the life of the school is clearly understood. Pupils enjoy it. School data shows that much RE teaching is good with outstanding features. As a result, pupils' attainment and progress are generally good. Teaching in RE enables pupils to learn about and from religion and reflect on new experiences and knowledge. Links with the school values and pupils' SMSC development are explicitly planned for and taught. Pupils are confident to make these connections. RE very successfully enables pupils to ask and reflect on open-ended questions of meaning and purpose. This allows them to develop and apply skills of enquiry, analysis and interpretation. Teachers are becoming more skilled at asking challenging questions and leading class discussion. This enables pupils to deepen their thinking about the big questions of life and appreciate the views of others. It also promotes their skills of listening and empathy as well as their insight into spiritual and moral issues. The study of faiths other than Christianity is provided for in part. The school is expanding the programme of inter-faith discovery and dialogue. Consequently pupils are becoming more able to make comparisons between beliefs, practices and value systems across a range of faiths.

The recently-appointed subject leader has a clear vision for RE in a church school. Her conscientious and specialist leadership is increasing the effectiveness of the subject as the new Diocese of Blackburn syllabus is implemented. Standards are monitored and staff feel supported by the coaching approach to the development of their RE teaching. Action plans for enquiry-led learning and written feedback to pupils have been drawn up. Joint RE planning and moderation with the other trust church schools is underway. This is ensuring the continued development of depth and breadth in the pupils' learning in RE.

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

The principal, leaders at executive and director level and the staff live out and promote a Christian vision which infuses all aspects of school life. The principal has high expectations of everyone in seeking to enable pupils to experience life in all its fullness. Teamwork is strong. Staff and pupils have embraced change and the school is improving rapidly. Self-evaluation is becoming more effective in informing the school's strategic priorities as a church school. This is providing impetus to the improvement in Christian distinctiveness. The effective trust and local advisory committee are vigilant and skilled in providing strong governance. They challenge and support which enhances the effectiveness of leadership and promotes school development. They ensure that collective worship and RE are well resourced and retain a high profile. The principal and RE leader coordinate worship planning and evaluation. They have addressed the shortcomings identified at the last inspection. The leadership of RE is becoming increasingly effective.

The school's recent change of name to match that of the parish was more than symbolic. Links with St John's church create a strong partnership. This influences the school's life and inspires its service at the heart of the community. Church groups use the school building and school services take place in church. The principal attends PCC meetings. The involvement of the vicar has increased the church's profile in the school which in turn has brought it into contact with more families. The development of Christian leadership is receiving attention. The induction of new governors and staff into their role in a church school is effective. The school has beneficial links with the diocese, local authority and its partner schools. The trust serves as a training hub for its four schools. Leaders and teachers say this professional development enhances their expertise and effectiveness. The school knows the pupils and their families well and meets their pastoral needs through a culture of Christian nurturing. Parents declare the positive difference St John's is making. They say their children's happiness and success are rooted in the Christian character of the school. 'It helps them to achieve and also become caring people', said one parent.

SIAMS report January 2017, St John's CE Primary School, Abram, Wigan WN2 5QE