

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Street
Pemberton
Wigan
WN5 0DT

Diocese: Liverpool

Local authority: Wigan
Dates of inspection: 6th December 2010
Date of last inspection: 23rd May 2008
School's unique reference number: 106451
Headteacher: Mr Mark Speakman
Inspector's name and number: Mr Ian Thomas 350

School context

St John's is a smaller than average primary school which serves an area of some socio-economic disadvantage. A higher than national average number of children are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also above average though the number with English as a second language is low. A new head teacher was appointed in January 2010.

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

With outstanding relationships and excellent pupil behaviour, St John's is well led by a team of professional and caring teachers. RE and collective worship are both central to the school's life, and the Christian values of love, respect and caring for each other are clearly demonstrated by children and adults. The school works tirelessly to ensure that its children gain a sense of worth and are valued as children of God.

Established strengths

- Relationships between all in the school community are outstanding
- Children's love for one another and the adults who care for them in school is exemplary
- The leadership team has a clear vision for the school's development which is based on Christian values

Focus for development

- To refine further the assessment and monitoring systems for RE
- To formalise the monitoring of collective worship

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

St John's is a warm and welcoming school where all are treated with respect and courtesy. The children's behaviour is exemplary, and they have developed a confidence and trust in the staff. The teachers and head teacher constantly encourage the children to aspire to greater things. They are treated with great care and as a result, the children know they are valued as individuals. The Christian values of love, respect and forgiveness permeate all activities in school. As a result, the relationships formed are outstanding. As one child said, 'School teaches you to love your friends.' Staff work together as an effective team and are seen as excellent role models for the children. They feel safe here, and enjoy their work. Through effective worship, RE and personal, health and social education lessons, the children's progress in spiritual, moral and social and cultural awareness is good. They know their views are important to the school, and there is an active school council which is able to act appropriately to their suggestions. Examples include the re-zoning of the playground, the purchase of play equipment and the creation of the quiet area which allows children the time to reflect and to undertake less boisterous activities at break times. Children and parents know that any problems are quickly and fairly dealt with. Spiritual development is further enhanced by the interactive displays and use of Christian symbols around the school. Through good links with the local community and businesses, support for a wide range of

charities and the recent establishment of a partnership with a school in South Africa, the school's community cohesion is developing well.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship occupies a central place in the school's everyday routines. Children enjoy worship. Good use is made of pictures on a large screen to stimulate thoughts. They know that worship helps them to be better people. The school ensures that worship is given at an appropriate level by providing whole school, key stage, and in-class experiences. This also means that all staff lead worship at some time each week. Singing is good while time is provided for the children to reflect on the messages of the worship. This deepens their spiritual development. The school's values are promoted well, and as a result the children's belief in themselves is improving. Parents comment on how the children's confidence has improved. Collective worship is planned around the church's year and the SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) resources. Together these ensure that Christian beliefs and their application to everyday living are explored. The older children are able to talk confidently about the key Christian festivals. Local clergy lead worship fortnightly which helps keep the links between church and school strong. The children are enthusiastic about the school prayer box into which they place their own prayers. These are offered to God in Church each week. They know the Lord's Prayer and use prayers at other times during the school day. The co-ordinators monitor worship informally through occasional meetings with children and chats with parents, governors and staff.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

Planning in RE is good. Examples seen showed well differentiated tasks and key questions linked clearly to the lessons objectives. The school follows the diocesan scheme of work which not only follows the teachings of Christianity but also that of Islam and Judaism. Together with visits to a synagogue and mosque, this gives the children an understanding of the key aspects of other faiths. The school also ensures that other cultures and festivals are investigated at appropriate time. As a result the children have a knowledge of other cultures present within the United Kingdom. The children enjoy their RE lessons, and they are happy to speak about what they learn and how it affects their own attitudes and beliefs. Behaviour is very good and the children willingly listen to each other's views and opinions. An observed lesson introduced the idea of empathy to Year 2 children. They were able to relate to how Mary and Joseph felt at different times in the Nativity story, and they listened well to each other's ideas. The RE coordinator has introduced a comprehensive system of portfolios which not only reflect the work done by each class in RE but also give examples of levelled work. The school is confident that the children are making good progress in RE. However, the assessment system does not track individual progress effectively. Parents and children are well aware that Christianity is a priority within the school. While there is some monitoring, this is too irregular to be fully effective.

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

Although the new head teacher has been in post for less than a year, he has been keen to build on the good Christian foundations of the school. He has a clear vision for the direction in which he wants to lead the school, and this is well supported by both staff and governors. Some of the latter are frequent visitors to the school, helping out in various classes or attending worship. This gives them a good working knowledge of school activities. They are seen as critical friends of the school, effectively challenging the leadership, but also promoting the school's Christian character. Links with the local parish church are good, and despite the recent retirement of the local incumbent, arrangements have been made with other local clergy to visit the school regularly to ensure that these links are maintained. The school choir take part in key Sunday services at the church which further strengthens the church-school relationships. Teaching staff are encouraged to develop their own skills and knowledge through supported training. Courses in 'Leading from the Middle' and 'Aspiring to Church School leadership' have been undertaken recently by staff. Stakeholders' views are sought through annual questionnaires and through informal meetings with parents. They spoke highly about the head teacher and staff always being available at the beginning of the school day to speak to them and ask their opinions.