



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St. John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Street
Pemberton
WN5 0DT

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Liverpool

Local authority: Wigan

Dates of inspection: 27 May 2016

Date of last inspection: December 2010

School's unique reference number: 106451

Headteacher: Mark Speakman

Inspector's name and number: Jean Forward (625)

School context

St. John's is a below average-sized primary school. Most children are of White British heritage. The proportion of children with special educational needs is above the national average. The proportion of children known to be eligible for the pupil premium is also above the national average. Data for 2015 shows that attainment and progress at Level 4 and above in reading, writing and mathematics were below the national average but in line with expectations for that particular group of Year 6 children.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. John's as a Church of England school outstanding

- The extremely strong Christian leadership of the headteacher and his vision for the development of the school ensure that the Christian ethos is central to daily life.
- The school is extremely successful in creating a loving and caring Christian environment which has a direct influence on children's well-being and positive attitude to learning.
- Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is excellent and is rooted in the school's Christian ethos and its approach to inclusivity. Children become increasingly confident and self-assured in their understanding of faith and their social skills.
- The governing body's highly effective support for the senior leadership team contributes strongly to the school's Christian foundation.

Areas to improve

- Develop the children's involvement in worship planning and leadership in order to deepen their understanding of the elements of worship.
- Introduce a range of visits to non-Christian places of worship to support children's knowledge and understanding of other faiths.

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

A strong commitment to its Christian ethos and the development of the whole child underpin the school's work. Children talk confidently about the importance of the school's core Christian values in their daily life. A Year 4 child said, 'Christian values help us to form a relationship with God and they help us in our daily life'. Positive relationships across the school and church community are rooted in a Christ-centred approach and are a key element in the school's success. Children's SMSC development is excellent as a result of the focused Christian ethos and the emphasis on nurturing every individual and on supporting families. Consequently, children demonstrate high levels of self-esteem, awareness of others and the need to persevere. All members of the community know they are valued and the ethos of trust and respect is clearly evident. Children are extremely courteous, friendly and responsible. They enjoy being members of the ethos group and school council. They are able to share concerns with their teachers knowing that these will be addressed in a sensitive way. The headteacher explained that many former pupils return to seek advice and support. Parents comment that their children are happy and enthusiastic about learning and school life. They say that their children develop positive attitudes to the world around them and talk about Christian values at home. They ascribe the support they receive to the distinctive Christian ethos. A parent said, 'This is an amazing school. The staff do an impressive job and always make time for us'. The school has a strong commitment to Christian stewardship, supporting a range of charities including Children in Need, Samaritan's Purse and the local foodbank. Children speak of the importance of showing generosity and compassion. A Year 5 boy referred to the story of the Good Samaritan as a way in which Jesus teaches us to love our neighbour. Quality displays and Christian signs and symbols emphasise the school's distinctiveness and prompt the children's spiritual awareness extremely well. Children value the classroom and outdoor reflection areas which help them to think and pray. The school's commitment to widening children's knowledge of Christianity as a world faith contributes well to cultural knowledge and positive attitudes. Attendance is close to the national average and has improved in recent years. The school's Christian care for and commitment to every child secure these positive results.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is central to the life of the school. Planning incorporates themes based on the school's core values, the Bible and major Christian festivals. The school places Christ at the centre of all it does and worship enables children of all ages to understand how the teaching of Jesus guides Christians in their daily lives. The children enjoy worship and engage extremely well with questions which explore values and beliefs. They understand the importance of silence and reflection and appreciate the contribution music makes to this. A Year 4 child said, 'Prayer and worship help us to be calm and to trust in God'. Children become familiar with Anglican practice through the use of traditional prayers and responses. Acts of worship follow a pattern which gives the children a sense of liturgical structure and familiarity. The parish priest of St. John's plays an important role in the cycle of worship. The whole school worships in the parish church every week. Children's prayers are taken into church each week and are included in the parish's pattern of intercession. This enables children and their families to feel part of the wider worshipping community. Children in Year 5 and Year 6 attend the Eucharist in church each half-term and those who wish to demonstrate their commitment to the life of faith are prepared for confirmation. Visits to the church make a highly effective contribution to children's spiritual development and understanding of the ways in which they can follow Jesus. They have a developing understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. A Year 4 child said, 'The most amazing story in the Bible is when Jesus is baptised. It helps us to understand the three parts of the Trinity'. The school has systems in place to evaluate worship which involve all members of the school community. This ensures that worship enriches everyone's spiritual life and remains relevant and inspirational. Children have the opportunity to contribute through prayers, reading and class worship and are involved in Sunday worship for special occasions. As a result, they have a strong sense of the Anglican tradition. As yet, they do not plan and lead worship independently.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The school develops all aspects of teaching and learning in RE using the diocesan syllabus and thorough planning. Progress and standards are in line with those in other subjects. Children's progress from their starting points is clearly understood and this ensures that teaching and learning meet the needs of every child. This is achieved through a range of teaching strategies and good use of appropriate resources. Creative approaches are highly effective in developing children's thinking skills and ability to discuss and share ideas. There is a good balance between learning about religion and reflecting on new experiences and knowledge. Children are enthusiastic learners and they enjoy a variety of written activities, discussion, role-play and art. Children demonstrate good prior knowledge and thinking skills and they are keen to answer questions and give their opinions. The sharing and careful consideration of ideas make a positive contribution to children's spiritual and moral development. One child commented that 'Everyone enjoys RE because it involves so many things'. Marking is used to guide children to the next steps in their learning and it encourages a reflective response. The experienced and highly committed subject leader uses a range of monitoring strategies to evaluate teaching and learning including book scrutiny, lesson observation and assessment tracking. The extremely successful RE focus weeks enable children to learn about faiths other than Christianity. The children enjoy the opportunity to explore and learn through exciting activities which they describe as interesting and fun. As yet, the school does not have a programme of visits to non-Christian places of worship. Assessment activities at the end of each unit of work are used to track children's progress.

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

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school based on Christian principles and values. He takes every opportunity to promote the school's distinctive Christian character. Staff and governors are committed to fostering all aspects of children's development and well-being through Christian care and love. In doing so, they have recognised the importance of the school's Christian character in creating an ethos which supports effective learning and the promotion of equal opportunities. The strong senior leadership team is effective in identifying clear priorities for the development of the school's Christian vision. The headteacher rightly attributes children's successful learning to the Christ-centred qualities of the school. The school knows its children and their families extremely well and meets individual needs through a culture of Christian nurturing. Parents recognise the distinctive Christian qualities of the school and speak highly of the respect with which they and their children are treated. Parents say that children's happiness and success are rooted in the Christian values and ethos which are at the heart of the school's daily life. Governors are knowledgeable and have a clear understanding of their role. As a result, they support the school in a variety of ways and provide a high level of challenge. Action plans for RE and worship are included in the school's improvement plan and are discussed by the governing body as part of the strategic development process. This ensures that aspects of church school distinctiveness continue to contribute to the development of the school's Christian foundation. Provision is made for all staff to participate in continuing professional development and this makes a valuable contribution to effective teaching and learning throughout the school and to succession planning for church school leadership. The school's strong link with the diocese provides opportunities for discussion and training and it enhances church school ethos and distinctiveness. The extremely strong partnership between the school and the church ensures that God is at the heart of service to the wider community.

SIAMS report May 2016 St. John's C of E Primary School, Pemberton WN5 0DT