

# National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

## **Ainsdale St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Sandbrook Road,  
Ainsdale,  
Southport  
Merseyside  
PR8 3JE

### **Diocese: Liverpool**

Local authority: Sefton  
Dates of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> December 2007  
Date of last inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> November 2003  
School's unique reference number: 104903  
Headteacher: Mrs L Deninson  
Inspector's name and number: Rev W Sloan (521)

### **School context**

Ainsdale St John's is an average sized, oversubscribed primary school. It has recently admitted a number of extra pupils following the closure of another faith school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average as is those who are eligible for free school meals. Only 5% of pupils are not of white British heritage and all speak English as a first language.

### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St John's C of E (Aided) Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding.**

The school's Christian character permeates all aspects of school life. Its Christian principles of love and respect are actively promoted making a significant impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children are caring, concerned and responsible members of their community and have been inspired by the Christian teaching and ethos of their school. The Christian ethos is evident in the positive relationships between pupils, staff, governors and parents.

### **Established strengths**

- The outstanding leadership of the Headteacher, management team and governors means that there are really effective self-review procedures in place relating to church-school distinctiveness which result in purposeful and successful action plans to support the development of St John's as an effective Church school.
- The quality of collective worship makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social, cultural and religious development. They are involved actively and speak positively about what they have learnt from worship.
- The school's distinctive character allows learners to grow in their faith and be confident that God is always with them.
- The outstanding relationships within the school contribute to the extended family feeling within the school environment ensuring that pupils feel safe and secure.

### **Focus for development**

- Using governors' experience in monitoring and evaluating to better effect in the self-evaluation of the school's distinctiveness as a church school.

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

The school's vision and values statement refers to Christ as the heartbeat of the school-church family: the unseen, but ever present teacher in its classes, the model for its entire staff, and the inspiration for its pupils. A strong commitment to an inclusive ethos fulfils this very successfully. It is also recognised in the recently designed school logo which displays

'God's hands around the whole school family'. One pupil commented, 'God has his hands around our school all the time and our school badge shows this to everyone.' Each child feels valued and special and is part of the Christian community. Parents speak very warmly about the level of care which is shown to their children. Relationships throughout the school are outstanding and are rooted in love and respect. The headteacher and staff at all levels set excellent examples of co-operative working together for a common good. The emotional, spiritual and physical well being of pupils is at the centre of the school's life with pupils feeling happy and safe. There is a strong sense of trust and community feeling in the school and pupils enjoy attending. They are secure and recognise that their teachers have a very good knowledge of their individual achievements and learning needs. Diversity is celebrated and every child is enabled to achieve and make progress through good planning and through a range of well planned and well attended extra curricular activities. Pupils talk about their enjoyment of these activities with enthusiasm and one child commented on how it enabled them all to work well together. High expectations for behaviour enable pupils to respond positively to all the school offers. The three pupil councils give enormous opportunity for children to express their ideas, act upon them and enjoy the impact they have on how the school is run. This has made a significant contribution to the pupil's personal development and raised individual awareness of personal responsibility. The pupils' wider social and cultural development is promoted well through an excellent range of educational visits and events. The school is outward looking, relates well to its own local community, and supports those in need in a way consistent with its values. Parents are very clear about the positive impact of the school as a church school. The location of the church near to the school ensures there are many opportunities for pupils to easily become familiar with and to experience church life and practice as a natural extension of school life to their personal benefit and wellbeing.

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

Collective worship has the highest profile in the life of the school. It provides a stimulus for the whole school community and is the means by which everyone is invited to reflect on the Christian message and what it inspires. It is carefully planned and the different contributions from the vicar, headteacher and staff are well integrated into the experiences offered to the pupils. A wide range of resources is used to considerable effect. Pupils and staff all take part and contribute extensively. Pupils are encouraged to write their own prayers, read and take part in role play which all contributes well to their spiritual development. Sufficient attention is given to the beliefs and worship of other faiths for all pupils to feel that their different backgrounds are recognised and appreciated. The local church is used to allow the whole school and parents to worship together encouraging the church congregation to identify more closely with the school while enabling parents and their children to see the very close links that exist between church and school. On special occasions such as Christmas, Easter, Harvest, Pentecost and the leaver's service the church overflows. Pupil's responses to collective worship are outstanding. This is shown by their behaviour, their reverence for what goes on and the inspiration that it gives them to help others both in school and beyond. This is particularly noticeable in their response to charities or taking part in events organised by the church. The planned worship gives children a very good awareness of the Anglican calendar and of the beliefs that Christians hold universally. It is also seen in the prayers that they write, their choice of hymns and their awareness of the needs of others less fortunate than themselves. On the day of the inspection, the collective worship was outstanding and contributed considerably to pupils' spiritual development. The governors are very involved with the headteacher and management team in overseeing the provision of collective worship and in evaluating its effectiveness. This is having a positive impact on the outstanding provision offered.

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

Pupils' enjoyment of RE is evident throughout the school and RE makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Teachers provide exciting and demanding lessons and pupils respond enthusiastically to questions asked and tasks set. They have exceptionally good knowledge and understanding of the language and concepts of Christianity and make very good progress. The quality of teaching is outstanding. It is planned with care and with knowledge of each pupil's abilities. A class studying the Jewish hopes for a Messiah were able to talk informatively and with enthusiasm on the topic. They

gave feedback confidently to the rest of the class and increased everyone's understanding of the Christian concept of Jesus the Messiah. The lessons observed during the inspection day made an outstanding contribution to pupil's spiritual development and increased their awareness of their school as a Church school. Using the Christmas story younger pupils understood the coming of Jesus as good news. All pupils are encouraged to reflect on what they have learnt enabling them to link their understanding of religious education to work covered in others areas of the curriculum for example science. The RE reflection board at the front of the school is valued by the pupils and is extremely successful. Drama is used well in lessons and this contributes to the pupils understanding of the work, but also gives them opportunity to reflect and develop spiritually. In one lesson observed the pupils dramatised the story of the events leading up to the birth of John the Baptist and of Mary visiting her cousin. They empathized well with the characters and debated thoughtfully the ways in which God communicates with his followers. Visits to different places of worship are used very constructively to develop the RE curriculum. They extend and stimulate pupil's knowledge and understanding. Very good use is made of the local church and its personnel to support learning and to promote an understanding of the Anglican traditions. Pupils visit the church many times during their career in school and their work is displayed in church so the parish can share with and understand what 'their children' are doing in school. The church is used by the teachers effectively as a resource for all curriculum areas and not just RE. Planning for religious education is outstanding throughout the school. Very effective use is made of the diocesan syllabus as a basis for this. Assessment procedures are used very well and marking of pupils' work is thorough and rigorous giving pupils a very clear understanding of how they could improve in the future. The subject co-ordinator along with the management team and the link governor work together in monitoring provision of RE. Their feedback to staff and governors ensures RE remains a high status area of the curriculum providing pupils with the knowledge and experiences needed to develop them spiritually and morally.

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

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. Over a period of years her inspirational interpretation of the Christian mission of the school matched by that of the foundation governors has become deeply ingrained in all aspects of school work. This shared Christian vision is evident in all the school's documentation and it informs their decision making. Leadership and management at every level, is highly effective. Monitoring using the National Society toolkit, critical self review and a continual striving to both maintain and improve standards generally underpins the way everyone works. This has cemented the Christian ethos and vision into the way the school is run. The strong bond between the work of the local church and the school is enhanced by the complementary programmes run during major festivals. The net result is that St John's is a school with great strength and resilience to cope with difficulties, to solve problems and to face up to change. Governors and school staff welcome and respect the views of all members of the community, particularly children and their parents. Letters to parents, questionnaires and the work of the School Council are all used extremely well to review the work of the school and to inform further development.