

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Banks St Stephen's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Greaves Hall Avenue

Banks

Southport

Merseyside

PR9 8BL

Diocese: Liverpool

Local authority: Lancashire

Dates of inspection: 9th November, 2007

Date of last inspection: May 2003

School's unique reference number: 119384

Headteacher: Mrs S Kenny

Inspector's name and number: Rev'd William Sloan 521

School context

St Stephen's is a slightly smaller than average primary school. The majority of pupils are from white British families and from the small number of minority ethnic pupils, some are at the early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average as is the number who are eligible for free school dinners. The Headteacher took up the post in June 2007.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of ST Stephen's Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

The school has a distinctive Christian ethos which has an outstanding impact on pupils' personal development. The happy family atmosphere ensures pupils are keen to learn and are extremely considerate towards each other. Worship makes a significant contribution to their lives. The recently appointed Headteacher, ably supported by staff and governors, leads the school with vision and drive.

Established strengths

- The outstanding personal development of all pupils that enables them to be happy and confident in school.
- Christian values that permeate the life of the school.
- The good role collective worship plays in supporting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The strong leadership provided by the headteacher and governors.

Focus for development

- Involve the whole school community in the process of monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school's Christian distinctiveness.
- Establish strategies for the evaluation of collective worship by pupils, staff and governors.

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

A strong commitment to an inclusive ethos achieves the mission statement's aim for the school to be a community where the potential of all is developed in a Christian environment. Pupils are valued as individuals and are happy, confident and secure. One child said, "We are like one big, happy family;" another that, "We are loved and cared for." There is a strong commitment to the development of the whole child within a supportive school community. The atmosphere in the school is relaxed and orderly and pupils are courteous and considerate to others and their behaviour is excellent. Staff are good role models for the pupils. Thoughtful prayers and times for reflection and stillness throughout the day help to develop the pupils'

spiritually. This is particularly evident at the beginning of the school day, before lunch and at the end of the day when prayers are said. All pupils play a significant role in decision-making and this encourages their independence. The school council has been instrumental in developing the "trim trail" and other improvements to the grounds around school. Diversity is celebrated and every child is enabled to achieve and make progress through good planning and through a range of extra curricular activities. High expectations for behaviour enable pupils to respond positively. Links with the parish church, and clergy and the diocese enhance the school's Christian character. Parents feel that the school has a special quality that is distinctively Christian, providing learners with a strong sense of identity, a caring ethos, appropriate responsibilities and a well rounded education. They appreciate their children's understanding of Christian values, which are evident in the care and concern shown for others with different attitudes and views.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.

Daily worship has a central place in the life of the school. The headteacher works closely with the clergy team in planning for school worship. Resources, including music, are very well chosen and used effectively. Story telling and drama is used well to emphasise the theme of the week. There is a sense of stillness and presence in the moments preceding the start of worship. Church and community links are good and the regular involvement of the clergy helps to reinforce the school's Christian foundation. Music and singing by the whole school are outstanding. This enables children of all abilities and those of other or no faith to be included fully in worship. Children enjoy worship, listen well and respond and participate enthusiastically. They write and sometimes lead the prayers and also participate in worship through reading and drama. Special events such as Christmas, Easter, harvest and the annual leaver's service are celebrated successfully in Church. Worship makes a good contribution to spiritual and moral development. It builds up and affirms the school as a Christian community in action through, for example, prayer and fund raising. Topics are followed up in Religious Education and at other times during the day which serves to affirm both the importance of worship and the learning which takes place. The planning for worship is effective. It identifies appropriate themes and key elements. Currently, the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship is at an early stage, but the school recognises the need to develop this further.

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

The recently appointed headteacher, the deputy headteacher, staff and governors make a significant contribution to the success of the school as a church school. They provide effective leadership and work in very close partnership to promote their Christian purpose and vision. This vision is supported fully by a united staff team and the governing body. The school's Christian purpose is clearly expressed in the mission statement in the prospectus and reflected in a range of school policies. The headteacher and staff at all levels set excellent examples. The partnerships that exist between the school and the local community, including the churches, are strengths of the school. This enhances pastoral care, family values and community spirit. The head's strong Christian vision and values are shared amongst all stakeholders and are lived out across the life of the school. The headteacher and staff are readily accessible and parents appreciate the 'open door' policy and regular consultations. Parents value the school as a Church school and the involvement of the local clergy. One parent commented that the school was "homely with approachable staff who listen and look after our children." The school is outward looking, relates well to its own local community and supports those in need both in this country and abroad in a way consistent with its values. The school accurately identifies its general strengths through self-evaluation, but the governors and staff have not undertaken any systematic evaluation of the distinctive Christian character of the school.