

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Kirkstall St. Stephen's Church of England Voluntary Aided School

Morris Lane
Kirkstall
Leeds
SL5 3JD

Diocese: Ripon and Leeds

Local authority: Leeds

Dates of inspection: 24 November 2006

Date of last inspection: 17 – 19 June 2002

School's unique reference number: 108043

Headteacher: Mr Ian Blackburn

Inspector's name and number: Meg Cooper 438

School context

St Stephen's is a small school in an inner city area of Leeds. The school serves an area of mixed housing of which a large proportion is student accommodation. There is high pupil mobility and in September 2006 St Stephen's received pupils from a closing neighbouring school. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than average. The number having learning difficulties and from ethnic minority groups is broadly average. The Headteacher took up his post in September 2006 after one year as Acting Headteacher and the Deputy Headteacher joined the school in October 2006.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Kirkstall St Stephen's as a Church of England school are good with some outstanding features.

It has a strong ethos of care and respect embedded in Christian values. The Headteacher has a clear vision that enables all the stakeholders to contribute to school improvement. The school's effectiveness is enhanced by the strong commitment of the Headteacher, staff and governors.

Established strengths

- The positive ethos reflected in the relationships between staff and children.
- The enthusiasm that the pupils show towards learning.
- The Christian principle of inclusion is evident as a key part of the school's development.
- The excellent links with St Stephen's Church.

Focus for development

- Implement the review of Religious Education and Collective Worship Policies as stated in the School Development Plan.
- Extend the monitoring and evaluation systems for Religious Education and Collective Worship led by Foundation Governors in partnership with the Religious Education and Collective Worship leaders and Headteacher.

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

Learners feel valued and special including those who are experiencing difficulties. Parents comment that there is a 'lovely atmosphere' and 'feel confident that my child will achieve'. They also comment that the children's levels of self esteem and independence are high and that they willingly support each other. New parents to the school feel that the staff and Headteacher work with them to enable the children to settle and become part of the St. Stephen's family. Learners are able to relate sensitively to the beliefs and feelings of others. Parents and governors state that this is due to the learning of tolerance and understanding through the Christian ethos of the school and the quality teaching of Personal, Social, Health and Cultural Education. Children say that they are always treated with justice, equality and respect in school. Standards of behaviour are good and are maintained through a framework of truth, forgiveness and reconciliation. The school has successfully integrated

children excluded from other schools. Staff feel that their views are listened to and the team spirit is evident. The school has achieved a number of curricular awards and supports a wide range of charities. There are many symbols of Christianity prominent in school including banners, large wooden crosses in the hall and entrance, with displays in classrooms.

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

Acts of Collective Worship are well planned in liaison with the curate of St Stephen's Church. The worship evokes willing participation and takes place in an atmosphere of calm and respect with all staff taking an active part as worshippers, alongside the learners. Worship is consistently Christian and honours the Anglican tradition with the school having excellent links with St Stephen's through the curate who is committed to the partnership of church and school. Teachers ensure that Acts of Collective Worship are fully inclusive and invite pupils to respond at their own level. There is time given for quiet, stillness and reflection in recognition of those of all faiths and of none. The curate and new priest in charge lead Collective Worship weekly in school. Some pupils attend church termly for the Eucharist and the curate prepares a number of children for confirmation annually. There are services in church for Easter, Christmas, Harvest and Leavers. Each class prepares two Acts of Worship annually and these are well attended by parents who write very positively of them in the 'Parents' Comment Book'. Foundation Governors are aware of their roles and responsibilities and those who are able, monitor by attending Collective Worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

Religious Education is recognised by the stakeholders as important in the life of this church school and the subject's status reflects this. The Religious Education leader plans and monitors the outcomes with staff. There is much development and improvement in the quality of Religious Education since the introduction and implementation of the diocesan syllabus. The practice is good and the School Development Plan reflects many priorities for review to further enhance evaluation and assessment for learning. The specialist teacher for Religious Education plays an important role in supporting the Religious Education leader by helping to assess the effectiveness of the planning and the impact of its outcomes. The younger pupils are learning about religion and are able to talk through role play about what peace means to them. The middle year children are able to draw conclusions and show incredible enthusiasm for the subject through lively teaching. The older children, again through role play and excellent questioning, can talk openly about their beliefs and recognise that their views are taken seriously by staff. The role played by support staff is good with participation and recording pupils' comments during lessons to aid assessment. The interactive whiteboards are used effectively by staff and children to support the learning in Religious Education.

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

The Headteacher provides a strong lead and articulates a Christian vision for the school. Stakeholders state that he is a supportive member of the team and that he strives to motivate through high expectations. The governors know the school well and Foundation Governors demonstrate strong commitment between church and school. The chair and governors are well informed and involved directly with monitoring and evaluation of the School Development Plan. An extension of these strategies would strengthen school self evaluation and promote further school improvement. Parents speak positively of the way in which the school seeks and values their views. The distinctive nature of the school as a church school is clearly communicated by those with close links.