

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Sankey Valley St James' Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Dorchester Road,
Great Sankey,
Warrington
WA5 1XE

Diocese: Liverpool

Local authority:	Warrington
Dates of inspection:	4 th March 2008
Date of last inspection:	September 2003
School's unique reference number:	133676
Headteacher:	Mrs Vivienne Formby
Inspector's name and number:	Miss Heather Starkie – 179

School context

A smaller than average size primary school serving an area of high social and economic deprivation. Pupils are predominantly of white British background. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average as are the number eligible for free school meals. Extensive building work and refurbishment has recently been undertaken and a Children's Centre is being developed on site. All but the headteacher in the management team are newly appointed.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sankey Valley St James' as a Church of England school are good.

The school's mission statement reflects Christian values of love, care, forgiveness and respect and is seen in practice in daily life. The headteacher and staff are fully committed to promoting the Christian faith. A bright, attractive and stimulating learning environment is provided in which pupils are valued and encouraged to develop as individuals. Their sensible behaviour and positive approaches to work and very good attitudes to learning clearly reflect Christian values.

Established strengths

- The caring and supportive Christian ethos and the way in which the school promotes Christian principles and values through children's personal, social, emotional and moral development.
- The committed staff team who work well together and who support each other.
- Effective links and the feeling of mutual respect and support between the school, the church and the parish community.
- A bright, stimulating learning environment with attractive displays which support children's learning and celebrate their work and achievements.

Focus for development

- Raise standards and the quality of written work within RE.
- Develop the use of assessment within RE to ensure all children are sufficiently challenged.
- Undertake a review of the school's mission statement.
- Involve governors, children and parents in evaluating the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school.

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

The strong Christian ethos contributes significantly to the all round development of each individual child. Christian principles and values are promoted effectively and are clearly reflected in classroom displays and in the whole school environment. All relationships within the school are characterised by Christian love, care, forgiveness and respect towards others. Children enjoy school and are happy. Staff work hard to encourage all children to develop as individuals. Children's personal development and well being is good and has a positive impact on their learning and achievement. Behaviour is good. Pupils understand the concept of right and wrong which contributes well to their moral development. Effective systems are in place to encourage good behaviour. Children's spiritual development is good. Opportunities are provided for children to experience times of stillness and quiet and to reflect, across all curriculum areas. Effective pastoral care and support is provided through the school's nurture groups. A structured programme of residential visits from Year 2 to Year 6 contributes significantly to children's growing independence, self confidence and self esteem. Opportunities are provided for all children to share their feelings and emotions through circle time discussions. In addition, all classrooms have "Emotions Boards" which also enable children to express their feelings and emotions on an individual and personal basis. Children feel valued and special. Their work and achievements are celebrated through effective displays around school. Older children learn to take responsibility through a variety of roles including looking after the younger children and organising playground games at lunch times. There is an established and effective school council. Representatives are very proactive within the life of the school. They have recently been involved in purchasing some new large playground equipment and they regularly organise a range of fundraising activities in support of local, national and worldwide charities. Children feel comfortable in expressing their views and feel their suggestions are valued and are taken seriously. They show respect and empathy towards people of other cultures and other world faiths. Annual multi-cultural theme weeks provide effective opportunities for them to appreciate the impact of cultural diversity in this country.

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

Collective worship enables children to develop their knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith and makes a good contribution well to the teaching of Christian principles and values. The main Christian festivals are celebrated and the worship pattern follows clear Christian themes. Worship leaders plan specific content within each of the themes carefully in order to ensure continuity and progression. On occasions, pupils are also involved in the planning and the leading of worship. A good range of experiences are provided including stories, role play, times of prayer and opportunities for quiet reflection. Effective use is made of quiet reflective music giving time for individual prayer. The lighting of the candle on the worship focus table adds to the spirituality of the occasion. Focused questioning encourages children to think about their own feelings and the feelings of others as seen when they explored the theme of respect. Children enjoy worship and speak positively about it. They listen attentively. They respond well to prayers and sing with enthusiasm and clarity. The experience has a good impact on their spiritual development overall. Elements of Anglican liturgy are incorporated well which helps to develop children's understanding of Anglican faith and practice. Links made to the weekly themes and prayers from the lectionary reinforce this. The vicar leads worship in school on a regular basis which further enhances children's knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory.

Religious education (RE) has a positive impact on developing children's knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith. Pupils enjoy the subject and demonstrate positive attitudes in their lessons. They are able to talk about their learning confidently and demonstrate their understanding in articulate and thought provoking ways. Progress within RE across each of the key stages is satisfactory in line with other curriculum areas. The RE curriculum follows the diocesan syllabus and is taught in a range of ways. Lessons are fun and interactive. In the Foundation Stage, practical activities enabled children to understand

that everyone is part of God's family. Key stage 1 children re-enacted, with enthusiasm, an "Easter Vigil" through drama and role play. An opportunity for spiritual development was also provided through the lighting of a candle. A key stage 2 lesson, enabled children to demonstrate their good knowledge and understanding of the Easter story through focused questioning. ICT is used effectively to also support teaching and learning. Effective planning is in place outlining clear learning objectives. Differentiated activities and opportunities for assessment are also identified. Standards of attainment within RE are satisfactory. Children are not always challenged however, in terms of their creative written work. Standards of written work are below standards achieved in other core subject areas. Procedures for assessing children's work have been introduced. However, they are at an early stage of development and are not fully embedded or used consistently across the school. The subject leader for RE is hard working and enthusiastic. She has a good understanding of her role in supporting the teaching of RE within the school. She has attended relevant diocesan training. Whole staff training has been recognised as an area that needs further development, particularly as several new members of staff have recently been appointed. A subject action plan has been formulated clearly identifying areas for further development. This includes implementation of the new diocesan syllabus and to use diocesan guidelines to ensure assessment provides more focused monitoring of children's progress and attainment.

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

Since the school's change of status progress in developing its distinctive Christian character has been significant. The headteacher has a very clear, distinctive Christian vision for the school. This has been shared effectively with the newly appointed leadership team. Together they are fully committed to promoting the Christian character within the daily life of the school and are effective in ensuring the Christian ethos underpins all aspects of the school's work. The headteacher and leadership team are very well supported by a strong staff team who feel valued and who share the Christian vision. A very good team spirit exists which enables staff, children, governors and parents to feel they are part of a caring, Christian community. Governors rightly feel it is time to now review the mission statement, formulated for the school's change of status, so it can better reflect the distinctive Christian character and more specific gospel teachings. Outcomes of a detailed evaluation of the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school has been undertaken by the headteacher and leadership team and shared with staff and the chair of governors. Clear areas for further development were identified and have been incorporated into the school's action plans and school improvement plans. Governors share and support the headteacher's Christian vision and are effective in helping to promote the Christian character of the school. However, they have not been involved fully in evaluating the effectiveness of the school as a church school, including the impact of worship and RE. Relationships with parents are good and they are very supportive. They speak highly of the way in which the school promotes Christian principles and values. Effective links between the school, the church and the local parish community have a positive impact in promoting the strong Christian ethos and Christian character. The vicar is very involved in and very supportive of the work of the school.