

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St James's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Tyrer Avenue,
Worsley Mesnes,
Wigan,
Lancashire
WN3 5XE

Diocese: Liverpool

Local authority: Wigan
Dates of inspection: 31st January, 2008
Date of last inspection: 8th – 10th June 2004
School's unique reference number: 106437
Headteacher: Mrs Pauline Rowley
Inspector's name and number: Rev'd William Sloan 521

School context

St James's is a smaller than average primary school. The majority of pupils are from white British families. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average as is the number eligible for free school meals. There have been a number of significant staff changes during the previous two years. The headteacher took up the post in September, 2005.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St James's Primary School as a Church of England school are satisfactory with some good features.

St James' is a welcoming school where pupils feel very happy, safe and secure and where Christian values are at the heart of the educational philosophy of the headteacher. The pupils' personal development is good and links with the church and vicar are strong. The school has a distinctive Christian ethos which has a good impact on pupils' personal development. This ensures pupils are keen to learn and are considerate towards each other.

Established strengths

- The very good relationships evident between pupils and adults throughout the school.
- The strong leadership provided by the headteacher.
- The personal development of all pupils that enables them to be happy and confident in school.
- The impact of the close working relationships between the vicar and the headteacher.

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.

Relationships throughout the school are very good. Staff are good role models and are working hard to help pupils realise their potential personally, socially and academically. Pupils respond positively to the high standards of behaviour and achievement demanded of them by the headteacher. This also has a good impact on meeting the individual needs of all pupils. The staff and governors have a strong commitment to an inclusive ethos where the potential of, 'whole child' is developed within a supportive Christian environment. Pupils are valued as individuals and are happy, confident and secure. A pupil who liked everything about the school particularly commented that 'people are kind, caring and considerate'. The headteacher and staff ensure the atmosphere in school is relaxed and orderly and pupils are

courteous and considerate to others. Thoughtful prayers and times for reflection and stillness throughout the day help to develop the pupils' spiritually. This is particularly evident at times of collective worship and before lunch when prayers are said daily. Pupils play an active role in decision-making and this encourages their independence. The school council has been instrumental in suggesting charities to support, both local and nationally. The vicar is a regular visitor to the school and is well known by pupils, staff and parents. These links with the parish church, and more widely in the diocese enhance the school's Christian character. Representatives from the church help in school on a regular basis which further enhances the local links. Parents speak warmly about the school: they regard the staff and headteacher as approachable people who listen. They also feel the school has a special quality that provides their children with a strong sense of identity, a caring attitude and an appropriate sense of responsibility. 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 from their own. One parent commented that the school was "a very friendly place and her child really enjoyed coming to school."

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

Worship is seen as a regular part of the school's life and work and there are some good features. Pupils understand what is expected and enter the hall ready to participate. A cross is central on the worship table and the lighting of a candle gives a clear signal that worship is to start. Pupils recognise and understand the significance of these symbols and respond to them well. Resources to support worship, including music, are very well chosen and used effectively. Story telling and drama is used well to emphasise the theme of the week. A sense of stillness and presence in the moments preceding the start of worship gives a good atmosphere to the whole. Children of all abilities and those of other or no faith are included fully in worship: this is especially seen through the good music and singing by the whole school. Children enjoy worship, listen well and respond and participate with enthusiasm. They sometimes lead the prayers and read and participate in dramatic presentations. The headteacher works closely with the vicar in effectively planning for school worship which clearly identifies themes and key elements. Special events such as Christingle, 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 such things as regular 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 contribution it makes to wider learning. Currently monitoring and evaluation of collective worship is at an early stage of development.

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

The headteacher has a strong commitment to leading by example in presenting a model of Christian values. She receives very good support from the vicar whose thoughtful contributions are especially valued. The vision and values are shared amongst all stakeholders and are lived out across the life of the school. The majority of staff share the vision and see the importance of emphasising and strengthening the Christian ethos of the school. The revision of the mission statement makes clear the commitment of the governors and headteacher to the school's foundation. This is now also reflected in a range of school policies. Staff are appointed who are supportive of the distinctive ethos. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the school as a church school is not systematic. The partnerships that exist between the school and the local community, including the church enhances pastoral care, family values and community spirit.