

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

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

Maple Road,  
Penge,  
London  
SE20 8HU

**Diocese: Rochester**

Local authority: Bromley

Dates of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> February 2008

School's unique reference number: 101650

Headteacher: Miss Sarah King

Inspector's name and number: Ms Jan Thompson N.S.92

#### **School context**

St. John's is a Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School in Penge, South East London. With a history in the area going back to 1837, the present school building opened in 1978 and has recently been extended on the same site. Its 282 pupils come from a variety of backgrounds in the locality, with over two thirds from ethnic minorities, mainly Black African and Black Caribbean. About 40% overall are from active Church families, though mostly not Anglican churches. The school is oversubscribed. It was judged by Ofsted to be satisfactory.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. John's as a Church of England school are good**

St. John's Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School in Penge is a good Church school.

#### **Established strengths**

- The all-pervading Christian ethos of the school.
- The strong Christian spiritual and moral development of pupils.
- The very strong relationship with the parish church.
- The Christian leadership of the Head Teacher and Governors, well supported by staff.

#### **Focus for development**

- Teachers should use the national level descriptions in Religious Education (RE) to set work appropriate to pupils' different abilities.
- Pupils should be involved in evaluating the Christian aspects of the school.
- The Anglican influence on school worship should be developed further.

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

This Church school is rooted in Christian values and supported by prayer from both adults and pupils. For example, the headteacher leads a prayer-group attended by some staff, governors and parents every half-term; and pupils use a prayer-box for their own prayer requests. Very strong Christian relationships are evident in school at all levels. All pupils are well cared for and treated kindly, resulting in happy, well-behaved and self-confident young people. Their moral development is very good because it is firmly linked with the question 'What would Jesus do?' Pupils say that this helps them to be kind and forgiving to each other. Pupils are enthusiastic in supporting charities and recognise the Christian motivation in doing this in a Church School. At the time of the inspection, their Lenten project supported a school in Uganda. A Fairtrade campaign in school had been started by a Year 5/6 class. There is very strong spiritual development in both Collective Worship and Religious Education (RE) lessons. Teachers and pupils are comfortable in talking about their spiritual beliefs and the impact these have on their lives. A good use is made around the school of Christian displays and prayer corners, but more could be made of the hall where worship takes place.

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

Worship is at the heart of this school, not only daily Collective Worship for all pupils and staff, but also grace at lunchtime and prayers in class at the end of each day. The acts of worship during the inspection, led by the headteacher and youth leader respectively, were of a very high quality. Worship is Bible-based and a selection of worship books are used on the school's six annual themes; but detailed and formal planning and evaluation are lacking. The worship follows the main festivals and seasons of the Church's Year, although pupils were unable to say what Pentecost celebrates. Pupils enjoy school worship, particularly the singing, which makes use mainly of modern Christian praise songs. They are responsive during worship and behave very well. They have a good understanding of the meaning of worship as 'praising God', 'thanking God' and 'talking to Jesus.' School worship reflects the churchmanship of the local parish church of St. John the Evangelist, which is low-Church evangelical. The school has introduced the practice of using candles and some responses in order to widen pupils' experience of Anglicanism and recognises the need to introduce a wider range of key Christian prayers and more Christian festivals. Year 6 pupils have taken part in Eucharistic worship in the Cathedral for the past two years, in the Church School Festival.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory**

The Diocesan RE Syllabus (2001) is now well established, ensuring a good balance between knowledge and understanding of religions and relating this to pupils' own lives. Being mainly on Christianity, it contributes very well to pupils' Christian spiritual and moral development. For example, at the end of a unit on Jesus' parables, Year 3/4 pupils were asked to think back over their meanings, to consider which they agreed with and what they were going to do about it. Teachers assess pupils' work against levels at the end of each unit. However they are not using the level descriptions to plan for the range of abilities in their classes, which is particularly important in mixed year groups. Nor are pupils given enough help through marking to know how they can improve in terms of developing RE skills. Progress made and standards attained are therefore no more than satisfactory, although pupils' Bible knowledge is good. Pupils have a mixed response to the subject, but behave well in lessons.

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

The headteacher and the school prospectus and website strongly promote the distinctive Christian nature of the school, with the result that parents are very clear about this when they choose to send their children here. Many members of the school community, including the governing body, are regular worshipping Church members who are active in their support for this Church school. A significant number of governors and the headteacher herself are members of St. John's Church. This has meant that links with the parish church have remained strong, even though they are without a vicar at the moment. The employed youth leader takes a daily act of worship in school once a week as well as a number of lunch-time Bible clubs in school, which are popular with the pupils. The church also runs its own after-school club, which some pupils attend with their parents. Relations with other local churches are also good. The Foundation Governors have benefited from recent Diocesan training; but the RE leader and Collective Worship co-ordinator has not been made aware of Diocesan support. The school has generally evaluated itself well as a Church school, particularly through parental questionnaires; but pupils have not been involved enough in this. Parents are very supportive of the school and very appreciative of the Christian education that their children receive here.