

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St John's Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

Heath Road
Sandbach
CW11 2LE

Diocese: Chester

Local authority: Cheshire
Dates of inspection: 26th February, 2008
Date of last inspection: 2005
School's unique reference number: 111334
Acting Headteacher Mr P Mellen
Inspector's name and number: Georgina Lewis 401

School context

St John's primary school is a smaller than average sized village school. Most pupils live outside the catchment and an above average proportion come from relatively advantaged backgrounds. There are few pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language. There are a few pupils from Traveller families and a small number from minority ethnic groups. There has been considerable disruption in staffing, and an acting headteacher has been appointed.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St John's primary school as a Church of England school are satisfactory

The Christian context is clearly stated in the school vision and aims. Documentation emphasises throughout that the school has a Church of England foundation. The environment reinforces this with many examples of Christian symbols and pupils' art work illustrating aspects of the church and its seasons. Relationships are calm and caring throughout the school, a practical example of the Christian ethos. The support from the parish church congregation is strong and the foundation governors actively promote its distinctiveness.

Established strengths

- The commitment of the foundation governors to strengthen the school's Christian ethos
- The care of pupils and commitment to inclusion
- The good spiritual development of children

Focus for development

- Training and development of teachers to improve their knowledge and understanding of Religious Education so as to meet the needs of all learners
- Assessment of Religious Education to inform future teaching and learning
- Introduce formal evaluation of Collective Worship
- More formal monitoring and self evaluation as a church school by the governing body

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

This is a school where the individual is valued. There are weekly celebrations of good work and effort and pupils have a clear understanding of the rewards and sanctions. In discussion with members of the School Council, pupils talked confidently about projects in which they had been involved. They were particularly proud of their involvement in the setting up of a new play area for the foundation stage and the 'Healthy Eating project'. The school's status as a Church of England school is clearly displayed in its signage and the large wooden cross at the entrance. All classrooms have a cross displayed together with the school's 'Golden rules', which are firmly based on Christian teaching; respect and concern for others, honesty

and hard work. Confirmation of the school's Christian ethos is seen in impressive displays of Easter cards made by Year 2 pupils in information and communication technology, showing clearly the Cross at their centre; an art display of stained glass windows and evidence of the support given to a Ghanaian school. Opportunities are provided for pupils' spiritual development. Pupils are encouraged to write their own prayers. Each class room has a 'quiet' space where pupils may sit and reflect; read or listen to Bible stories. Parents are very supportive of the school and speak highly of its Christian ethos. The school's policy of inclusion ensures that children from traveller families and pupils with special educational needs are catered for with good support from both teachers and teaching assistants. The more consistent behaviour management strategies adopted ensure that class rooms are well ordered and pupils' learning is more focused. The 'Golden Rules' prominently displayed providing a constant reminder of the high expectations of good behaviour and consideration for others expected.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The Christian values which are central to the school's ethos are clearly demonstrated in the caring and calm atmosphere created during acts of collective worship. Pupils' participation in collective worship is very good, they willingly respond to questions, giving informed answers which draw on knowledge gained in their Religious Education (RE) lessons as well as previous acts of collective worship. They sing enthusiastically. A candle is lit during prayer time signalling the time for quiet reflection and prayer. The focal point for worship is a table covered with a coloured cloth, purple for Lent. In visits to the church the vicar explains to the pupils what each of the colours signifies developing the pupils' understanding of the Anglican tradition. The worship observed focused on the leadership qualities of Christ, and pupils' recall of the vicar's act of worship, which introduced the theme, was impressive. The pupils very clear understanding of the qualities of a 'good leader', reinforcing the Christian principles of caring and respecting others with God's support, is an illustration of the good impact which collective worship has on pupils' spiritual development. Acts of collective worship are well planned and carefully prepared. There is recording of collective worship and some pupil evaluation, however, this is not detailed and does not inform future planning. Year 6 pupils are involved in worship through responsibility for the organisation of the hall and the use of the overhead projector. The links with the local church are good and further involvement is planned. Pupils participate in services as well as visiting the church for school events. The vicar leads worship each fortnight. Important events in the church's year, Harvest, Christmas and Easter, are celebrated with pupils playing an important role. The school choir sings at the 'Nine Lessons and Carols' service and pupils deliver harvest gifts, with their parents, to the older members of the community.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

The co-ordinator of Religious Education (RE) is well organised and has developed a comprehensive guide for other teaching staff to use in implementing the teaching of the recently adopted Cheshire RE Syllabus. Pupils' spiritual development is positively enhanced by the teaching of RE as pupils relate learning in collective worship. Teaching and learning are at present satisfactory. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject and its assessment needs further development in order to meet the needs of all pupils. The work of the most able pupils shows good understanding of the themes and topics being studied and a developing appreciation of spirituality. However, standards in RE of most pupils is satisfactory. The resources for RE are good and displays in classrooms show good use is being made of them to reinforce teaching. In a reception class, pupils observed were visibly amazed when comparing a tiny carrot seed with the final product. The element of 'awe and wonder' continued when they saw the Amyrilis flower which had grown from a bulb. A mixed Year 3/4 class has written an impressive collection of prayers and also had a 'Count Your Blessings' book, both of which show pupils' good spiritual development. In the lessons observed pupils were engaged and interested but the pace of lessons was insufficiently brisk to maintain the same level of interest throughout.

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

The school has a strong vision and clear aims to promote the distinctiveness of the school as a church school. The school prospectus, vision statement and aims and development plan send a clear message about its Christian foundation and links with the church. Policies are clearly based on Christian principles. Foundation governors have begun to promote the Christian ethos and encourage links with the parish church through joint activities and involvement in the school. Pupils now have a regular slot in the parish newsletter, members of the church visit the school as volunteers and the school features regularly in the prayer life of the church. The governors have been very supportive of the acting headteacher and staff at the school during what has been a very difficult and emotional time. Meetings have been increased and the collaborative approach ensures that all are now beginning to feel valued and empowered. Governors' monitoring and evaluation of the school is developing. This is an inclusive school where all children are respected and the level of care is good. Parents are very positive in their support of the school as shown in a recent survey. Parents spoken to complimented the school highly on the good communication and the willingness of staff to be available to discuss their children.

Sandbach Heath St John's CE Primary school 26th February, 2008 Georgina Lewis (401)
Chester Diocese