

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St John's Stonefold Church Of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Rising Bridge Road
Rising Bridge
Accrington
BB5 2SW

Diocese: Blackburn

Local authority: Lancashire
Date of inspection: 7/12/09
Date of last inspection: November 2006
School's unique reference number:
Headteacher: Mr S Oldfield
Inspector's name and number: Mr G Yates
SIAS number 430

School context

The school is a below average size Church of England Voluntary Aided primary school serving a mixed community between Accrington and Haslingden. An average number of children are eligible for free school meals. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has achieved many awards including the Healthy Schools award. The parish is now part of the extended parish of Saint James Haslingden.

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

The headteacher has been successful in establishing a Christian ethos in the school that was lacking at the time of the previous inspection. Christian values are now at the heart of everything the school does but more now needs to be done to improve standards.

Established strengths

- The major weaknesses found in the previous inspection have been addressed well
- The school is a welcoming Christian community with very happy children.
- The school has established good systems to evaluate the quality of Christian worship

Focus for development

- To achieve a good balance between pupils learning about religion and learning from religion
- To explore and develop links with other faith communities so that pupils are able to learn more about diverse cultures and faiths.
- Involve the foundation governors in the evaluation of the quality of the school as a church school.

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

The school is good in the way in which it meets the personal needs of all pupils. However, far more needs to be done to meet pupils' academic needs. The Christian ethos is now good. Christian values are known and understood by pupils. A pupil commented 'We look out for each other in our school.' The school's Christian character does encourage the spiritual, moral and social and cultural development of all pupils. However, while pupils have a sound understanding of their own culture their understanding of cultures different from their own is less secure. Spiritual development, provided through collective worship and religious education is good. The atmosphere around the school is friendly and relationships are supportive and encouraging. For example, when older pupils experienced as an audience, the dress rehearsal for the Infant Christmas play, they applauded the children's efforts with

gusto. Pupils are well behaved in the hall during acts of worship and well behaved when talking to visitors, including asking pertinent questions of the mayor, who was on a visit to the school during the inspection. However in some lessons behaviour is sometimes variable. Pupils say they do feel listened to and are well represented by the School Council. Displays promoting Christian values and religious education work have improved greatly since the previous inspection and are of a good quality. The entrance hall display leaves any visitor in no doubt that you are entering a Church school. The extra curricular activities offered, including a Friday night Church service for parents and children, and school choir activities are much enjoyed by pupils. The school has ensured that the building provides a good environment for learning to take place.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Acts of worship are of a good quality and well planned and organised. The school provides daily collective worship for all pupils and this is central to school life. Christian values promoted in worship are clearly evident when talking to pupils. Links to the parish church are good despite the distance between buildings. The vicar leads worship in school and pupils take part in Church services on a Friday evening monthly and other occasions. There is no school Eucharist but this is under consideration. The school has taken very good steps to develop its evaluative procedures since the previous inspection to enable it to measure the impact of the provision on pupils of all ages. The school now has a wealth of valuable information to help it improve the quality of worship even further. Pupils say they enjoy the school's collective worship. Pupils are respectful and attentive when they meet for worship. Christian symbols such as an altar cloth and a Bible contribute to an appropriate and reverent atmosphere. The learners are fully involved, singing with great enthusiasm and joining in with the prayers. They also lead class assemblies. The act of collective worship observed was led by the headteacher who successfully used visual aids to develop pupils' understanding of the symbolism of the Advent ring. The Lord's Prayer is well known and opportunities for reflection enhance pupils' spiritual development. For example, the school has a prayer room that is used by pupils and staff as a place of prayer and reflection. It is clear that the impact of collective worship permeates the daily life of the school.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

Religious education now has a prominent place on the timetable and pupils say they enjoy lessons. Overall standards are broadly satisfactory but some of the writing pupils' produced does not reflect fully the pupils' capability. Pupils have a good understanding of the Christian faith for their age and aptitude but their knowledge of other world religions and customs is not as strong. Only a limited amount of teaching was observed and no overall judgement can be made because the normal timetable was adjusted to take account of a dress rehearsal for the Christmas plays and a visit from the mayor. The overall quality of work across the school is satisfactory with a portfolio increasingly being used to demonstrate the range and quality of the work produced. However, while there is some evidence of pupils learning from religion rather than just about it, progress in this aspect is somewhat inconsistent in this aspect of learning. Older pupils do however talk confidently about what some of the parables Jesus told mean to them. There are some isolated examples of pupils using their writing skills well but the writing tasks for more able pupils sometimes lack sufficient challenge. Assessment systems are in place and have recently been revised. The opportunity to link with a multi-cultural school is being explored so that pupils will be able to learn more effectively about other faiths and cultures.

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

Parents are supportive of the school and pupils are very happy to attend. The headteacher has worked hard since the previous diocesan inspection in addressing the identified weaknesses and all of them, with the support of the diocese, have been addressed. The school now has a clear vision and commitment to the school's Christian foundation. However, governors now need to ensure that the school continues to move forward by becoming actively involved in the on-going evaluation of the school as a church school. The religious education coordinator carries out her duties conscientiously. She has been given time to evaluate the quality of religious education and has a good understanding of how religious

education might improve further. The chairman of governors, also the incumbent, knows the school very well and is a frequent visitor. Staff and parents are fully aware of the Christian aims and ethos of the school. Parents particularly appreciate the care that their children receive. The school promotes most aspects of community cohesion appropriately but far more needs to be done to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the life in multi-cultural modern Britain. Sporting and musical activities are used well to enable pupils to socialise with others. The school as a church school has come a long way since the previous inspection and now needs to embed the impact of recent improvements further into school life.

SIAS report June 2009, St John's Saints CE Primary School, Rising Bridge BB5 2SW