

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Thornham St James Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Castleton Road,
Thornham,
Royton,
Oldham,
OL2 6XT

Diocese: Manchester

Local authority: Oldham
Date of inspection: 13 June 2007
Date of last inspection: 11 and 12 June 2001
School's unique reference number: 105692
Headteacher: Mrs M Johnson
Inspector's name and number: Revd Ian C Anthony - 87

Context

The school is situated in a semi-rural area of Royton. Children join the school with average levels of attainment and the ability range is widening. The number of pupils receiving free schools meals is below the national average as is the number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities. There is a small but growing number of children from minority ethnic groups.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St James, Thornham as a Church of England school is good

St James', Thornham, is a good, distinctive and effective Church of England School with some outstanding features. The warm, friendly and relaxed atmosphere of the school allows the children to develop appropriately and achieve their full potential. High standards are set and achieved. The head teacher, staff and Governors develop and foster the Christian ethos of the school very well and there are clear and productive links between the school and the parish. Parents value the Christian ethos of the school and the contribution it makes to the excellence of the education delivered.

Established strengths

- The excellent behaviour and attitude of the children; their manners, friendliness and positive outlook are exemplary.
- The exciting stimulating environment within the school with its high quality displays giving evidence of a rich balanced curriculum and a strong Christian ethos.
- The friendly, caring, welcoming and relaxed Christian atmosphere of the school and the support given to the school by the parish priest and parishioners.

Focus for development

- Draw up a plan of worship for each term listing in detail specific topics to be covered each week. Keep a record of each day's worship and include some evaluation.
- Consider installing some visual equipment in the hall so as to give the opportunity for more varied forms of presentation during assemblies and thus enhance the quality of provision and its impact.

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

Through the Christian qualities of care, tolerance and respect, which are evident throughout the school, the children feel valued and respond very well to all that is offered them in school. Relationships within the school are excellent and it is clear that teachers and children relate well together as do the staff to each other. There are features of the spiritual, moral and cultural development of the children which are outstanding. An example of this is the excellent behaviour and attitudes of the children and the way they relate to each other and

visitors to the school. Staff are approachable and each morning the Head and some teachers are present in the school yard to greet children and meet parents. This aspect of how the school operates reflects the care and concern the staff have for the families of the school and also demonstrates an open approach to parents and any concerns they might have. Some of the few children from minority ethnic backgrounds were interviewed during the inspection and expressed a view that they were very happy at the school and enjoyed all that it had to offer. The children and whole school community enjoy the effective pastoral support of the parish priest who is a regular visitor to school as well as being present to lead worship. The school's practice reflects in an excellent way its Christian foundation and the aims set out in its mission statement are clearly evident in the way it operates on a day to day basis.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship occupies an important place in the life of the school and its impact on the school community is good and recognisably Christian. Children questioned during the inspection were clear in their view that they have learned much in assemblies which enabled them to lead better lives in terms of their relationships with each other in school. "It makes us more Christian" said one child when asked about this and quoted an assembly where children had been urged to consider the moral outcomes of some of the things they said about each other. Worship also had had an impact on the school community with regard to how the school looked at the world around them. Topics in worship dealing with the environment had had a particularly good impact when linked to the school's 'Eco-friendly' status. Worship in school is led by a variety of people: the Head, staff and the Vicar. The Vicar's contribution clearly linked the work of the school with the parish and was good. Children are also involved with the worship either assisting an adult or in presenting class assemblies. The worship observed during the inspection was good and contributed very well to the moral, social and emotional development of the children, challenging their attitudes and opening their minds to fresh and interesting possibilities. Children reflected upon the issues raised and throughout each assembly the behaviour and approach of the children was excellent. Their singing was very good and the overall impression gained was that the whole school saw itself as gathering for an event which was important in the life of the school and was taken seriously by everyone. Although the yearly programme of assemblies is on the whole effectively planned, it would benefit from further development giving opportunity for a weekly overview of topics and including some evaluation.

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

The quality of the Christian leadership of the school contributes very effectively to the success of the school. The Head Teacher has established a strong and caring leadership where a shared Christian vision has produced a school with some outstanding qualities. The school has effective pastoral supports in place and the children themselves contribute to this with their 'Peer Mediation' and the 'Friendship Bench'. Children from all backgrounds benefit from everything that the school has to offer. The children contribute effectively to the life of the school through the school's council. The Christian influence of the leadership of the school has encouraged the children to use Lent as a time to support local charities such as 'Mediquip4Kids' as well as supporting charities at other times. Displays throughout the school emphasise its Christian character and the significance of Christian teaching which goes on in the school. Notably, displays on places of worship and pilgrimages outline both Christian teaching which has taken place and the fostering of an understanding of the Islamic faith. Displays in the hall depict events in the life of Jesus and in the Reception Class there is a display showing Jesus and the fisherman. All the displays are of a particularly high quality and promote the school's Christian ethos very well. There are also notices which contribute effectively to developing the children's Christian attitudes such as notices which encourage good behaviour and emphasise the 'Golden Rules'. The school has a variety of good links with the local community eg the school welcomes elderly people to concerts performed by the children. There are excellent links with the local parish church and the Vicar and visiting parishioners are significant figures around the school. The Vicar supports the staff by teaching some aspects of RE. The Governors realise their responsibility in maintaining the Christian ethos of the school and achieve this effectively by their appointment of staff. The

Head effectively ensures that the Governors are well informed about issues in school and many of the Governors visit the school regularly. The staff interviewed said they felt valued and that their opinions were taken seriously and they understood their responsibility with regard to teaching in a church school. Parents felt that the school reflected very well its Christian ethos and valued the contribution this made to the life of the school. All who are involved in the life of this church school; Head, staff, children, Governors and parents should be proud of the excellent work that is going on here.

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