



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St John's Church of England Aided Primary School

Ashton Road East
Failsworth
Manchester
M35 9PN

Previous SIAMS grade: St John's CE VA Infant and Nursery School Outstanding
St John's CE VA Junior School Good

Current inspection grade: Satisfactory

Diocese: Manchester

Local authority: Oldham

Dates of inspection: 3 December 2015

Date of last inspection: Nursery and Infant School July 2010 Junior School March 2011

School's unique reference number: 105712

Headteacher: Ged Kehoe

Inspector's name and number: Gail Fullbrook 530

School context

St John's school was formed in September 2014 when St John's Nursery and Infant School and St John's Junior School amalgamated. The schools continue to run on separate sites ¼ mile apart with a busy road in between. The school has 305 pupils on roll and serves the urban village of Failsworth. Almost all pupils are of white British heritage and the proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is just above the national average.

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

- Collective Worship (CW) is recognised as important in the life of the school. It includes some biblical teaching and has a positive impact on the behaviour, attitudes and relationships of the school community.
- Children's understanding of the importance of prayer is well developed and supports spiritual development.
- The Christian character of the school is evident in the way in which the children conduct themselves, in their very good manners and in their love of learning.

Areas to improve

- Undertake a review of the school as a church school involving governors, parents and children that will support the school in putting Christian values and spiritual development at the heart of the curriculum and the daily life of the school.
- Develop the impact of school leaders and governors in monitoring and evaluating the school in a way that acknowledges the school's distinctive Christian character.
- Ensure that there is greater consistency in the quality of teaching of Religious Education (RE). This will enable children to make good and sustained progress each year.
- Increase the use of biblical story within worship so that children become familiar with a range of stories and are able to draw upon them, and the example of Jesus, in daily life.

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

The Christian character of St John's school informs the school's approach to all aspects of school life. It provides an effective learning environment based on implicit Christian values where pupils are proud to belong and are challenged to succeed. As a consequence achievement is good and children want to come to school. Parents welcome the school's nurturing of their children and acknowledge the value of support given in times of difficulty. Children know that they are safe and cared about. As a result of fair rules and a widely understood commitment to the Christian foundation of the school, behaviour is good. Where issues arise it is acknowledged by children and parents that they are quickly and fairly dealt with. Although several Christian values can be identified as having importance within school life, children are not always able to make links between these values and the teachings of Jesus. As a consequence the values have limited impact on their spiritual development. The Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) education of the children is supported and reinforced through their involvement in the life of the church and the local community. At Key Stage 1 this is further strengthened through an active link with a culturally different Manchester school. Strong relationships at all levels are widely attributed to the school's Christian character. Parents are appreciative of the school's Christian foundation and are confident of its impact on the lives of their children. When discussing the impact the school's faith status has, parents comment that, 'the school knows my children well', and, 'it teaches right from wrong'. Parents appreciate the additional support given through the nurture and social skills groups that run alongside academic interventions. As a result, children are confident learners and show good levels of self-esteem. A parent of a child with specific needs remarked that she would always be thankful for the help given to her child. During a period of interregnum the school was well supported by a number of visiting ministers from a range of Christian traditions. Alongside the spiritual support this brought, the children's understanding of the diversity of the Christian church was developed. As a result of fund raising and occasional visitors to the school, children are developing an understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. They enjoy RE lessons and can make links between themes studied and their own lives.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Children talk with enthusiasm about CW. They enjoy the regular opportunities to worship in church where they lead prayers, dramatize stories and read from the Bible. Children are familiar with eucharistic worship and understand its importance to Christians. They recognise the importance of Jesus in worship and can retell some stories about his life and teaching. They talk with ease of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and share ways in which they picture each concept. For example, a child compared the Holy Spirit to the dove that descended on Jesus at his baptism. Children readily share examples of worship that have given food for thought. One child talked of the importance of recognising that whilst some people may not have as much money as you have that doesn't mean that they are less special than you. Another commented that there is always a consequence for not respecting each other. Stories told within worship often relate to aspects of school life and have a positive influence on behaviour and attitudes. Children are less confident when asked to make links between biblical teaching and the ways in which they think about things and the way they behave. As a consequence, whilst the children's moral development is a strength of the school, their spiritual development is not as strong. Children recognise the purpose of prayer. Their prayers are frequently included in worship and some children speak of the importance of prayer in their life. They nod in agreement when comments such as, 'prayer helps me to be a better person,' and 'prayer helps me to think carefully about things,' are made. Children take responsibility for projection and music during worship although opportunities to plan or lead worship are rare. Worship themes, whilst recognising the Church's year, usually have a moral basis and are not routinely underpinned by stories from the Bible. The monitoring and evaluation of worship tends to relate to its delivery. Feedback and discussions with the school council give a good level of support to those who lead

worship and sometimes lead to changes being made.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

Standards achieved in RE are satisfactory although attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is not in line with attainment in other subject areas. A new syllabus has been introduced to address this and the school is exploring ways of recording children's work that will allow for greater creativity in both teaching and learning in RE lessons. As a result children are beginning to make good progress. There is however wide variation in the quality of teaching and learning between the two key stages. At Key Stage 1 lessons have a good balance between learning about faiths studied and reflecting on their impact on believers. Opportunities to wonder are frequent. In one lesson, where children were thinking about how God can speak to his followers, a child commented that, 'God sends messages into our brain and tells us what we need to do that's special for our world.' Another wondered whether God sometimes still appears to people in the form of angels. Within Key Stage 2, lessons often have a cross curricular focus and as a consequence the children's knowledge and understanding relating specifically to RE is less well developed. A strong focus on learning about and developing a respect for those of other faiths has resulted in the children having less secure knowledge and understanding of Christianity. Assessment procedures provide a summary of overall attainment but marking in workbooks does not always provide children with good information about what they need to do to improve their work. There is some evidence of RE supporting the children's SMSC development however planning does not always identify how opportunities will be introduced or developed. Where RE supports the Christian values important to the school it tends to be incidental and is not generally planned for. The monitoring and evaluation of RE is in its early stages and is not yet bringing about improvement in standards of teaching or learning. The coordinator, new to post in September 2015, has attended recent training relating to the new scheme of work and is enthusiastic about the opportunity to develop RE through the school.

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

Senior leaders are enthusiastic about the school's Christian foundation and welcome links with the church community. A clear vision however, is not yet in place to support the school's development as a church school. Self-evaluation procedures are not embedded and do not involve representatives from across the school community. As a result the school is not clear about what it does well as a church school and which aspects of its practice should be prioritised for development. Implicit Christian values inform CW, RE and the wider curriculum. They have a positive influence on the good levels of moral, social and cultural development, whilst having less impact on spiritual development. Links with the church community are productive and strong and make a good contribution to the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school as a church school. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and recognise the part they have to play in supporting the school's development. Links with the diocese are not well developed. Consequently, the understanding of the leadership team and governors of the ways in which church schools should be led and managed requires further development. Children are proud to belong to the church family and carry out a number of supportive actions such as bulb planting and taking part in the town's remembrance parade. They recognise their importance within the life of the community and also take steps to support charities within their community (Foodbank) and the wider world (Children in Need, Comic Relief). Arrangements for CW and RE meet statutory requirements.