

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Addison Terrace
Wednesbury
Wolverhampton
WS10 7AL

Diocese: Lichfield

Local authority: Sandwell
Date of inspection: 27th April 2011
Date of last inspection: 30th September 2008
School's unique reference number: 103992
Headteacher: Yvonne Hughes
Inspector's name and number: Julie Moore 579

School context

St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School has 170 pupils on roll, most of who live in the area close to the school. Most pupils are from a range of ethnic backgrounds with the majority having Bangladeshi heritage. English is the second language spoken by most of these pupils. About one third of the remaining pupils are White British.

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

St John's is a cohesive and welcoming Christian school where pupils and their families work harmoniously together for the benefit and well-being of everyone in the school and church families. Pupils have many different backgrounds, religions and cultures, all of which are valued and respected within the overarching Christian context, and this enables the school to serve its multi-cultural community so effectively.

Established strengths

- Christian values firmly underpin everything that happens in the daily life and work of St John's and these successfully steer the school's leaders as they plan the way forward.
- Worship and prayer have a high profile throughout the whole school and this enables all pupils to develop spiritually during their time at St John's.
- Very positive teamwork between the clergy, senior team, staff, pupils and parents enhances the school's relationship with the wider community and this successfully encourages everyone to support and help each other.

Focus for development

- Expand the work in hand for improving the strategies for assessing and recording how well pupils are doing in Religious Education.
- Implement the plans for enhancing the role of foundation governors so they have a greater input into monitoring and evaluating the impact of collective worship.

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

St John's school is clearly and distinctly Christian. The impact of its Christian values is evident in the many ways that the school successfully nurtures all its pupils whatever their religion, belief or culture and this includes those pupils who have no faith at all. Parents are very pleased with this approach, as a number of them said, *'This is a very caring school, my child is getting on really well with his learning'* and *'There is a lovely atmosphere here. Children are taught what is right and wrong and moral development is very good. Everyone is welcome and no-one is left out'*. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is firmly embedded, with many successful opportunities during lessons, when sharing in the act of worship, being in and around the school and when visiting church. As one pupil said, *'Everyone helps each other here, that's why we like coming to this school. Teachers are good at sorting out problems and there is always someone to talk to'*. Spiritual development is strong as evidenced in a lesson on the Ascension when pupils clearly understood why Jesus's friends spoke and felt as they did after the Ascension. One comment, *'Jesus' friends*

knew that he had risen from the dead and was going to heaven' indicates an understanding of the spirituality of Jesus. All of which supports the school's Vision Statement effectively. Pupils actively and willingly contribute to decisions about their school and the community it serves through the school council and through their responses to questionnaires and surveys. Community cohesion is a real strength at St John's as school leaders are successful in their determination to embrace, respect and welcome everyone in the school family and the wider community it serves. This was an issue at the last inspection that has been tackled very well. The school environment effectively reflects the strength of its Christian values and its spirituality within which the many different backgrounds of the pupils and their families are valued and respected.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils enjoy worship because it is well planned and effectively delivered by the worship leaders. Going to St James' church for 'special' services is especially enjoyed and older pupils enjoy planning and leading worship for their class or for the whole school. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Worship is seen as an integral part of school life that everyone shares, which is very positive indeed. Prayer is very important in the life of this school. Pupils having no faith and those having a different faith to Christianity share prayer time equally as they quietly and reverently reflect on personal events that are meaningful for them. One pupil (who is not a Christian) said, *'I like writing my own prayers just for me and I like saying our class prayer with my class'*. The truly spiritual ethos that exists throughout St John's is firmly and securely embedded for many members of the school family. Services in St James's church, and the celebration of the Eucharist in school, ensure that pupils have a good understanding of Anglican traditions and practice. The school is well aware that many of its pupils follow a faith that is different to Christianity and it ensures – very successfully – that there is no conflict between being a Christian school alongside celebrating and admiring the lives of other faith communities. St John's prides itself on giving pupils every opportunity to explore a range of religious values and beliefs and the way in which they impact on each other's lives, which is another reason why the school is such a successful cohesive and harmonious community. Plans are in hand for school governors to have a greater input into the worship experience, which is positive.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards in Religious Education (RE) are broadly average and are similar to attainment in other subjects. Scrutiny of work in pupils' books and discussions with pupils indicate that many of them are making good progress in their understanding of religious concepts. Teaching is good because lessons are well planned and pitched at the right level. The next step is to refine the school's systems for assessing and recording how well pupils are doing and a start has been made to tackle this issue following the last inspection. Pupils are positive about RE lessons. In one lesson with older pupils, which was based on the story of Joseph in the Old Testament, pupils were asked *'Do the brothers become more or less jealous of Joseph?'* A pupil responded *'They become more jealous as time goes on because they realise that their father favours Joseph instead of themselves'*, indicating good levels of understanding especially when the response to the question *'Why?'* was *'Because Joseph had the best things and their dad was always kinder to Joseph than he was to the other brothers'*. A main strength of this lesson was that the moral and social aspects of the story were developed very successfully throughout the entire session. The RE curriculum is firmly rooted in the basic principles of Christianity. Guidance from the Lichfield diocese informs planning successfully as the curriculum encourages understanding and respect for other world religions, faiths and beliefs. RE has a high profile in school as evidenced by the positive approach to the subject and the success of the school's links with its many families who have a different faith to Christianity.

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

Leadership is good. The headteacher and her team are fully and actively supported by parents, staff, governors, clergy and pupils, all of whom work together very successfully as they plan the way forward for the school. Governors are led very effectively by their chairman, who is the local vicar, and a well-known person in this multi-faith and multi-cultural area. Everyone has a clear understanding of their role and teamwork and relationships are very good all round. The bedrock of the school's work are the Christian values that underpin everything that happens at St John's so successfully. The Mission Statement and the Vision

Statement have a key role in this process, enabling all members of the school family to clearly understand what the school stands for in their local community. The chair of governors has regular informal meetings with pupils and staff and the next stage is to involve the foundation governors in this process. Parents, staff, governors and the clergy are regularly consulted and asked to comment about aspects of the school's work. There are many positive comments such as, '*This school is great*', '*We love the school because our children do well and they are happy here*', '*I chose this school because of its positive ethos and children are taught right from wrong*'. Clearly indicating the strength of the shared vision by members of the school and church families as well as members of the local community. Senior leaders and governors keenly encourage staff to participate in training for their role in a church school. St John's Church of England School is very well placed to serve the whole community, which it does so well. It has many strengths, which is why it is a successful and fully cohesive Christian community.

SIAS report April 2011. St John's Voluntary Aided Primary School, Addison Terrace, Wednesbury, Wolverhampton. WS10 7AL.