



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 Voluntary Aided Primary School

Denmark Street  
Waterloo  
Liverpool  
L22 9RG

**Previous SIAMS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: Liverpool**

Local authority: Sefton

Dates of inspection: 17 March 2016

Date of last inspection: September 2010

School's unique reference number: 104920

Headteacher: Cheryl McManus

Inspector's name and number: Ruth Wall 548

#### School context

St. John's is a smaller than average size primary school with 173 children on roll. Children come from a wide range of different socio-economic backgrounds. The number from minority ethnic communities is below the national average. The mobility rate is high. The percentage of disadvantaged children who are eligible for pupil premium is above average. Whilst the number of children identified with special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average, the school supports children with a wide range of specific needs. The headteacher was appointed in January 2016.

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

- The leadership and commitment of the headteacher, staff, governors and clergy are very effective in ensuring that children thrive within a shared Christian vision, evident in all aspects of school life.
- Children's excellent understanding of Christian values and Christian teaching about them means that they relate these values to their relationships, their learning and the challenges they face.
- The school provides broad and creative learning experiences which deepen children's spiritual understanding across the curriculum, especially in religious education (RE) and collective worship.

#### Areas to improve

- Ensure that the assessment system for religious education (RE) is embedded throughout the school, to improve consistency and accuracy, leading to greater improvements in children's work.
- Further extend the RE programme to develop children's knowledge and understanding of Britain's wide cultural and religious diversity. Include a range of visits from members of other faiths and visits to their places of worship.

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

A strong commitment to Christian values and the development of the whole child underpins the work of the school. Children are able to talk about the importance of key Christian values that have been selected by the whole school community. A teacher explained, 'These values of love, courage, friendship, trust, compassion and respect are at the heart of the school and ripple out to all staff and pupils'. Behaviour is outstanding and expectations are consistently linked to the Christian values. A Year 6 boy said, 'We use the values in the playground. We show compassion to each other'. Parents approve of the school's teaching of Christian values, one saying that they are often referred to at home. All members of the community know that they are valued and the outstanding ethos of trust and respect is clearly evident. The school's Christian care for and commitment to every child, informs their approach to the challenging issue of attendance and in striving to ensure that all children achieve their academic targets. Effective intervention strategies and intensive mentoring are in place to nurture and support children in their learning. The school has a strong commitment to Christian service in supporting a range of charities. Spiritual education is enriched through a variety of activities, including the well-established Experience Easter, Christmas and Harvest days which are organised and run with the church community. High quality displays and Christian signs and symbols emphasise the school's distinctiveness. Prayer and RE areas, with excellent examples of children's responses to various themes, shine out around the school and in every classroom. Younger children consider, 'What did Jesus teach us about being a friend?' and older children reflect on, 'What did Jesus teach us about courage?' Children benefit from varied opportunities to appreciate God's creation in wonder and awe. They clearly enjoy finding out about the different ways Christians celebrate Christmas and Easter around the world.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Collective worship makes a significant contribution to children's spiritual and moral development. Planning is firmly based on Christian values, the Bible and major Christian festivals. Children have an excellent knowledge of the life and person of Jesus and a developing understanding of the nature of God. A Year 5 girl said, 'The Holy Spirit reminds me of God's promise to help us'. The programme is varied and wholly inclusive, involving staff, clergy, foundation governors and St. John's Church Assembly Team in planning and leading acts of worship each week. In a pupil questionnaire a Year 3 child wrote, 'I like it when we can play a character in the Bible...I love worship'. Children respond extremely well because they are given time to ask big questions and develop their ideas. Prayer is important in this school, not only in worship but throughout the school day. Worship is monitored and evaluated effectively by staff, children and governors. As a result, significant improvement and developments are ongoing. The assistant headteacher is currently leading the school in enhancing the distinctiveness and richness of class worship. A school action point is to develop children's skills further in planning and leading class worship. Excellent singing enhances the worship experience in school and in the wider community when the choir visits local residential homes. Year 6 children have a key responsibility for preparing the hall for worship, managing the ICT and participating with readings and prayers. Children learn about and experience different traditions in Anglican worship. This includes the significant and regular Eucharist services where the church community and the school family worship together. The older children visit Liverpool Anglican Cathedral for acts of Worship. These support their understanding about their membership of God's wider family.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

The school has a commitment to developing all aspects of teaching and learning in RE using the diocesan syllabus. Portfolios show evidence of the high value placed on RE and its wider context within the school. There is very good leadership of RE which supports teachers and provides a clear vision for development. Standards of teaching and learning are at least good in most classes. From learning walks and book scrutiny, leaders and foundation governors have

identified where action is needed. They have implemented effective procedures in order to raise standards in all classes. Action taken to bring about improvement is rigorously monitored. Leaders have identified the need for teachers to moderate assessment work together to give them a clearer understanding of the standards achieved by children. Teaching about faiths other than Christianity helps children to develop attitudes of respect for different faiths. The 'diversity group' made up of a range of staff members, are in the process of planning various events to further develop children's understanding of cultural and religious diversity. Leaders acknowledge that this would be further enhanced by visits from members of other faiths and visits to their places of worship. RE is taught in a creative way with a strong emphasis on developing children's ability to discuss and share ideas. The balance between learning about religions and reflecting on their new experiences and knowledge is developing well across the school. Very good prior knowledge and thinking skills were demonstrated in a Year 5 class discussing aspects of the Easter story. They responded confidently and enthusiastically when asked to recall learning and express their opinions. The sharing and careful consideration of ideas was also evident in the Year 2 class who were excited about their work on Paschal candles. Early Years children benefit from using well chosen and age-appropriate resources. Their teacher said how excited they were in recreating the journey through Holy Week using leaves, a toy horse and Lego men. In a pupil questionnaire a Key Stage 2 child commented, 'RE helps us learn how to live by the values Jesus showed us'. Children benefit from input from the vicar and chair of governors who share their expertise to enhance children's learning.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding**

The headteacher was recently appointed following a rigorous process by governors, and the diocese, which included a clear focus on her proven ability to be an inspiring leader in a church school. She and the assistant headteacher are committed Christians who live out their faith and consistently promote Christian values in daily life. Leaders and governors are highly effective in articulating and promoting the Christian ethos throughout the school. They recognise the need to celebrate and promote this to a wider audience through the website. Foundation governors are proactive and successful in supporting, challenging and monitoring the work of the school as a church school. They use their considerable skills and experience to very good effect. Issues from the previous inspection have been an ongoing focus with continued improvement and development through several changes in leadership and management. RE and collective worship are extremely well led, with planning and evaluation contributing effectively to future development. The school is supported very effectively by the diocese. The professional support and coaching given to staff is a high priority with training specifically linked to church school development. The assistant headteacher is working towards accreditation of the Christian leadership course and the special educational needs coordinator has completed it. Children value their role in decision making and know that their views are valued. They take their various responsibilities very seriously including the Ethos Group who work together to further the Christian values within school. The school's leaders have a strong focus on meeting the needs of the individual child and have developed effective self-evaluation processes that place the uniqueness of each child at the heart of school improvement. They recognise the importance of the school's Christian character in creating an ethos which supports effective learning. The input from local parish churches makes a valuable contribution to the life of the school and presents a positive image of the church. Parents' comments give examples of happy, settled and confident children and of those with special needs who are extremely well cared for. The words of one parent sum up those of many, 'Our school is so wonderful, not only for the welcoming and friendly environment but also for the great sense of family'.

SIAMS report, March 2016, St John's CofE Primary School, Waterloo, Liverpool L22 9RG

