



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St John's CE Primary School

Larcom Street

Walworth

SE17 1 NQ

Previous SIAS grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Southwark

Local authority: Southwark

Dates of inspection: 18 November 2014

Date of last inspection: September 2009

School's unique reference number: 100831

Headteacher: Keith Fox

Inspector's name and number: Christine Smyth NSI 459

School context

St John's CE Primary is a one-form entry Voluntary Aided school. Its 205 pupils are from a diverse range of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. The majority are Black British, mainly of African heritage. The number of pupils with English as an additional language is above average, as is the number of pupils supported by the school with a statement of special educational needs. A very high proportion of pupils are from worshipping Christian families. The school is on the edge of a regeneration area. Despite the recent demolition of the Heygate Estate, from which over 40% of children were admitted, the school has managed to increase its roll.

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

- The place of prayer in the school, which is its heartbeat, is actively fostered by the headteacher and is strongly supported by his senior team, parish priest and governor.
- The strength of spirituality enriches the whole school community and results in a deeply shared Christian ethos.
- The strong, inclusive nature of the school that values all pupils and their families in a warm, safe and welcoming environment firmly rooted in its Christian values.
- The central role that worship plays in the life of the school community which enriches the spiritual lives of pupils and has a real impact on them both at home and at school.

Areas to improve

- Improve the quality and consistency of marking in Religious Education (RE) to enable all pupils to respond to teachers' comments in an interactive way so that they can improve their work further.
- Develop strategies for governors to actively engage with senior leaders and pupils in the self-evaluation of the school including aspects relating to its distinctive Christian character and mission, learning and teaching in RE, and Collective Worship.

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

The school has a very powerful, distinctively Christian ethos which is evident in every aspect of school life and which learners both understand and appreciate. It is visible throughout the school environment, in relationships and classroom practice.

As a result of the trusting Christian ethos, pupils feel valued, enjoy coming to school and build excellent, trusting relationships. They grow into well behaved and compassionate young people who have an understanding and respect for diversity and difference together with a motivation to help others in their community and beyond. When speaking about prayer, a Year 5 pupil volunteered that at night he prays for, 'other people who don't have beds, a house or clean water'.

The study of comparative religion has contributed to pupils' very good understanding of different cultures and faiths resulting in a harmonious and caring school community where individuals appreciate and look after each other. Pupils behave well, feel safe and enjoy caring for each other at playtime or as buddies in church. Attendance is very good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong, with Christian values, such as justice and perseverance, encouraging and challenging pupils' thinking across the curriculum. These values are being exemplified in school through teaching from the life of Christ. Pupils are reflective, they have a strong sense of right and wrong and are able to attribute their emphasis on ignoring past wrongs and caring about the future to the Christian ethic of forgiveness. The community of St John's is justifiably proud of its distinctive but inclusive ethos which was very evident during the inspection. The confidence and compassion shown by pupils as they explore and express their own and others' feelings and beliefs, demonstrates the positive impact of RE. Because the school cares for each individual, pupil attainment and progress has continued to be good. The incumbent's view that, 'The Gospel permeates everything here at St John's' was echoed by many. Truly, prayer is its heartbeat.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

Worship is an integral part of school life which binds the school and church community together. It is one of the main ways through which the school expresses its strongly Christian character. It gives expression to its Anglican foundation and links seamlessly with other aspects of the school's Christian distinctiveness. Worship is consistently and explicitly Christian. Through the fortnightly Mass children develop an understanding of the Anglican faith, tradition and church festivals. Strong leadership and effective planning and review by the headteacher and senior leaders, ensures that it has a significant impact on the spiritual development of the school community. It is inclusive and valued by all pupils, including those who are of other faiths or of none. Pupils speak enthusiastically about worship which incorporates themes that cover their personal development as well as world issues and events in the liturgical year. They enjoy the varied range of styles and experiences, which includes special occasion worship in Southwark Cathedral. They recognise the impact worship has on their lives. A Year 6 Muslim pupil said that worshipping in church made him feel happy and part of the school family. During each act of worship observed, pupils focused well as a result of the calm, spiritual atmosphere which had been created and the stimulating ways in which worship was delivered. They showed lively enthusiasm as well as appropriate respect and reverence, joining in confidently with responses, singing, acting, and times for quiet. Pupils have engaged well with prayer in their own lives and see its significance in the life of the school. Some pray about world issues, for those who have been unwell, and for their own needs. The Lord's Prayer is well known to all. Older pupils know The Grace. They understand that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit relating their understanding of the Trinity to prayers and Bible teaching in RE and worship.

Since the last inspection, the school has addressed the areas to improve by increasing pupil participation. The now frequent opportunities for sharing prayers, thoughts, song actions and improvised acting enhance pupil's attitudes and spiritual development.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

St John's shows a very strong commitment to the teaching of RE which permeates the whole curriculum and is visible in thought-provoking displays throughout the school. There is a strong programme of RE which is based on the Southwark Diocesan Guidelines. Pupils engage eagerly in RE lessons and develop a good understanding of Christianity, making comparisons between beliefs and practices of other religious faiths. The teaching observed featured good and outstanding practice. In the best lessons teachers' subject knowledge, enthusiasm and high expectations inspired pupils who become fully engaged in a process of learning that facilitates enquiry and reflection. Standards achieved in RE are broadly in line with other core subjects and in line with national expectations. Progress of some year groups, for disadvantaged children and those for whom English is an additional language, is slightly above national expectations.

Pupils recognise the importance of RE and the older pupils are reflective learners. RE makes a good contribution to the school's values and to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In a discussion about prayer a Year 5 pupil was clear that God does not always answer our prayers when we ask for what we want but do not need. The subject leaders have effectively developed and embedded the curriculum and supported staff in tracking assessment for both Attainment Targets 1 and 2, learning about and learning from religion. Data has been used to analyse the progress of individuals and groups so as to inform planning and teaching. The marking process, where it is used well, involves pupils in actively assessing their own progress so they understand how to improve their work. However, the lack of consistency in marking results in uneven progress across the school. RE is not yet outstanding as pupils are not sufficiently clear about their achievements and what the next steps in their learning are. Pupils are not sufficiently engaged in actively extending their learning.

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

St John's School and the church, which is adjacent, are integral to the community. The shared belief in living out the gospel binds the church and the school together. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors promote a strong and distinctive Christian vision for the school. They see its place 'as a beacon for living the faith'.

They are accurate in their view of the school, considering it to be a happy, spiritual place where its strongly promoted core values permeate school life. Parents are very clear that these values have a significant impact on pupils' well-being and behaviour at school and at home. As one mother stated, 'all the children learn to love God and to love each other, regardless of their faith'.

The incumbent provides a real presence in the school, leading worship and supporting RE. This, together with their involvement in church services, is greatly valued by the pupils who recognise the impact on their learning and spiritual growth. The headteacher and all the staff provide impressive role models. As a result, relationships are strong, staff feel well supported and progress in RE remains good. Pupils are clear that there is mutual respect and trust between and among staff and themselves saying, 'teachers always help you and you can always speak your mind'. A focus for development from the last inspection, to develop links with other faiths and schools locally and worldwide, has been effectively addressed. This area is not outstanding as governors, though hugely committed and involved, are not actively engaged in the school's self-evaluation. They do not have a clear understanding of future development needs of the school as a church school and are unable to challenge leaders sufficiently to secure further improvement.

SIAMS report November 2014 St John's CE Primary, Walworth, SE17 1NQ