



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

Kingsmill Road,
Basingstoke
RG21 3JU

Previous inspection grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Portsmouth and Winchester

Local authority: Hampshire

Date of inspection: 21 March 2016

Date of last inspection: 29 March 2011

School's unique reference number: 116400

Headteacher: Hayley Clayton

Inspector's name and number: Julia Welford 576

School context

St. John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is a larger than average Primary school with 304 pupils in an urban area of Basingstoke. The number of pupils has grown considerably since the last inspection. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium and those from an ethnic minority are both below average. A minority of pupils' first language is believed to be other than English, with seventeen other languages spoken.

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

- The vision and drive of the headteacher, effectively supported by staff and governors, has embedded strong Christian values and a distinctive Christian ethos throughout the school community.
- The pastoral support that the school offers makes a significant contribution to the wellbeing and achievement of pupils.
- The positive Christian ethos and relationships in the school make all pupils feel safe and valued, whilst developing their academic, social and spiritual potential.
- The opportunities provided within the structure of collective worship invite pupils to appreciate the links between the biblical teaching, music and prayers to reflect on in their lives.

Areas to improve

- Refine the new assessment procedures in RE to enable teachers to track pupils' progress more accurately and plan next steps in teaching.
- The Governing body to formalise monitoring and evaluation of the school's Christian ethos.

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

The distinctive Christian character of the school is evident in all areas of school life. It is central to the school's ethos, vision and values. Pupil and parent surveys confirm this. The school is distinctively Christian, yet balances this with a celebration of diversity and a respect for the inclusion of pupils of all faiths and of none. Pupils are keen to talk about how they feel their school is a very safe place where everyone's beliefs are respected, learning is fun, and all the staff care about them. As a result, the school's rigorous assessment processes in the core subjects indicate that there is a rising trend in academic progress. Pupils make at least expected levels of progress. More vulnerable children and those with special needs overcome huge barriers in their learning and individual circumstances, because the school values all children's achievements and their emotional well-being. The school offers an excellent range of extracurricular provision, through which it fosters the development of each child's talents and interests. The result is a community where everyone is valued, known by name, and where pupils make very good progress. The school is highly inclusive. Pupils are enabled to understand and respect people who are different from themselves. The school's compassionate yet firm approach to attendance and behaviour results in attendance that is above the national average and behaviour that is excellent. Behaviour is strong because there are clear expectations and guidelines, based on Christian values. Pupils learn to make right choices, to take responsibility and understand the consequences of their behaviour. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere throughout the school. One parent commented, "It's a very loving environment for all our children". High quality displays emphasise the school's distinctiveness and support the children's spiritual awareness and development extremely well.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The high profile of collective worship gives it a central role in school life and reflects the strong Christian ethos of the school. The Headteacher articulates a clear Christian vision and is the subject leader for collective worship. The themes of collective worship are very well planned to explore the meaning and applications of the values of St John's School, moral and social issues and major Christian festivals in the Anglican church year. All pupils, regardless of their faith or belief, are affirmed by worship and understand that it is an important part of faith. Children who are new to the school quickly learn how to respond and behave, as it is such an established experience in the school. There is a cross, a candle and a liturgically coloured banner at the front of the hall, with quiet music playing, all of which help pupils collect their thoughts and prepare for worship. Pupils have excellent opportunities to pray or reflect on the key messages from their own faith perspective. This respect for prayer and reflection builds pupils' personal spirituality and nurtures their personal faith. Verses from the Bible are carefully linked to themes in collective worship and children learn 'memory verses' which develop their exploration of the Christian faith; one verse the school council recited includes, 'Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God'. The Anglican framework for collective worship, introduced since the last inspection, ensures that pupils are familiar with a range of prayers, responses and the church calendar year. Once a term, the pupils assist the vicar in leading a whole school Eucharist. The school community are offered a rich experience of Christian faith and practice. The worship observed was an innovative account of Easter week, with accompanying slides and dramatic sound effects by individual pupils and the whole school. The school celebrates the Christian year, with major Christian festivals being celebrated with parents in the church. Parents are welcomed to Friday worship, an uplifting and affirming time when children's efforts and achievements are acknowledged and celebrated. The school has made good progress with involving learners in planning and leading worship. Pupils love the challenge and responsibility and are proud to make a contribution to the school. They write comments and thoughts about worship in a 'Gold Book' and have requested one such book per class.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Pupils engage enthusiastically in RE lessons because a wide variety of teaching approaches, including drama, discussion and questioning are used. This ensures that lessons are both lively and engaging, and consequently pupils make good progress in RE in all year groups. Pupils' attainment is in line with other core subjects. This academic year, the role of subject leader has been allocated to a member of the school leadership team, who combines the role with leading Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) education and Personal, Social, Health and Emotional education. RE is now very well led by a committed subject leader. The school held a 'Faith Week' the previous year which explored different faiths and associated cultures and customs. RE lessons demonstrate pupils that have a good knowledge of the Christian faith and Christian values are embedded. This begins in the reception class, where a pupil was able to describe, in basic terms, the characters from the Easter story using 2D puppet figures. He said that, "They were very cross", (chief priests), and "He got a bag of money", (Judas). Pupils also showed an understanding of the sequence of the Easter week and explained about the Easter garden they had made. One child said that, "Jesus the King was put in a cave". Spirituality has a high profile in the curriculum, with planned opportunities for spirituality moments clearly identified in planning. In all lessons observed, there were detailed lesson plans. Older pupils were open to sharing their ideas and made links to past lessons and experiences, such as the Eucharist service. During 'Faith Week' all Key Stage 2 pupils visited a local Mosque and a United Reformed Church, which helped to enhance their understanding of religious diversity. The new RE leader has already attended two RE courses, including a focus on a new assessment guide for the subject, and network meetings in the area. She also leads a weekly prayer meeting before school. Monitoring of the subject has been undertaken, including pupils' books and lesson observations. The assessment and tracking from RE shows that standards and progress are good and in line with other core subjects.

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

The headteacher has created an environment in which everyone matters and is cared for as a unique child of God. New families are welcomed and made aware that this is a Church school. Policies are underpinned by the school's Christian values with 'Love' as the basis, and a display in the hall clearly states this. Parents trust the school and recognise that it has the best interests of their children at heart. They confirm the school's willingness to seek their views and be approachable. The school has close connections with All Saints Church, ensuring church and school support each other. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The achievement and progress of students is tracked and there is a clear striving for all to reach their God-given potential. RE and worship meet statutory requirements and the school has fully addressed the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. The governing body monitors the School Improvement Plan, especially aspects relating to the Christian ethos. However, governors' monitoring activities for this area are not yet sufficiently scheduled and routinely recorded. They have recently used a questionnaire to gather parents' views on St John's as a Church school. Older children take their responsibilities seriously, including the School Council, Peer Mentors (who support pupils at lunchtime) and the Junior Leadership Team, who write applications for the role. One pupil wrote, "I would like to introduce visitors to our school and explain to them how great it is." The school has also implemented a Young Interpreters scheme to provide additional support to pupils who are learning English as an Additional Language and other pupils at the school. Each child attends training sessions to fully understand their role. The school's new library, opened by the Bishop of Basingstoke, was a joint project supported by a local grant, the PTA and the Diocese. This has further extended links with the wider community, such as use by local groups. Pupils and parents recognise that community links enrich school life and the educational experience of the pupils. The headteacher is trying to develop a mutually supportive link with a school in another country to further develop understanding of global communities.