

St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Johnson Street,
Radcliffe
Manchester
M26 1AW.

Diocese: Manchester

Local authority: Bury.
Date of inspection: 17th April, 2012
Date of last inspection: 2nd February, 2009
School's unique reference number: 105349
Headteacher: Mr. M.D. Gate
Inspector's name and number: Mr J Verity 440

School context

St John's is approximately half the size of a national average sized with 137 pupils on roll. The vast majority of children live nearby in local authority housing where the Index of Multiple Deprivation Indicates that the area the school serves is situated in the lowest quartile. The majority of children are white British with over twice the national average being entitled to free school meals. The proportion of children on action or action plus registers is well above average with many having social, emotional and communication difficulties. Transience of pupils is exceptionally high with many experiencing St John's as one of several attended. The school is currently in a hard federation with a local authority school in the same parish and shares a governing body and executive headteacher who devotes 80% of his time with them until the end of the current school year.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St John's CE Primary School, Radcliffe, as a Church of England school are good.

The Federation and senior management of school have developed a good, inclusive church school where pupils make good spiritual, moral and social development. Evolving strategies are also manifesting themselves in a positive Christian ethos amongst all stakeholders and throughout the school and local community.

Established strengths

- The excellent quality of pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships with each other and adults.
- The excellent teaching of Christianity manifesting itself in the promotion of a sense of awe and wonder and Christian values that assist in developing attitudes conducive to academic and social excellence.
- The vision and expertise of senior managers in planning a core curriculum that raises academic standards whilst simultaneously promoting inclusion across the curriculum.

Focuses for development

- Ensure that the Christian foundation is consistently evident throughout the school, particularly in the entrance hall.
- Improve the recording and development of the RE curriculum throughout the school to ensure that teaching and learning remain consistently high.

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

Christian values underpin the school's ethos and in doing so emphasise the importance and responsibility of each pupil. The school's foremost rule states that children 'should always treat others as they would like to be treated themselves.' As a result the children possess a positive sense of worth and hope. They have a range of expectations for their life that fulfill the spectrum of ambitions that include lawyer, artist and chef. Most children express pride in their 'awesome' school and love attending. They find much of their work interesting but sometimes feel that they underachieve. Established playground routines ensure that the limited recreational facilities are utilised effectively and promote pupil harmony. They are able

to apply Christian moral values by relating Biblical teaching such as the Good Samaritan story to ensure successful peer interaction through a playground leadership scheme in which positive actions promote high levels of independence, maturity and citizenship. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Children are well aware of the codes of behaviour and report that rare disciplinary challenges are resolved speedily, fairly and in a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation by all adults. Children's good level of understanding of Christianity is supported by faith displays in most areas of the school. These give effective support to worship and the school ethos. The school's Christian character is not so evident in the official entrance hall. An array of extra-curricular activities supports children's spiritual, moral and social development well. Cultural development is good and is enhanced by drama and visits to activity centres.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Christianity and acts of worship are central to school life. They are enjoyed by all the children and led by the head, who is the worship co-ordinator, by other senior members of staff or by visiting clergy. The development of pupils' sense of awe and wonder is fostered successfully by the use of drama where analogies are drawn between life experiences and stories from the Bible. Worship matches the backgrounds, ages and abilities of all learners well. Children sing hymns enthusiastically to a piano accompaniment, with words being projected on the wall. Good use is made of technological equipment as it is utilized to help focus attention on the theme of the week. Children have a good knowledge of the Bible and can recite the Lord's Prayer with clarity and understanding. Children's understanding of Christianity is also deepened because worship generally follows the Church's Year. As St John's Church has been demolished, developing links with the co-parish of St Thomas and St John ensures that school attends Church to celebrate Christmas and the Leavers' Service. These occasions are valued and well supported by parents. Worship makes a good impact because it explores inclusive Christian themes such as peace, hope and love, elements tangible in the school ethos, with content and approach attractive to the children.

The effectiveness of Religious Education is outstanding

The teaching of RE is excellent and achievements are significantly higher than in other subjects. Complex Christian and multicultural themes such as the explorations of awe and wonder and empathy are conducted utilising drama, an array of technological equipment and referencing skills. Pupils' investigative skills are particularly well developed, for instance in exploring the significance and existence of angels. Good use is also made of speaking and listening skills and working co-operatively in mixed ability groups, individually or in pairs. Children are able to empathise with the meaning and application of some of the parables, for example, in their caring attitude to the treatment of pupils less physically able than themselves. This is because lesson objectives are clear and assessments are differentiated. Assisting pupils along their own spiritual journey should be further enhanced by a greater knowledge and experience of other major non-Christian religions. This could be developed through planned co-operation with the local inter-faith group.

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

Despite undergoing a time of severe challenge, with a hard federation replacing an independent Governing Body, an executive head taking charge of more immediate school priorities, such as the raising of the standards of basic education and the threat of school closure, the senior leaders are successfully continuing to promote St John's as a school based on Christian values. This is seen in the positive school ethos where staff lead by example in the knowledge that their actions are far-reaching, inclusive and impacting strongly on the individual and the wider school community. Children also take an active role in the school management. Their decisions are taken seriously and have resulted in improvements to the challenging environment. Pupils also feel that they can confide in all the adults who work with them about any troubles they may have. There is clear evidence, in the form of petitions, to show that there is an outstanding commitment by the original Church Foundation Governors and current senior managers of school to reverting St John's into a viable and independent place of Christian education.