



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



 The **Methodist Church**

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### St John the Evangelist Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Ivy Road  
Macclesfield  
Cheshire  
SK11 8QN

|                                   |                     |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Diocese:</b>                   | <b>Chester</b>      |
| Local authority:                  | Cheshire East       |
| Dates of inspection:              | 23/01/14            |
| Date of last inspection:          | 16/03/09            |
| School's unique reference number: | 111331              |
| Headteacher:                      | Mrs Caroline Waites |
| Inspector's name and number:      | Mrs Ruth Wall (548) |

#### School context

The school is situated on the edge of Macclesfield and serves an area which is socially diverse. The intake varies from year to year but tends towards pupils from low socio-economic backgrounds. Almost all pupils are from white British backgrounds. A slightly higher than average number of pupils has special educational needs. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The majority of class teachers, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed since the last inspection. There have been challenging staffing circumstances over the last 18 months.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St John the Evangelist as a Church of England school are outstanding

- A clear Christian vision is at the heart of all that St John's does. The conviction with which this vision is promoted by senior leaders and shared by all members of the school community, ensures the school's success in meeting the academic and spiritual needs of all children
- The excellent quality of relationships within the school family, together with the value placed on each individual
- Relationships with the church and church schools in the learning community are very strong in promoting a shared Christian vision for development and learning

#### Areas to improve

- To support children's progress in religious education (RE) more effectively by: ensuring that they know the level they have achieved to inform next steps in their learning and to develop a portfolio of assessed work, in order that all members of staff will have a sound understanding of expected standards and those being achieved
- Provide experiences to broaden children's knowledge and understanding of faiths, other than Christianity, including visits to their places of worship

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

The school's motto: 'Children are a gift from the Lord', is evident on all documents and communication. This, together with its core Christian values, shapes the thinking of the school and is understood, articulated and embraced by all members of the school community. One teacher said, 'This is how we live our lives' and a supply teacher commented, 'The Christian ethos shines through.' Children spoke with clarity and conviction about the Christian values that are important for their lives. 'We can have faith that God will be with us', explained one child. High quality displays throughout the school reflect its Christian foundation. The Christian character of the school is clearly defined and effectively promoted so as to make a significant impact on the personal development and academic needs of the children. These strengths within the school's Christian character have been the foundation for its academic success. Achievement and rates of progress are good. It is also at the heart of all relationships. Behaviour is outstanding and there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere throughout the school. Effective strategies have been introduced, including responsible children acting as 'sports ambassadors' to engage children at playtimes. Children's spiritual development is enhanced by a wide range of cultural and reflective activities. Year 2 children were clearly proud of their outstanding contribution to their collective worship presentation for parents and the school. The school is both distinctive in its Christian character and inclusive in its approach to diversity. This is a highly cohesive community in which all feel valued regardless of differences. The chair of governors commented, 'We are all part of God's family.' A child's response in a questionnaire stated, 'our teachers tell us everyone is special and individual so it makes me feel good to be different.' The strong links with the local church and the All Hallows Catholic College enable children to have positive views of the role of the Christian church within the community and the opportunity to continue their faith journey. Leaders recognise that knowledge of the church in a global sense is not so well developed.

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

Children recognise that distinctively Christian worship is at the heart of the school and understand the place of Jesus within the Christian faith. The worship is very well planned by the coordinator and the headteacher, with the vicar. Worship covers Christian themes with a strong emphasis on Christian values and on important Christian festivals. This enables children to have a very good understanding of the nature of worship, the Christian faith and Anglican traditions and practice. The school's close link with All Hallows, and the much valued input from the chaplain serve to broaden children's outlook as they learn from Christians of a different denomination. All classes take their turn in planning and presenting worship on the current theme for the half term. This develops children's skills and reinforces the importance of worship to the whole community. In the worship observed Year 2 children, under the expert direction of the teacher, re-enacted a Bible story and provided the school and parents with a challenge to their thinking. Reflecting on the worship theme, a child explained, 'God gave us the Holy Spirit to help us make good choices.' The vicar of St John's regularly leads worship. He has observed that 'worship goes on all day in the school.' The prominent place of prayer across the school ensures that worship is a spiritual experience of real significance. Children say formal prayers but also respond to opportunities to prepare and express their own personal prayers. The school has fully addressed the issue raised at the last inspection and now evaluation of worship is thorough and very effective because it is carried out through discussions and surveys involving all members of the school community. Recently, children requested a visual reminder of the worship theme and now each class takes their turn to design and make an impressive banner as a focus point for worship.

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

The quality of teaching is good. This enables children to have a sound understanding of the Christian faith and of other faiths represented within the wider community. Standards are in

line with those attained in other core subjects which are good in relation to national expectations. RE makes a good contribution to the Christian values of the school and to the learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The subject leader and headteacher demonstrate clear purpose and sense of direction in driving through initiatives to raise standards of attainment. Teachers have a shared commitment to improving standards and recognise RE as a core subject. The issues raised at the previous inspection: to improve the marking of children's work and to ensure that the curriculum is developed to include more work on learning from religion as well as about religion, have been addressed as a result of focused school development action. Marking now gives children clear indication of how their work can be improved and they respond effectively in the time given to do this. New systems for monitoring have been developed this year, strengthening leaders' views of the school's standards and highlighting where improvements need to be made. Leaders acknowledge the need for teachers to moderate children's work together to give them a clearer understanding of all the attainment levels and for children to know what level they have achieved to inform next steps in their learning. Children speak very positively about their enjoyment of RE. One child explained that learning about different faiths 'helps us understand better.' In the Key Stage 2 lesson observed, children demonstrated their developing investigative skills in both interactive and independent learning on the subject of Creation. They were beginning to respond to asking more challenging questions. There are many opportunities for learners to experience other cultures through planned themed weeks. Their knowledge and understanding of the main practices and beliefs of other faiths would be further enhanced by visits to their places of worship.

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

The school vision is rooted within the Christian faith. It is shared by all members of the school community including parents who speak enthusiastically about the difference it makes to their children's lives. One parent commented that the care and support her child had received had 'helped to develop her confidence when going on to high school.' Governors explained that deciding on the appointment of the headteacher had been a 'prayerful experience.' They believe that the right choice had been made in appointing someone who demonstrated 'the ability to live out the Christian ethos.' Through thorough self-evaluation the school knows itself well. Leaders and governors take time to listen to the views of the staff, children and parents and to make an appropriate response. They are aware of the school's strengths and areas for development and have identified priorities for school action. All issues raised at the previous inspection have been fully addressed. Priorities relating to the school as a church school are identified in the school improvement plan which is monitored effectively by all governors. Leaders and governors have been successful in ensuring that the academic needs of the children, especially those that have special needs, are met. In doing so they have recognised the importance of the school's strong Christian character in creating an ethos which supports effective learning. The school has strong and supportive links with the local church including the very popular 'Messy Church' activities. Through their link with other schools in the learning community they are involved in a range of collaborative activities and valuable training for staff. Children are encouraged to show concern for world issues and they recognise the need to work together to help others less fortunate than themselves through regular charitable giving. The school is committed to the professional development of the staff. Newly qualified teachers and those looking to take on senior leadership posts have had the benefit of courses specifically linked to church school development. Great importance is attached to the leadership of RE and collective worship. Both are led with commitment and a genuine desire to continue to seek ways to improve further, including developing opportunities for teachers to share outstanding practice across the school.

