



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Towngate
Clifton
Brighouse
HD6 4HP

Diocese: Wakefield

Local authority: Calderdale
Dates of inspection: Monday 28 April 2008
Date of last inspection: 14 June 2005
School's unique reference number: 107571
Headteacher: Mrs C Graham (Acting Headteacher)
Inspector's name and number: Allan Summers 281

School context

Situated in attractive grounds in an exposed hilltop location in the picturesque village of Clifton between the conurbations of Bradford and Huddersfield and enjoying impressive views across the Pennine hills, St John's CE Primary School serves the expanding village community and the surrounding areas. This popular, regularly oversubscribed school currently has 216 pupils of predominantly white British heritage, though parents from other faith communities actively seek out the school because of its strong caring ethos based on Christian values.

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

An overwhelming sense joy, calm and purposeful endeavour greets anyone entering this school; it exudes an atmosphere of warmth, love, care and prayerful Christian witness. The children are happy, articulate, enjoy the challenges set and achieve highly. Said one child, "we work hard in school but what makes our school a happy place is that teachers are happy too and make subjects entertaining". Staff are led whole heartedly by a most dedicated headteacher, thus enabling the whole learning community to live out its mission in a profoundly caring fashion with collective worship and RE at its heart.

Established strengths

- The quality and strength of relationships between all sections of the learning community;
- A dedicated, collegiate, highly motivated and very well led staff team supported by a governing body, which shares the same traits.
- The Christian ethos based on shared values, which pervades every aspect of the life of the school and in which all pupils feel safe, nurtured and valued.
- Very well behaved and responsive pupils with a remarkable sense of personal responsibility and their place in a global perspective.

Focus for development

- To fully embed a system which supports the continuing professional development of RE subject management.

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

Visitors get an immediate and clear affirmation of the Christian character of St John's Primary School from the plentiful interactive, informative and celebratory displays, with beautifully arranged Christian artefacts evident throughout the school. This is a school where the staff know their children well and fashion an imaginative, varied and attractive curriculum around their needs. Both ends of the academic spectrum are outstandingly well served, as one couple remarked, "we feel that the good Christian values practised at school have helped our son to gain confidence, happiness and equality". All facets of learner's experiences are rooted in a universally held Christian conviction and a shared vision from a totally supportive workforce which continually challenges itself to strive for excellence. There is a strong sense of tradition with the school held in high esteem and proud to be at the heart of the local community socially and spiritually. There is an inclusiveness to which all members subscribe and a very positive emphasis on empowering pupils and parents to interact in the process of self evaluation which contributes greatly to their sense of value and worth. Children are scrupulously fair, sharing the very many opportunities for responsibility; their behaviour is exemplary and their work ethic impressive. This school lives its mission.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

As the prospectus and evaluations clearly state, "The ethos of the school, encompassing all that we stand for is expressed through Collective Worship", which does form a vital, important and central part of the life of this school. It is not only an affirmation of corporate Christian values but also, through prayer, a basis for the school's success and enterprise. There is a comprehensive plan of themes with support material, guidance and suggestions but room for spontaneity and flexibility and a regular evaluation process, which crucially involves the whole learning community so that impact is closely monitored. Worship, which is enriched by the variety of personnel who lead on a regular basis is conducted in a fashion wholly appropriate to the ages and stages of development of the children who are extensively involved, sometimes producing and directing proceedings entirely unaided, very impressive! Experiencing worship at St John's is a joy and spiritually uplifting. The children enter and exit the sessions in respectful silence but engage enthusiastically in any interactive moments and sing joyfully. Prayer and quiet times allow opportunities for reflection and children are encouraged to compose their own words for particular occasions. Children talk animatedly about worship sessions and attitudes are very positive. The very close links with the local Anglican church and the Methodist chapel allow for the many special occasions to be shared enthusiastically by the parents and the local community.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious education has a pervasive and binding influence on the whole curriculum. The thematic approach allows links to develop quite naturally and especially in the expressive and creative arts the outcomes are impressive. Display is plentiful, vibrant and celebratory and artefacts are tastefully positioned leaving the visitor in no doubt that this is a Christian environment. Policy and practice are informed by the latest guidance, however the recently installed RE manager, whose ability and enthusiasm are beyond question would benefit from further professional development opportunities. Children's work is excellent and they are very articulate in their positive attitudes towards the subject. "RE is more than just a lesson; it teaches us how to live our lives", was a typical comment. The subject is in safe, skilful hands with the latest technology used effectively to enhance the learning experiences, but most memorable was the extensive use of drama to embed an understanding of stories and their messages. From the earliest years children at St John's happily strive to make faith messages part of their lives and though this 5 year old may not have the genealogy quite right one could not fail to be moved by the innocent enthusiasm for the Old Testament story of Noah whom he described as, "Jesus' mate who saved all the animals from the flood", or this 7 year old's valiant attempt to interpret from the 23rd psalm, 'The Lord's my shepherd', with the phrase, "The big man who looks after us all".

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

Led by a consummate professional and inspirational headteacher, the staff and Governors share a unity of purpose and a clear vision for the continued success of the school. The head has gathered around her a happy, motivated, enthusiastic team, which has created a learning

community rooted in the Christian faith, which can be proud of the quality of love and care extended to all its members. That, "there's a pleasure and joy in sharing children's education", is clear for all to see as the school prospectus accurately suggests and "As the writing runs through a stick of rock, so the caring Christian ethos runs through every aspect of the life of St John's CE Primary School", . All the staff provide excellent role models which is encouraging learners to adopt positive attitudes to learning and to become respectful, polite and well mannered young people. Structures and systems are robustly in place to continue to deliver high quality education underpinned by Christian values, and the highly supportive and knowledgeable governing body reinforces this situation by carrying out its responsibilities to challenge and support with sensitivity and rigour.

SIAS report April 2008 St John's CE Primary School, Clifton, HD6 4HP