

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St John the Baptist CE (Aided) Primary School

East Avenue
Leicester
LE2 1TE

Previous SIAS grade: Good

Current grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Leicester

Local authority: Leicestershire

Dates of inspection: 21 January 2015

Date of last inspection: 11 and 20 January 2010

School's unique reference number: 120230

Headteacher: Andrew Marshall

Inspector's name and number: Marian Driver (116)

School context

St John the Baptist is a large city school without a designated catchment area. Pupils come from the city and surrounding area. Half the pupils are of White British heritage and the remainder from other ethnic backgrounds and religious groups. The church is across the road from the school. A new vicar took up the post in November 2014. The school was rated good by Ofsted in September 2014.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St John the Baptist as a Church of England school are outstanding.

- The school lives out distinctive Christian values with a focus on the wider community.
- Highly motivated pupils achieve high academic standards and make good progress.
- Biblical teaching makes a strong contribution to pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The excellent teaching of Christianity and other religions both in lessons and integrated into the wider curriculum is achieved through practical and participative experiences.

Areas to improve

- Extend the monitoring of RE to include the observation of RE lessons in order to improve the quality of teaching and provide the necessary professional development.

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

The headteacher, staff and governors share the vision of St. John the Baptist as an inclusive Church of England school. The Christian ethos of the school is embraced by parents who find that their own religious beliefs and values have a place in this school. Christian values are embedded in the life and work of the school where the vision is 'Excellence for All'. Learners make good progress and standards are high, often above the national. Behaviour is good and pupils have a strong sense of belonging. The commandments of 'love of God' and 'love thy

neighbour' underpin the depth of respect, tolerance and relationships, and drive the community involvement. Pupils experience a Christian community where each individual is valued, included and considered special. Parents say that they know 'how much their children are cared for, and how their children really feel the love of others'. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is strong. Pupils are encouraged to search, question and wonder within a Christian ethos which parents say has a strong impact on their children. One pupil said, 'even if you don't have a faith it's good to know about that religion'. RE teaching has a high profile in this church school and the school recognises the contribution that Religious Education (RE) makes to the knowledge of other faiths and understanding of the world. Pupils talk naturally about their own faith and discuss similarities and differences with friends of other faiths and none. The peace garden and woodlands in the outdoor environment are used regularly to provide safe opportunities for pupils to be quiet and have time to think. Children recall how an outside area became the garden of Gethsemane when taking part in the 'Easter Experience'. This helped them to understand the emotions of the characters.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is at the heart of the school's distinctive ethos. It is well planned and engages all. Pupils enjoy taking part in worship and their comments reveal that it is an important spiritual time. Pupils write their own prayers which are used in worship times and special services. They value prayer time and say that, 'If you pray that means love to whoever is hurt'. Children say that when they sing songs and pray together, 'it makes our togetherness'. They enjoy the jazzy and rap songs but recognise that they are, 'still to do with God'. They are able to recall stories from the bible and understand the underlying messages which help them to develop their personal responsibility and actions. Pupil comments show that the inspiring and interactive worship observed is typical. It regularly informs and engages them. Exploring the theme of 'love', the depth of Christian belief based on patience was evident. Pupils have an understanding of the Trinity related to 'God like the clouds, Jesus the rain and the Holy Spirit like the wind'. Staff lead worship and by their regular attendance are able to re-iterate and think about the messages with the pupils throughout the day. There are regular visits from the vicar and other church representatives ensuring that there is a good understanding of Anglican faith and diversity of style through involvement in collective worship and a lunch time club. A foundation governor monitors worship on a regular basis. This has led to more involvement of pupils in the planning and delivery of worship. Parents speak enthusiastically about being invited to special acts of church services, worship and theme days. Feedback from parents attending worship highlights the enjoyment from learning and the singing of Christian songs and prayers linked to other activities.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious Education is given a high priority and pupils have a good understanding of Christianity and other major world religions. Standards are at least in line with national expectations, with a large percentage of pupils working above. The experienced co-ordinator makes use of assessment data, showing that pupil progress in RE is good. She regularly delivers inset to staff, taking advantage of Diocesan and network training. The quality of teaching and learning across the school in both lessons and integrated into the wider curriculum is outstanding. Pupils enjoy RE and can relate its relevance to their own lives. Learners, through planned annual visits to places of worship gain deeper knowledge and respect for other religions and views. Year 1 pupils observed were engaged with the 'What if' learning approach as in Godly Play and thinking questions. This enabled them to fully explore the meaning of the characters' actions. Year 3 explored the idea of 'envy', relating this to the story of Joseph. Questioning and the use of differentiation allowed the more able children to explore their own feelings of envy further, leading to better understanding. RE consistently promotes the Christian values of the school and there is a clear link between whole school worship and RE. The creative curriculum approach to RE was effective in the 'Christmas Experience'. Parents say how Christmas was, 'very much about the birth of Jesus'. Pupils develop a greater understanding when encouraged to take part and experience Christian festivals. The importance of RE in the school is reflected in the school development plan

and the strategic role of all leaders in the self evaluation process. Foundation governors and RE co-ordinator carry out joint monitoring of books and pupil interviews. These confirm that pupils have a positive experience of RE, providing opportunities to think deeply and ask questions of the world and God. Monitoring does not include lesson observations of the quality of teaching so it does not help leaders to identify specific points for improvement and training for staff.

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

The inspirational leadership provided by the headteacher provides a strong model for the school community. Through his leadership, staff, governors and parents are informed and supported in the ways of the Anglican tradition. The 'Lighthouse blog' regularly updates the wider community giving an insight into the Christian character of the school. The governing body fully supports the headteacher in promoting the school's Christian foundation and, as part of the strategic action plan, have become more involved in the monitoring and evaluation process. Staff and governors benefit from leadership training with the Diocese. Parents' views are valued. They say that the 'Christian ethos,' is so strong that it filters through everything the school does' and 'we could not ask for a better school for our children'. During the time without a vicar, both the local and wider church members gave practical and prayerful support to each other. The links with St. John the Baptist church are strong. The nearby church provides an extra meeting space for joint events. Partnership with the new vicar has revitalised the mission partnership and a new parent prayer group has recently started. Improved communication by the headteacher, monitoring by the foundation governors and the growth of the mission partnership has led to stronger leadership of this church school.