



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St John the Baptist Church of England Primary School

Cronall Street, Hoxton, London, NI 6JG

Previous SIAS grade: Satisfactory

Current SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Diocese: London

Local authority: Hackney

Date of inspection: 29th April 2016

Date of last inspection: February 2011

School's unique reference number: 100266

Headteacher: Alyson Tyler

Inspector's name and number: Pamela Draycott 161

School context

The school is part of a federation of six schools. Each has its own headteacher and school committee overseen by an executive headteacher and governing body. The proportions from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are well above the national average. Likewise, the proportions with special educational needs and those for whom additional funding is provided due to social disadvantage are also high. Most pupils come from Christian backgrounds with a small but significant minority from other faith traditions or non-faith backgrounds as represented within the local community.

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

- The headteacher, well supported by senior and middle leaders and through the federation, provides ambitious leadership for school improvement based on the school's five core beliefs. This impacts positively on the good and improving academic attainment and progress made by pupils.
- The school is a harmonious, welcoming and happy place based on its inclusive and nurturing Christian ethos.
- Religious Education (RE) and the worship programme have a high profile and are intrinsic to the school's wide provision of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development opportunities. In turn this makes a valuable contribution to pupils' academic development and personal wellbeing.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that the school's five core beliefs are strengthened through considering and acting upon recent and ongoing developments in Church of England school 'character education'.
- Review the worship policy so that it accurately reflects the school's foundation as a voluntary aided Church of England school.

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

The school's mission statement, 'We achieve, we believe' is underpinned by five core beliefs (determination, honesty, respect, celebration and co-operation). These were introduced in September 2014 in consultation with the school community. Whilst not exclusively Christian these beliefs are founded on a Christian vision for school improvement. Pupils and staff can articulate their importance and can link them appropriately with Christian beliefs and teachings. Consequently, the core beliefs make an effective contribution to raising aspirations and developing behaviours and attitudes which aid learning. This leads to good academic achievement and progress for pupils both of which are on a continued upward trend and are above local and national averages. In keeping the school's Christian and inclusive vision the gap in attainment and progress between more vulnerable pupils and others is narrowing. Reflecting the school's caring and inclusive Christian service it is a welcoming and happy place with a strong sense of belonging. Pupils of different ages, ethnicities, abilities and religions get on well together. Consequently, attendance is above the national average and pupils' behaviour is excellent. 'Bullying is bad. It's not what Jesus would want', as one lower Key Stage 2 pupils said. The quality of relationships at all levels is very strong. The school expresses its Christian care in a number of ways including employing a pastoral manager to support vulnerable pupils and their families and a part-time school chaplain, who is also the children's worker at the parish church. High quality display celebrates the school's core beliefs and enriches the learning environment significantly. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. For example, pupils recognise the importance of prayer and charitable giving as a way of showing concern for others less fortunate than themselves, 'because Jesus gave us the example'. The worship programme and RE successfully enhance and play major roles in leading this provision. Pupils are engaged and excited by things they learn in RE. Through RE and the recent introduction of 'Growth Mindset' and 'Philosophy for Children', pupils are very well equipped to express their personal opinions and beliefs whilst recognising and respecting others' beliefs and practices.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The worship programme plays a valued and positive part in school life. As rightly recognised by staff, governors, pupils and parents, it clearly supports the school's core beliefs. Through worship, supported by RE units of work, pupils have a detailed and age-appropriate understanding of key Christian beliefs such as that of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Bible stories are explored very well through worship and the importance of Jesus for Christians is clearly expressed. The daily programme is very well extended through regular school worship in the parish church, especially at times of Christian festivals such as Christmas and Easter. There is an effective structure used for acts of worship in school which is familiar to pupils and staff. It aids prayer and reflection which contributes significantly to pupils' and adults' own spiritual journeys. Planning is detailed and the programme's delivery and relevance is regularly reviewed and evaluated by pupils and adults. The link governor for worship, along with other governors and school committee members also regularly attend and review worship. Comments are well acted upon. Pupils enter and leave the hall with a sense of reverence. They display enjoyment during worship, especially through singing both traditional and contemporary hymns and songs. They celebrate each other's achievements and recognise diversity within the school and wider community well. Pupils take an active part in prayer, including reading their own prayers and regularly saying the Lord's Prayer. This helps them explore the significance of prayer for Christians and in their own lives. A worship focal point in the hall helps pupils develop an understanding of Anglican traditions such as the use of different coloured cloths reflecting different times of the Christian year. In worship led by Church leaders formal greetings with responses are used. These are insufficiently used during worship at other times. Whilst being explicitly Christian in nature, worship is fittingly inclusive of those of other faiths and of none. For example, during prayer pupils are given the option to reflect rather than pray. Each classroom has a well used reflection and prayer area. Pupils know that there are different types of prayer. One younger pupil reflected that 'Prayer is talking to God and you can ask for things or ask for forgiveness or just say "thank you" to God.'

The effectiveness of RE is outstanding

RE is regarded as a 'core subject'. Consequently its importance in supporting the school's Christian ethos and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is recognised and celebrated. A wide range of suitable strategies, appropriately matched to different ability levels enhances provision and help pupils learn and enjoy the subject. Consequently, pupils make at least good, and sometimes very good progress from their various starting points. Pupils' progress is accurately tracked using a new assessment system. The percentage of pupils working at age related expectations in RE is at least equivalent, and often better, than nationally. The RE scheme of work draws on a range of sources including some parts of the diocesan guidelines. Teaching about Christianity and other world faiths is well balanced. The curriculum is extended by the school chaplain who leads extra sessions periodically on aspects of Christian belief and practice. Higher level and open-ended questioning to probe thinking and encourage reflection is very well used in RE lessons. Pupils reflect in a very detailed way on what they have learned and relate it creatively and effectively to their everyday lives at school and beyond. Pupils' written activities include, for example, poetry and extended writing. It is of a comparable quality with written work engaged in literacy lessons. Assessment is detailed and very well used to record learning and prompts further discussion. Pupils are consistently given opportunities to respond to teacher marking in order to extend their thinking/reflection. However, giving pupils specific steps for improving their knowledge and understanding of RE content is less apparent. RE is rigourously and enthusiastically led by an effective subject leader. Well supported by senior leaders, governors and federation colleagues, she is successfully driving forward improvements. This includes providing detailed support for developing teachers' knowledge and confidence in teaching RE through half-termly inservice training sessions held within the school. There is also effective feedback to teachers on the regular lesson observations and monitoring of pupils' work.

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

The headteacher has successfully and collaboratively led on introducing a refined school mission statement and core beliefs based on the school's Christian foundation. As a parent said, 'The school's core beliefs are now well known and shared. The children live by them not just in school but outside as well, whether they are Christian or not'. Senior leaders, including governors, have detailed insight into school performance. Therefore, self-assessment is accurate. This in turn leads to effective action planning for further improvement. Recent on-going developments within Anglican education in relation to 'character education' and Christian values is recognised as important. Consequently, the school has firm plans to develop this area further. The school works effectively in partnership within its federation and increasingly beyond. There are appropriate links with the Deanery and some, more limited, links with diocesan educational provision. Staff are encouraged to develop professionally whilst working within a church school. For example, currently two teachers are embarked on higher level degrees, partly funded by the school/federation. RE and worship meet statutory requirements. However, the collective worship policy does not accurately reflect the basis for worship within a voluntary aided school. Links with the parish church are very strong and evident in both school and parish life. This is a significant improvement since the previous denominational inspection. Parents are very well informed about children's education. They are extremely appreciative of the school's approachability and care, including for families who find themselves in difficult situations. This is recognised as clearly being part of the school's distinctive Christian and inclusive ethos. Areas for development from the previous denominational inspection have been well addressed with most progress being made since the appointment of the current headteacher in September 2014.

St John the Baptist CE (VA) Primary School, Crondall Street, Hoxton, London, N1 6JG