



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St John's Stonefold Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Rising Bridge Road
Rising Bridge
Accrington
BB5 2SW

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Blackburn

Local authority: Lancashire

Date of inspection: 16 June 2016

Date of last inspection: April 2011

School's unique reference number: 119453

Headteacher: Stephen Oldfield

Inspector's name and number: Gail Fullbrook 530

School context

St John's Stonefold is a smaller than average primary school. The proportion of children eligible for pupil premium or who have special educational needs is below the national average. The school has good links with the church of St James', Haslingden, the church being 1.4 miles away from St John's school. St John's Church, once adjacent to the school, was closed many years ago. The parish is currently in an interregnum.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St John's as a Church of England School are good

- The school's leaders ensure that Christian principles and practice support a community in which every person is valued and can flourish.
- Collective worship in this church school is a highly valued part of each day and has a transformational impact on the lives of the children.
- Supportive and purposeful relationships are founded on a clear understanding of the importance of each person in the eyes of God. They make a significant contribution to the wellbeing of each child.

Areas to improve

- Undertake a full review of the school's Christian distinctiveness to raise awareness of its strengths as a church school and to guide future developments.
- Develop understanding of a series of core Christian values that will underpin the daily life of the school and inform attitudes, behaviour and spiritual development.

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

This is a welcoming and happy school where children feel safe, are socially secure and flourish. Through an individualised approach to learning, the school's Christian character makes a significant contribution to the children's achievement and to the progress they make. The school has developed its own unique curriculum based on the objectives set out in the National Curriculum (2014). It has as its aim, 'To open doors to the awe and wonder of the world in which we live', and reflects both the Christian distinctiveness of the school and its locality. As a result, children are excited by their learning. Staff know the children and their families well and work hard to give each child the support they need. Most children attend school regularly because they enjoy coming to this caring Christian school. Almost all concerns about attendance are quickly addressed through personal contact with families. Most, but not all, of the school's core values are distinctively Christian. Children understand that values help them to, 'know how to be with each other'. However their understanding of the values as Christian values is not always underpinned by Biblical stories. Weekly rewards are given to children who exhibit particular characteristics of the values in their behaviour or attitudes to learning. The children's behaviour is good and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is well supported. Children show enthusiasm for Christian giving through their support of a number of local and national charities. Their spiritual development is nurtured through prayer and opportunities for reflection within worship, RE lessons and across the curriculum. Children are at ease when sharing their thoughts and feelings. For example, one child talked about how he had worked hard in the past to control his temper, to which another child responded, 'But he doesn't lose it now'. Children are aware that Christianity is a world-wide faith and meet visitors in worship from a number of Christian groups. This strengthens awareness and understanding of the diversity of local faith communities. Children are respectful of their peers from other faith traditions and recognise that Christian values are often shared values. Relationships, founded on Christian values, are a strength of the school. Parents know that someone is always available to talk to them and that issues of concern will be addressed quickly and effectively. One parent commented that, 'The school's Christian foundation shines through in the way it values people'. Another parent referred to the school as, 'A respectful place that supports children and families well'. Members of the church congregation visit the school regularly to lead worship and to support class activities. Children feel a strong sense of belonging to their church, despite its distance from the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Children and adults acknowledge the importance of collective worship to the life of the school. Children talk with enthusiasm of the importance of hearing stories about Jesus and of learning from the Book of Proverbs. They are keen to share ways in which they relate the stories they hear to their lives. For example, when reflecting on the story of Jesus' temptation, one child shared that the story had helped him when he had been tempted to do something wrong. Christian values are interwoven through worship and in times of silence, children are encouraged to reflect and pray. A Key Stage 1 child spoke of reflecting on the Christian value of honesty saying, 'I feel better when I tell the truth'. Another child talked of the importance of taking time to, 'pray for people who really matter to me'. Worship plans reflect the seasons of the church year and important Christian festivals. Children have a good understanding of the stories relating to the festivals and of their importance to Christians. They are familiar with a range of traditional prayers and greetings and have an age appropriate understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Children are encouraged to reflect and respond to worship themes. Prayer is offered within collective worship and at other times during the school day. Children are invited to leave prayers in areas set up for reflection and in a prayer book. They talk of praying when they are worried, when they have had a nice day and when they have done something wrong. Children know that they can pray anywhere and at any time. However, their prayers are not yet routinely included in collective worship. Children particularly enjoy worship where they play an active part acting out a story or sharing their thoughts or opinions. Older

children take responsibility for many routine aspects of worship. Children sing with enthusiasm and one child, when talking about a favourite song, said that singing made her feel uplifted. A number of different people lead worship, including members of staff and visitors from local places of worship and the community. Worship is carefully planned and processes for monitoring and evaluating worship ensure that it makes a good contribution to pupils' SMSC development. However, occasions when children plan and lead worship are infrequent.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Children enjoy RE lessons and make good progress through the school. By the end of Key Stage 2 standards are in line with national expectations. Teaching is good and children use a range of key skills within lessons such as enquiry, interpretation and reflection. The school follows the Blackburn Diocesan scheme of work and children have a good knowledge of key aspects of Christianity but a limited knowledge of other faiths. Lessons are designed to encourage children to learn about religion and then to respond to the lesson content. For example, when learning about the purpose of prayer, Year 4 and 5 children think about what prayer is, and what it isn't, and then discuss their own approach to prayer. When Year 1 and 2 children re-enact a service of baptism, they think about belonging and the role of Godparents. Children are encouraged to ask questions and teachers readily take time to address these even when they aren't directly related to the subject of the lesson. Key Stage 2 children discuss Jesus use of the word 'rock' to describe Peter. This leads to them thinking about who the 'rocks' in their lives are. The RE subject leader brings enthusiasm to the subject and arranges training to ensure that the teachers' knowledge is kept up to date. She regularly reviews the ways in which RE is taught and monitors the assessments teachers make. As a result, the teachers are aware of current good practice in teaching RE and lessons are creative and interesting. Teachers recognise the importance of the contribution RE makes to the Christian distinctiveness of the school and Christian values are effectively developed and reinforced within lessons. A report on the ways in which RE is taught, and the children's progress and attainment in RE, is shared regularly with senior leaders and governors.

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

The school's aim of being, 'A centre of vibrancy and excitement where quality learning takes place, emphasising a secure Christian ethos in everything we do', is understood and valued by all associated with the school. Children recognise that their school is distinctively Christian and an exciting place to be. They understand that the school's Christian ethos of care and respect is important across all areas of school life. Parents recognise that the school makes good provision for the wellbeing of their children. They are appreciative the support given to enable them to succeed. Consequently standards of achievement are good. Regular reports are shared with governors about the Christian character of the school, RE and collective worship, ensuring that they meet statutory requirements. The school correctly identifies that processes for the strategic monitoring and evaluation of the school as a church school are not yet in place. Consequently, the school is not always clear about its strengths as a church school or areas that would benefit from future development. Development points from the last inspection have however been largely addressed. The school has good and effective links with local church schools and accesses diocesan support when appropriate. However, the school does not always take advantage of diocesan conferences for senior and subject leaders. This sometimes means that the school is unaware of new resources or of the importance of new developments. It also has impact on the ways in which the school prepares staff for future positions of responsibility. Links with St James' Church in Haslingden are strong. The school ensures that, despite the distance involved, children regularly visit the church for special services or to support their learning in RE. The monthly Friday evening service, arranged specifically for school families, is well attended by children and staff. Pupil numbers in the school are rising and are a positive sign of the growing confidence of the community in the school.