

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St John of Jerusalem Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Kingshold Road
London
E9 7JF

Diocese: London

Local authority: Hackney
Dates of inspection: 9th May 2012
Date of last inspection: November 2006
School's unique reference number: 100270
Headteacher: Mrs Asarena Simon
Inspector's name and number: Gladys Vendy (NS 299)

Context

Founded over one hundred years ago, St John of Jerusalem is an attractive, well cared for and oversubscribed one form entry school with a nursery class. The school is situated in the parish of South Hackney in an area of significant deprivation, although the demography is changing. It has very close links with the nearby church of St John of Jerusalem. The present building was erected over fifty years ago and has recently been updated, adapted and modernised. 75% of pupils are of minority ethnic backgrounds, the three main groups being Black African, Black Caribbean and White. An above average number of pupils is eligible for free school meals. A quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. Pupil mobility is low. Children enter the school with skill levels below those expected for their age. They make very good progress and leave in Year Six with attainment above the national average in English and Mathematics. A significant number of pupils are from practising Christian families.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St John of Jerusalem School as a Church of England school are outstanding

The close links between the school and the church effectively and distinctively secure the Christian ethos of inclusiveness. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced by the shared Christian vision.

Established strengths

- Strong and committed leadership which together with the mutually supportive links with the church nurtures and sustains the Christian ethos of the school resulting in excellent relationships between adults and children.
- The school has a shared set of Christian values which promotes inclusiveness and contributes effectively to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the school community.
- Very good teaching in religious education and imaginative collective worship are underpinned by clear policies and opportunities for reflection that develop the pupils' spiritual and moral growth.

Focus for development

- Consistency of class based worship through an agreed framework

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

The vision statement which 'puts the child at the heart of the school within a Christian community' has recently been reviewed and strengthened to affirm the Christian ethos. Great emphasis is placed on being an inclusive school that serves the local community and celebrates the diversity of pupils' backgrounds. Christian values of respect, care and thoughtfulness towards each other are demonstrated through the excellent relationships between all groups such as the love shown towards those with severe physical and learning disabilities. A strong reward system and a behaviour policy, which is fairly implemented, encourage children to be very well behaved. Conflict resolution, founded on Christian principles and understanding of Jesus' teaching about forgiveness and reconciliation, shapes children's response to difficult situations. The school considers the needs of the whole child as set out in the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development policy. 'Christian faith and values inform the whole life of the school and each child is provided with a wide range of opportunities to develop in mind, body and spirit' - these include breakfast club and many extra curricular clubs. Lesson plans are set within a framework of holistic learning. The inclusion manager, school counsellors and an art therapist make very good provision for all groups through intervention strategies and extended activities. The curriculum is dynamic and integrated and includes core learning values such as using the imagination. There is a good exposure to creative learning. There are many visible signs that this is a church school with high quality RE displays around the school, classrooms and in the foyer that impact upon the whole community. Each classroom has an interactive area for reflection which children say they use to be calm. Pupils exercise leadership and responsibility through the school council, buddy schemes and playground friends. Children are keen on caring for the environment and robustly campaign staff about an eco friendly approach. Parents feel they are welcomed into the school and one parent said 'this is a brilliant school – people really care'. Volunteers and business partners contribute to community cohesion which is outstanding. Partnership with the church is close and mutually supportive sharing information about activities and charitable projects. Children have also linked with those in a rural school in England.

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

The comprehensive collective worship policy, which includes a description of the Christian values of the school, provides clear guidance for worship which is central to the daily life of the school. Among its aims it plans to 'give pupils experience of broadly Christian worship within an Anglican framework'. Themes for worship are planned by the Head Teacher and the Rector and follow the church calendar year. All acts of worship are exceptionally well recorded and constantly evaluated and reviewed. Governors regularly report to the Governing Body about the effectiveness of worship and Religious Education. Worship is non sacramental but follows a liturgical format and children know prayers and join in responses. Some older children are prepared for confirmation. The weekly pattern of worship includes whole school, key stage and classroom worship. Children were able to describe worship in their classrooms which showed some inconsistencies in the delivery. The act of worship observed focussed on the theme of friendship. Children came in quietly to music and sang enthusiastically. Candles and a cross are placed on the altar which is covered by a cloth that reflects the colour of the church season. Paired talking encouraged all children to join in. Children were able to describe what a friend is and one child said 'you can turn to your friends for advice but online friends don't qualify'. Children acted out the story of David and Jonathan describing Jonathan as a 'strong friend' showing they understood the importance of loyalty. Children write their own prayers which are taken from the prayer box each week and used in worship. Silence and music are used for periods of reflection which are an important feature of worship. One child described prayer as 'just me and God talking'. Parents attend and enjoy worship in both church and school. Nursery children join the whole school for special services but learn to pray in their own room and have their own prayer area.

The effectiveness of Religious Education is outstanding

Religious Education is given a high profile. Standards of attainment are above average and are often higher than those achieved in other subjects. RE is properly timetabled, carefully budgeted, appropriately resourced and very well led. An RE week is held each year with a specific focus such as visits to other faiths places of worship. The school uses the Diocesan scheme of work, supported by the Value for Life scheme. Formative assessment, including learning from and learning about religion, correlates with assessment in other subjects and there is good evidence of both peer and self assessment. Work is regularly scrutinised, lessons observed within the school's planned cycle and feedback given to staff. Differentiation, an issue in the previous denominational inspection has been addressed. RE is considered as a subject in which children of all abilities can achieve. Learning is always placed within the context of previous work and pupils show very good prior knowledge and understanding. A candle was often lit at the start of a lesson as a reminder that this was a special time. Very good cross curricular links were observed with science, mathematics and literacy as in a lesson linking Pentecost and the Trinity when the Holy Spirit was described as 'my map to joyfulness' and God as 'master of creation'. Different genres were used for writing – poems, letters, shopping lists and recipes. ICT proved an effective visual stimulus in almost all lessons. Children were articulate and familiar with the use of many religious terms. A Godly Play session using simple resources encouraged young children to reflect about the creation and afterwards to work independently and together to make a collage. Children showed they could think deeply about the big questions as when a child responded that the meaning of life was to improve on what God has given us. In all lessons teachers were confident and enthusiastic and set a good pace for learning to which children responded keenly and empathetically. There was a quiet excitement about RE lessons and children confidently expressed their enjoyment, one older child describing the teaching as 'high quality'. The quality of learning and teaching is very good.

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

The Head Teacher has a strong and clear vision for the school which she confidently shares and articulates with all in the community. She is very well supported by the Deputy Head Teacher and the Rector. Christian values are embedded throughout the school day and in all interactions and relationships. Interviews for teachers reflect the school vision through appropriate questioning. This year has seen four teachers begin their career at St John's and because of careful mentoring, nurturing and encouragement staff morale is high. Everyone is committed to raising the effectiveness and quality of teaching and promoting the Christian values of the school. The spiritual development of staff is met by providing opportunities for reflection on retreat away from the school. The Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher have led by example covering for the RE co-ordinator who is absent on long term leave. The RE action plan has rightly identified areas for development. The high expectations for collective worship and the teaching of RE are supported through a professional approach, good induction procedures and in-service training. The Rector's regular presence in the school means that not only is he well known but the school's relationship with the church is a distinctive and important feature. Governors are linked with classes as well as subjects and build very good relationships with staff and pupils. The Governing Body upholds and maintains the Christian integrity of the school. Delegation is a key feature of leadership involving children and all staff members. Pupils and parents views are taken into account through regular surveys and acted upon when appropriate. The Parents', Teachers' and Friends' Association generously organises and supports fund raising events. Communication with parents is very good. The school is well supported by the diocese and the local authority. The provision for collective worship, the teaching of RE and the strong leadership and management of the school impact strongly upon the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school as a church school. The school has very good capacity to develop even further.