



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St John the Baptist Voluntary Aided Primary School

High Street
Penistone
S36 8BS

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: Sheffield

Local authority: Barnsley

Dates of inspection: 19th March 2015

Date of last inspection: July 2009

School's unique reference number: 106635

Headteacher: Antoinette Drinkhill

Inspector's name and number: Alastair Wood 575

School context

St John's is a much larger than average primary school on two sites situated across a playing field. There are 429 pupils. Key Stage 1 and the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught on one site while the KS2 pupils are taught on the other. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is much lower than similar schools nationally and the percentage of pupils with special educational needs is about the same as similar schools. The headteacher has been in post for twenty years.

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

- The headteacher's vision and outstanding leadership are based on Christian values that are shared by the whole community
- The close links between the school and the clergy enhance its distinctiveness
- The school's values impact on every aspect of its work and exemplify its Christian character

Areas to improve

- Formalise an effective system for governor monitoring of RE and collective worship
- Ensure pupils are given more opportunities to explore Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith

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

St John's is a school at the heart of the community and is prized by all for its distinctly Christian character. The school's five key values of love, kindness, honesty, forgiveness and faithfulness permeate all areas of daily life and as a result, pupils know and understand the importance of belonging to a special community. In each classroom displays ask: 'What would Jesus say?' emphasising the importance of pupils' spiritual development in everyday life. Relationships throughout the school are very strong and demonstrate the core values in action, for example, when tensions occur from time to time, these are openly discussed in an atmosphere where everyone understands the importance of honesty and forgiveness, as a result, instances of bullying or poor behaviour are few. Attendance at school is above the national average and pupils say they enjoy coming to school because they do lots of fun things and learn about God and worship. They also say they feel special and valued because there is always a teacher checking that they are safe. Pupils describe the school as being a part of their family. The school's distinctive character ensures that all are included and standards of learning are high. This is demonstrated through pupils' good progress from their different starting points and the reducing gap between disadvantaged pupils and others. Pupils' behaviour towards each other and around the school reflects the values and the staff model exemplary behaviour and have high expectations and aspirations for the pupils ensuring there is a calm atmosphere throughout the school. The classroom displays are colourful, questioning and stimulating enabling pupils to make connections between the different areas of the curriculum. There are Christian symbols throughout the school and the entrance hall has a prayer net where pupils and parents may add beads representing thoughts and prayers for others, helping to deepen pupils' spirituality. The themes taught in Religious Education (RE) are integrated with the wider curriculum enabling the pupils to explore the importance of God in their daily lives. Pupils enjoy RE and the way the teachers make links to art, dance and music, they like the challenges of debating different points of view. In a Year 5 RE lesson the teacher skilfully led vibrant discussions from pictures painted by a variety of artists about worship which captured the pupils' imaginations and provoked exciting discussions. There is clear respect for diverse communities and the pupils understand how others are less fortunate, for example, a young girl from Bangkok visited the school to talk about her country and the pupils expressed their appreciation of the differences between cultures and how education was valued differently in other countries. The clergy from St John's Church are regular visitors and play an important part in the life of the school supporting in many different ways. Parents speak highly of the school and its distinctively Christian character they say they appreciate the way the school understands individual pupils' needs, tailors the teaching to them and how their children are feel special and valued. All the areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been addressed.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is central to the school's daily life and the pupils' worship committee plays a major role in supporting and developing it throughout the school. They have an established three steps process: opening the Bible, placing the cross and lighting the candle with three wicks to represent the Holy Trinity, helping pupils to develop their leadership skills and responsibilities. Themes for collective worship are carefully planned and shared with the clergy and it is delivered in imaginative and inspirational ways linked to the school's Christian values and stimulating the pupils' understanding of the Holy Trinity and God. Prayer and reflection are an integral part of worship and the pupils are encouraged to relate the Bible stories to their own lives. The vicar leads a weekly worship in school and the pupils are an active part of the service. The Bible stories are carefully planned and made relevant for all the pupils' understanding enabling them to contribute and engage with the learning. Singing is of high quality, enthusiastic and clearly worship is a highlight of the school day. Pupils' evaluations of worship emphasise their understanding of Jesus and the Holy Trinity. They know the Lord's

Prayer and some responses. Prayer and reflection form regular parts of the day enabling pupils to develop their spirituality, thoughtfulness and care towards others. The school has close links with the parish church and makes visits to celebrate the major festivals and use the artefacts as teaching resources, this helps the pupils to understand the distinctive features of the Anglican tradition. The congregation and wider community are kept informed of the school's achievements through the parish magazine, the half-termly Herald newsletter and links between the school's website and St John's. Currently there is informal governor monitoring of collective worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE is an important subject in St John's and given a high profile across the school, it is an integral part of the curriculum and pupils' progress is at least in line with progress in the other subjects. The leadership of RE is robust and the subject leader ensures staff are well-supported, as a result, lessons are interesting and stimulating and pupils make good progress. In a Year 2 lesson the pupils were talking about God and the teacher deepened the pupils' understanding with powerful questioning. She had prepared a special box of Christian artefacts and symbols which inspired the pupils to make links with the Bible. An impressively creative lesson in the Early Years Foundation Stage focused on the parable of the sower and the young pupils readily made links to the ways people do not listen through planting beads in stones and soil. Teachers' lesson planning is clear, as are the expected pupils' learning outcomes, the planning focuses on individual pupils and ensures that all can succeed. The governors monitor RE but feedback to the governing body as a whole is an informal process. The subject leader attends regular training and shares developments with staff. She monitors pupils' progress through observations, pupils' work and tracking data resulting in accurate assessments of pupils' progress in RE. Through the importance the school places on its five key values, there is a clear impact on the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development: as a result, they understand right from wrong. The school balances the teaching of Christianity with other world faiths as two-thirds to one third and the school's development plan targets spending on RE demonstrating the importance it gives to the subject. The school has begun to develop pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith and while they understand and respect different beliefs the opportunities to explore this area are limited.

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

The headteacher leads the school through her clarity of vision and robust commitment to the pupils based on the distinctly Christian values. Her clear articulation of the values ensures understanding by the whole community which in turn impacts on every aspect of pupils' lives through the relentless pursuit of excellence. She leads by example and has high expectations of her staff, resulting in a truly team-spirited school where pupils' experience outstanding relationships at all levels. Governors, staff and parents share the values that form St John's unique Christian character making it a genuinely community-centred school. Governor support is strong, independent and strategic. They offer robust challenge and support to the school knowing that all are doing their best for the pupils. As a result, strategic planning from accurate self-assessments has enabled the school to go from strength to strength. The foundation governors are closely involved with school life, have specific areas of responsibility and are able to give effective feedback on pupils' achievements to the full governing body. Staff and governor training is planned, focused on succession planning and ensures the pupils benefit from all aspects of any developments. Parents know they are listened to and their views are important to the school, as a result they feel valued. They enjoy the Christian ethos of the school and its approach to God and beliefs, encouraging all to have a faith in order to make choices. The close links with the church and the clergy cement the community, as one parent described the school: 'It's through Christian belief that the children believe in who they are.'