



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 Voluntary Controlled Primary School

St John's Way,  
Ragworth,  
Stockton-on Tees  
TS190FB

**Previous SIAMS grade:** Good

**Current inspection grade:** Outstanding

**Diocese:** Newcastle and Durham

**Local authority:** Stockton-onTees

**Dates of inspection:** June 18<sup>th</sup> 2015

**Date of last inspection:** 12<sup>th</sup> July 2010

**School's unique reference number:** 111668

**Headteacher:** Mrs Kerry Coe

**Inspector's name and number:** Mike Falcus (694)

#### School context

This medium-sized primary school serves the Ragworth area of Stockton-on-Tees. The deprivation factor for the area is significantly higher than the national average. Nearly all pupils are of white British heritage. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is much higher than average. Two thirds of pupils are entitled to receive free school meals. The school has a local authority funded infants assessment and support class in recognition of its strength in supporting SEN. The school holds many awards including Governor Mark and the Gold Inclusion Quality Mark.

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

- The outstanding pastoral care and support afforded to its children and community which lives out the Christian message to 'love your neighbour as yourself.'
- The vision, commitment and passion of the head teacher in promoting Christian values across the school.
- The outstandingly effective partnership with St John's church, clergy and parish community which significantly contributes to collective worship and the spirituality of the school community.
- The hugely positive relationships between all stakeholders, led by the example of the head teacher and founded on the premise of love – 'everyone different, everyone loved.'

#### Areas to improve

- Extend the school development planning process to incorporate strategic plans for RE, collective worship and Christian distinctiveness.
- Involve governors and children more in formally evaluating the effectiveness of RE and worship.

- Explore opportunities for partnerships with local faith groups to increase pupils' understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity.

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

St John the Baptist is a fully inclusive school which lives out its Christian message, "God at the centre of what we do." Although not every stakeholder was able to recall the exact words from its Vision Statement 'everyone different, everyone loved', all stakeholders clearly identified the central tenet as love. Academic achievement and progress are good. Disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs succeed equally as well as their peers. Some stakeholders could identify the impact of Christian values on outcomes for pupils, 'children, often from chaotic backgrounds, experience a calm, peaceful place. As they adapt to that culture there's a leap in attainment' (parent governor). Love in action is illustrated by the school's astonishing level of pastoral care and support for vulnerable pupils and their families. For example, the recently established family fund has provided food parcels and household items for a family in desperate need. A member of social services wrote "in 25 years doing the job I've never seen such wonderful support for a family." This exceptional support and hugely rich curriculum contribute to pupils' outstanding social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. SMSC folders provide photographic evidence of the myriad of opportunities afforded to pupils including in Religious Education and worship. Christian values help shape the exceptionally positive relationships across the school. Children behave extremely well and are able to relate this to biblical values. Referencing the story of the Good Samaritan, one said 'love helps with your friendships, otherwise you'd be awful to them.' Relationships between adults provide an excellent role model for children. One support worker said 'there's no distinction between us, we're all equally valued.' The school acknowledges that it is predominantly mono-cultural. It addresses this through units in RE about other religions and an annual multi-faith week. However, the school should explore with local faith groups opportunities to increase still further children's understanding of diverse communities. Given that the school is voluntary controlled, RE enjoys high status. There is robust planning, thorough assessments and evidence from books of stimulating lessons in RE which contribute to children's SMSC development. The co-ordinator conducts some evaluations of effectiveness e.g. work scrutiny, but there are no formal observations of lessons at this time. Pupils overwhelmingly report that they enjoy RE and parents appreciate its impact, 'they enjoy RE and bring home stories from the bible.'

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Collective worship is central to the life of the school and valued by all its stakeholders. One parent commented 'I like Friday celebrations and those in church best.' It is distinctively Christian, well planned by the head teacher and clergy using a variety of resources based around teaching Christian values. Children are highly engaged and motivated by collective worship. All pupils said they 'liked it very much,' particularly the songs, awards, stories and acting. They reported being involved in assisting, helping younger pupils, presenting prayers and leading in church and with the Eucharist. A unique feature of worship in St John the Baptist is the attendance of key stage two pupils at the weekly service in St John's Church. Through this valuable link with the church and regular Eucharistic services pupils are given a thorough understanding of Anglican practice. St John the Baptist is a prayerful community. There are plentiful opportunities for prayer and reflection in hall, class, church and in the school grounds. One child described how the forest area has places to 'sit and think,' adding 'you can pray anywhere.' A staff member said the spirituality evident in collective worship had brought her 'closer to God.' Children are able to relate messages from worship to their everyday lives. For example, an incident of a missing banana at break time on the day of inspection was resolved using the creation story about 'forbidden fruit' used earlier in collective worship. Pupils have a clear understanding of the Christian faith including the Holy Trinity. When asked about worship

in the school, a parent referred to the lighting of a candle and her small daughter added 'God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.' A great strength of worship in the school is the involvement of so many stakeholders. It is led by staff, SLT, clergy, members of the church and children. It is very well planned by the head teacher and vicar of St John's. Staff in particular, comment on the value of this in preparation for their class worship. The head teacher, staff and clergy are involved in evaluating the effectiveness of collective worship and children's opinions are sought through 'pupil voice' arrangements. However, children remarked that they would like to be asked more often about their views on worship.

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

The inspired leadership and deep personal conviction of the head teacher ensures that the vision of St John the Baptist is distinctively Christian. The head teacher is passionate about her community. She states 'I am called to come and serve.' She is supported by a dedicated, active governing body who balance 'standards' with 'wellbeing' in their challenge to the leadership to account for themselves as a church school. One governor explained, 'spirituality is as important as academic progress.' All stakeholders were involved in drawing up the original Mission Statement and reviewing it in autumn 2014. The National Society toolkit, completed mainly by the SMT but reviewed by governors, is the chief mechanism by which the school evaluates itself as a church school. Governors also raise questions at meetings, review RE and Worship policies and conduct 'learning walks' which often include consideration of the 'Christian environment.' However, the school has no formal, written plans (e.g. in the SDP) for evaluating its RE, worship and 'Christian distinctiveness.' The school is extremely well managed, (as illustrated by the Governor Mark award) and governors are generally astute at holding the leadership to account. The leadership has effectively addressed the issues from the last inspection and ensured that the arrangements for RE and worship meet statutory requirements. Both RE and worship are very well led and staff and clergy are involved in evaluating its effectiveness e.g. through learning walks and work scrutiny. Informal arrangements are in place for governors to monitor and evaluate worship e.g. by attending or leading. However, there are no formal mechanisms for them to evaluate the effectiveness of RE and worship. The leadership are aware of the issue of preparing for the future leadership in church schools. Turnover of staff in St John's is particularly low. Substantial resources have been invested in ongoing training, support and induction. For example, one of the SLT has recently completed the Aspiring Deputy Headship course. The head teacher is also an active member of the Stockton church school leaders' group e.g. organising joint worship opportunities. However, there has been no specific church leadership professional development for staff (which the school has identified as a development point). The school's partnership with parents is exceptionally strong as shown by innovative measures such as the 'Parent Ambassadors.' It also enjoys successful links with the local 6<sup>th</sup> Form College, other church schools and the community generally. However, it is the almost symbiotic relationship between St John's parish and the school which is truly outstanding. It is illustrated by the weekly attendance of junior pupils at St John's church, the regular appearance and work of clergy and church members in school and the much valued half-termly Eucharist celebration. The most recent initiative is a project that is seeking to make the school the 'centre of ministry' for the Ragworth area.

SIAMS report June 18<sup>th</sup> 2015. St John the Baptist, Stockton. TSI90FB