

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St John's Crossens Church of England Primary School

Rufford Road, Crossens, Southport, PR9 8JH

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Liverpool
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Sefton
Date of inspection	4 May 2017
Date of last inspection	July 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 104894
Headteacher	Philip Thomson
Inspector's name and number	Mike Graham 286

School context

St. John's is a below average sized primary school situated on the northern edge of Southport. Most children are of White British background with a growing number of children from other cultures. The proportion of children entitled to the 'pupil premium', extra funding for the disadvantaged, is above the national average. The school serves the local village and a large area of social housing which leads to mobility being above the national average. The headteacher and most of the teaching staff have been appointed since the last inspection.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St John's Crossens as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The clear Christian vision of the headteacher can be summarised as JOY; Jesus first, others second, yourself last. This sets the tone for all of the school's caring work with the children, some of whom make up the JOY team to lead on Christian values and worship. All staff and governors follow this lead with conviction.
- Christian values permeate and drive all aspects of school life and are lived out in the outstanding relationships between all members of the school. Mutual respect and care ensure that children are secure and happy in their learning. As a result, they make good to outstanding progress.
- Excellent worship and religious education (RE) lead to impressive maturity in the children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) development.

Areas to improve

- Devise a new child-friendly mission statement to reinforce and state boldly the Christian vision that is the beating heart of the school.
- Ensure that the Christian values on which the school's ethos is based are made explicit in all areas of the school's work, including policy documents, to provide clarity for all members of the school community.

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

Christian values of respect, thankfulness, compassion, truthfulness, trust and responsibility are the foundations of all the school's work. All of the school family joined in a re-launch of the Christian values and all therefore have ownership of them. The loving Christian care lavished on every pupil brings security and a sense of joy in learning. A governor commented, 'Every child is special and valued, and is given wonderful care.' The headteacher is rightly proud of the fact that, in his own words, he 'takes time to be with the children' and knows that 'relationships are the key'. There is no fear of failure or of making mistakes, so that the pupils are able to give of their best. The academic progress achieved, as recognised by Ofsted last March, is good to outstanding. The school's own record-keeping data confirms this, and indeed there have been steady improvements in results over the last 5 years. Work with vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils is outstanding, with the learning mentor playing a key role in support and encouragement of pupils and families. This results in outstanding progress for this group of pupils and in improved attendance levels, which are now reaching national expectations. Outstanding Christian care and love make these positive outcomes possible.

The pupils' social and moral development is very impressive. They have a clear sense of right and wrong, and show respect and good manners to everyone. They do not just know about the Christian values that are demonstrated by the staff, they live them. Their behaviour is exemplary. The pupils' spiritual and cultural development is also excellent. A key contribution is made by RE. The subject leader is skilful, sensitive and full of enthusiasm for her subject. This leads to outstanding teaching throughout the school. The pupils' knowledge of Christianity and the impact this has on the Christian character of the school is highly significant. Their understanding is deepened as they explore Christian themes. The events of the first Easter were explored through a topic entitled 'Mission Impossible'. Year 6 pupils discussed the role played by Jesus who, as one said, 'could have stopped the crucifixion', but went through the ordeal 'for us'.

They also study other world faiths to good effect. They are open and accepting of those from different faiths. Excellent sharing by a Hindu mother and her Year 6 son about a naming ceremony had everyone in the classroom deeply involved. The local Imam visits school and welcomes pupils to the mosque. These experiences give first hand examples of generosity and common values between faiths. The pupils are quite clear about the value of this, one saying that knowing about other people's lives 'gives a different perspective and informs your choices'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship at St John's is sincere and relevant, and makes a significant difference to the lives of everyone in the school family. The variety of leaders, including pupils, staff and clergy, and the informal evaluation ensure that worship engages everyone and is constantly evolving and improving. The clergy and lay reader provide appropriate experiences of Anglican traditions in worship. They bring theological insights to the pupils and staff. Sensitive teaching in RE and worship, and confirmation classes for those who wish to take part in them, make the half-termly child-friendly Eucharist services powerful and effective. Many pupils thereby reach a deep level of Christian maturity. The recently formed JOY team lead worship and train others to do so. The spiritual and social maturity they demonstrate is exceptional.

Bible readings, drama, prayer and excellent singing, often with actions to emphasise the meaning of the song or hymn, are all part of a rich tapestry of spiritual inspiration. The pupils and adults present are captivated, thus gaining great insights into the Christian faith and values. The pupils have a good understanding of God as Father and Creator and of Jesus as Son and Saviour. They are less sure about the Holy Spirit but some have a clear grasp of key elements. One Year 6 girl commented, 'The Holy Spirit watches over us, just like He watched over Jesus.' The older pupils are certainly aware that the disciples were empowered at Pentecost

Prayer is seen and understood as a natural part of a life of faith. The pupils accept quite naturally that 'we just say things to God in our heads. God knows!' as a Year 6 boy put it. The pupils also welcome the prayer corners in each classroom where they are able to reflect on issues and write or say their own prayers. Prayer features frequently throughout the school day, not just in worship. As a result the pupils' spiritual awareness and understanding are enhanced.

Parents and carers join with the school and the church community at key points in the church calendar to worship in church together. The pupils play important roles in leading such services at Harvest, Christmas and Easter. These occasions undoubtedly play their part in maintaining and strengthening the bonds between the communities.

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

The headteacher leads the school with a clear Christian vision. His own faith shines through all his work and relationships in school, with the focus always on the well-being of the children. The leadership team, staff and governors follow and support this joyful lead with immense commitment. The Christian love and support given to

every child releases their full potential, often from starting points below national averages. JOY, which summarises the school's vision and inspires the children so effectively, also sums up the character of the school. It is indeed a place that is full of joy. The source of this is clearly the example of Jesus, whose teaching and life inspires and guides the school.

The vision is clear to almost all members of the school community, and everyone admires the caring and wholehearted work of the staff team. However, the mission statement does not do justice to the school's Christ-centred approach, and policy documents do not fully reflect it either. The whole community benefits from the fact that the Christian values are not just present in writing or on displays. As one governor said, 'All members of the school family live the values.' The lay reader and other foundation governors are closely involved in school, helping with clubs and in classes. Their presence reinforces the strong links with the church and governors. They know the pupils well and add to the already loving and caring ethos. Their enthusiasm in supporting the pupils in their work and in their awareness of Christianity and faith in general is infectious. One said, 'The children understand what faith is about.' The chair of governors spoke of faith as 'the intangible umbrella' under which all live and work together.

The impact made by the school's Christian vision is secured by detailed, honest and strategic planning. Governors are keen to challenge when appropriate as well as bringing well-deserved encouragement to the staff team. Issues raised by the previous report have been tackled thoroughly and successfully. Future leadership in church schools is promoted through excellent teamwork, good delegation and high quality in-service training.

Partnerships and relationships with other local schools, St John's church, the diocese and the community at large are strong and mutually beneficial. Examples include the choir's gift of singing to a local luncheon club and outside local shops, and regular visits to two care homes by Year 5 pupils. Gifts made by them bring joy to the residents and the pupils are blessed too. Giving to local and international charities reinforces the pupils' understanding of Christian compassion through helping others. The pupils take a strong lead in building positive friendships through the buddy system whereby those in Year 6 befriend and support the Reception pupils. Parents and carers are immensely proud of their school, and appreciate the significant improvements made in recent years to an already successful school. Comments included, 'It's an amazing school with great teachers' and 'RE lessons on different faiths encourage the children to embrace differences'.

The vicar from St Luke's, who leads worship in school once a week, commented, 'There is sincerity and reality in the spiritual life of the school, leading to a distinctive Christian witness.' The joy shining out of all members of the school family certainly supports his view.

SIAMS report May 2017, St John's CofE VC Primary School, Crossens, Southport, Merseyside, PR9 8JH