

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Portland Road  
Kingston Upon Thames  
KT1 2SG

#### **Diocese: Southwark**

Local authority: Kingston Upon Thames  
School's Unique reference number: 102589  
Dates of inspection: 27 and 28 April 2009  
Date of last inspection: September 2006  
Headteacher: Janet Tuck  
Inspector: : Christine Smyth (NSI 459)

### **School context**

St John's is an oversubscribed, one form entry voluntary aided school in Kingston, serving 237 children from three to eleven years. The majority of children come from the local community which is generally favourable in its socio-economic character. About half the learners are from practising Christian families. Other faith groups are also represented. The Headteacher joined the school in October 2008 and took over the post permanently from April 2009.

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

St John's is an outstanding **church** school with a powerful sense of community. Staff, governors and parents articulate their strong commitment to its Christian foundation. They live out the Christian Gospel by ensuring that every member of the school community is made to feel special and valued. The Christian values and attitudes which are interwoven into the fabric of school life enable all children to flourish as caring, confident, supportive individuals.

### **Established strengths**

- the Christian vision and leadership of the headteacher, staff and governors, resulting in the effective leadership and management of this school as a Church school.
- the central role that worship plays in the life of the school community which enriches the lives of children and adults alike.
- the caring, supportive yet challenging learning environment, underpinned by Christian values and teaching, which is evident in the quality of relationships, behaviour, enthusiasm and motivation of the whole school community

### **Focus for development**

To raise further the standards in Religious Education (RE) through the development of learners' self assessment and the tracking of individual pupil's progress.

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

Through its distinctive Christian character, the school as a whole community makes outstanding provision in meeting the needs of all learners. Children enjoy school; they feel special and truly valued. They were eager to say that everyone was kind and friendly; that the school is special

because they welcome different cultures and faiths. One year 6 pupil said that, "people care; everyone is treated equally; like a family". Parents emphasised the strength and quality of relationships, speaking of teamwork and of everyone being "wonderfully warm and encouraging". A School Councillor explained how the Headteacher listens and responds to requests, citing recent improvements such as improved drinking fountains and a renewed scramble net. Learners enjoy their work; they co-operate and collaborate fully with each other and with adults in the school. Their self-esteem is high and they demonstrate self-confidence and considerable independence which enables them to optimise learning opportunities. Learners at St John's achieve well; they support each other with older children actively encouraging and engaging with their younger peers. All this is a reflection of the school's Christian commitment to each individual in its aims. The Christian values of the school enrich the spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of all pupils. They contribute significantly to community cohesion; children demonstrate a strong sense of right and wrong, and speak of honesty, sharing and respect. Learners also develop a very good understanding of needs in the wider community. They show active support for those less fortunate than themselves and have very positive interpersonal relationships. All that goes on in and beyond the school is seen as part of the school's Christian Mission. The Christian dimension *is*, in the words of the incumbent, "the living and breathing of the place". All are encouraged to be actively engaged. For example, children contribute to the spiritual impact of the environment by adding prayers to the display in the Reflective Area. Both children and parents are influenced by the Christian ethos and worship; parents enjoyed joining the children for services in school and in church. A pupil summarised what is special about being a pupil at St John's quite simply by stating that, "It's a Christian school; Jesus' stories in the Gospels help us by showing us how to live our lives".

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

Collective worship is central to the life of the school. It is varied in style and there is a strong emphasis on the inclusion of all children and adults. During the acts of worship observed, pupils entered quietly to music, and were interested and involved. On each occasion there was a strong visual focus as well as lively moments and yet a thoughtful, spiritual atmosphere. The musical involvement of pupils, staff, and a highly animated puppet enabled everyone to reflect on how we can recognise and utilise our talents and those of others to good effect. Children played and sang enthusiastically, were keen to answer questions, contribute ideas and participate, demonstrating mature, thoughtful attitudes. Strong leadership by the headteacher and co-ordinator, together with clergy, ensure that worship has a significant impact on the school community. Guidance and planning ensures that opportunities are provided for varied, quality experiences including whole school corporate worship in school, led by different staff or classes as well as festival or special occasion worship in St John's Church. A member of the clergy leads worship once a week. This enables pupils to experience different forms and styles of worship including an understanding of elements of the Anglican tradition. The Lord's Prayer is a regular feature and pupils enjoy singing it. Each class later reflects on the message of the act of worship and how it will impact on them. All of this has a positive impact on all who participate. Pupils and staff value the time for prayer and reflection as well as the opportunity to actively participate in school worship. One pupil spoke of an assembly on forgiveness which had really helped them all, "because it's really hard to forgive people properly". Children make good use of the prayer box in the reflection area, writing prayers for someone in their family or the wider world to be shared with the school. They expressed their enjoyment of worship and the songs they sung which, in their words, made them feel 'joyful' and 'refreshed'.

#### **The effectiveness of the Religious Education is good**

RE is good with some outstanding features. RE is seen as very important in the school and given high profile. Planning is innovative, creative and well organised with many opportunities for learners to participate through first hand experience. The headteacher works well with the local clergy and these links are used to enrich teaching and learning. Learners of all faiths or none display extremely positive attitudes to the subject. This subject, through its content and creative presentation contributes very well to learners' spiritual, moral social and cultural development. Pupils actively engage in their learning and their knowledge and understanding is good. A Year 2

pupil reflected that, 'praying is speaking to God ... and he knows that we mean it!'. The distinctive character of this Christian school is demonstrated through the very confident way in which learners speak, role play and write in RE lessons and through the commitment and extremely positive attitude of staff. The quality of teaching and learning is good enabling learners to develop a good understanding of Christianity and other major world religions. Children in the foundation stage were able to 'retell' the Creation story thoughtfully through pictures and their percussion playing. Learners acknowledged that RE lessons were challenging in the sense of making them think; a Year 6 pupil articulated the message of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as, 'No longer doubt within you, now faith has risen in you!'. Very good quality displays to illustrate Christianity and other world faiths are evident throughout the school. Children valued these displays. When reflecting on an Easter' display, a Year 3 girl said that Jesus had been frightened but got strength from God, confidently adding that 'God will always help us when we are afraid'. The focus for development in the last inspection was to develop the use of collected assessment information so that it has greater impact on learning in RE. Considerable work in this area has already had a positive impact on progress, which is good, and standards which are broadly in line with achievement in core subjects at Key Stage 1 but not as high at upper Key Stage 2. The Headteacher and RE subject leader have rightly identified the assessment of RE as an area for further development in order to achieve better progress across the three Key stages leading to even higher standards.

**The leadership and management of the school as a church school are outstanding.**

The headteacher's very strong Christian leadership, supported by the staff and governors, provides a powerful Christian vision which permeates the whole school and all that it does. The vision is shared and recognised by the whole school community. The governors are involved in actively promoting the school's Christian status. Links between the school, Southwark diocese, parish churches and the community are very strong and effective with pupils regularly visiting St John's Church, leading and taking part in services. The clergy provide an active and supportive presence, giving a clear Christian lead. They contribute enthusiastically to collective worship, RE and pastoral care. A sense of peace and harmony permeates St John's. The co-ordinator for Collective Worship and RE, together with the link governor, are capable, committed and reflective, giving staff clear guidance, support and training. All members of the school community are involved in the evaluation of the school and in development planning. Self evaluation indicates judgments which are honest and accurate. Governors and staff see RE and worship as central to the school. Their monitoring and evaluation of RE and worship are through governors' visits and reports. The school therefore has a very good capacity for ongoing improvement. Staff recruitment and induction processes which involve clergy and diocesan staff ensure that the school's Christian character and mission are clearly understood. Parents are supportive of, involved in and delighted with the school; acknowledging and appreciating the warmth and strength of relationships, the welcoming, accommodating and committed staff team and the sense of cohesion. They believe their children are happy and safe; that each person is known and cared for as an individual and that St John's as a church school plays a central and valued role in the community.