

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Kettleshulme St James' Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Macclesfield Road

Kettleshulme

HighPeak

SK23 7QU

Diocese: Chester

Local authority: Cheshire

Dates of inspection: 18/09/14

Date of last inspection: 23/10/08

School's unique reference number: 111439

Headteacher: Mr Paul Quirk

Inspector's name and number: Mr Mike Graham 286

School context

St James' is a much smaller than average school with just 3 classes. It serves the village of Kettleshulme and the surrounding area, attracting several children from the nearby town of Whaley Bridge. Almost all of the children are white British. The proportion of children who join the school at other than the start of reception year is well above average. The school is part of two local small school partnerships.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St James' as a Church of England school are good

- Good leadership from headteacher, governors and staff ensures that Christian values are understood, articulated and demonstrated in the excellent relationships between all members of the school community
- The Christian character and values of the school are lived out in the care and love given to all children and have a positive impact on their academic development and well-being
- Collective worship and religious education (RE) impact significantly on children's spiritual and moral development and encourage an understanding of prayer

Areas to improve

- Enable the children to have a good understanding of the school's distinctive Christian vision by involving the whole school family in devising a child-friendly mission statement
- Ensure that all staff and governors have an understanding of key elements of the school's ethos by involving them in a fresh review of the school's Christian distinctiveness
- Increase the children's involvement in leadership and evaluation of worship, so that they have greater ownership of this crucial aspect of school life

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

Distinctly Christian values are embedded in the life of the school. Children and adults understand these values, articulate them in worship and RE, and endeavour to live by

them every day. Children's attendance and behaviour are excellent. All members of the school community see this as a reflection of the Christian values of the school. Any fear of failure is banished by the confidence built by the loving and secure Christian environment. Children are expected and are able to give of their best, and therefore achieve well. The skill levels with which the children enter school vary considerably, but their progress is good or better, and attainment in maths and English at Y6 is above national averages. Relationships between all members of the school community are positive and caring. Parents speak of the welcome they and their children receive and the willingness of staff to give time to talk to both children and parents, one of whom said that there is '...obvious care for the children in every aspect of their lives'. Children have a wide range of experiences which develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and understanding. Although there are few immediate opportunities to mix with children of other cultures and faiths, good teaching in RE and worship gives insight. A Y6 child said 'RE helps us understand what they believe in and appreciate their beliefs'. Plans are in place, initiated by the vicar, to build a link with a school in Manchester with a mix of cultures and faiths. The high quality of teaching and learning in RE adds considerably to the Christian character of the school. The Christian values which are central to the whole curriculum feature strongly. A very impressive cross, with children's ceramic sculptures depicting Christian values and celebrating God's creation, is displayed in the entrance hall. Delightful quiet areas in the grounds, which are well used by the children, also demonstrate the emphasis placed on spiritual growth and understanding.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is highly valued by all members of the school family. The reverence shown by all is testimony to the high level of expectation and awe. The candle lit at the start of worship to represent Jesus' presence as 'the Light of the world' is recognised by the children as a special moment. One said, 'He's the Son of God, a guide to the world'. Teaching about the Trinity is thorough and appropriate. A Y6 boy said, during a discussion about Jesus' death, 'this was not the end because His Spirit would always be with them (the disciples) and us'. Worship is led by staff, vicar, lay reader and the Methodist minister, giving a good variety of styles and approach. The worship includes Bible readings, reflection and prayer with the whole school family, and often the wider community, fully involved. The community is brought together effectively, and those involved are taken deeper on their faith journey, by these worshipful celebrations. For instance, a dramatised modern version of the 'Prodigal Son', with several children as volunteer actors, made a deep impression. Laughter and wholehearted singing combine with awe and careful teaching based on and including Christian values to excellent effect. Children are involved in leading in music, with skilful playing of chime bars for example, and taking leading parts in key services, including the reading of prayers. Evaluation of worship by co-ordinator and staff is honest and regular, leading to regular refreshing of themes and planning. However, the children are not fully involved in leading and evaluation of the everyday worship. Thorough planning for collective worship is based on an agreed set of Christian values, including forgiveness and trust. It ensures that Bible stories are used regularly and that worship is sincere, relevant and varied. Christian festivals are celebrated by the whole school and church community together, usually in the local Methodist church in the village. God's presence is evident to the children and adults. A Y5 boy said tellingly, 'If you're alone, you're not alone, because God's there with you', and a parent said that the impact of worship in school is illustrated by the fact

that 'the children find Christianity enjoyable', and they 'worship at home!'

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Good teaching and learning in RE leads to good achievement over time. The older children understand the difference between learning about religion and learning from it, and have a mature appreciation of the impact of faith in the life of a believer. Well planned lessons are delivered with sensitivity and skill with excellent differentiation to ensure that children of all ages and abilities are able to access the learning opportunities. Sometimes however, the higher ability children are insufficiently challenged. Information technology is used creatively together with 'hot seating' role play, good teamwork with teaching assistants and interaction in group discussions. The children have a good knowledge and understanding of Christianity and the life and teachings of Jesus, and strive to follow His example of love and care for others. In a lesson on the parable of the sower, a discussion took place about 'God's message seeds' such as 'thoughtful, kind, good, forgiving and loving'. One boy said of another who had been helpful earlier in the day, 'You did loving!' Teaching about other world faiths is excellent and well resourced. The children are able to understand the similarities between faiths and their common values. One said, 'I love it that we all have an opinion on faith'. Leadership and management of the subject is good, with the headteacher co-ordinating with a team ethic so that evaluation, assessment and development involves the whole staff group. This helps to ensure variety in the approach to teaching and learning, increasing the impact on the spiritual development of the children.

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

The explicit Christian vision that is articulated so well by the leadership team, including governors, is demonstrated very effectively by the headteacher. His Christian care and love shine out in every aspect of his leadership. The leadership group, including the governors, the whole staff team and the children all aim to live by the Christian values which are crucial in establishing a Christ-centred ethos. This is demonstrated well by the loving care shown to all members of the school family, in school and beyond. The vicar, relatively new to the post, commented that 'the school is a beacon in the community'. Staff and governors have not undertaken a fresh review of the school's Christian distinctiveness, but plan to do so with the full support of the vicar. Parents are certainly supportive of the Christian ethos. One father, not a man of faith himself, said of the religious teaching at school that his son 'gets a good foundation, and can make his own mind up when he's ready'. The impact of the vision is secured through excellent evaluation and careful and strategic planning, which is detailed and honest, and is consistently aimed at continuous improvement. The mission statement however is too long and is not child-friendly. Good teamwork and in-service training prepares staff well for potential future leadership in church schools. There are strong partnerships between the school and the local community, including the churches, Anglican and Methodist, which are mutually beneficial. The vicar is determined to play her part in improving these links. Regular 'Messy church' celebrations already take place, encouraging children and parents to join in informal Christian teaching and worship. Parents and carers have numerous informal and formal ways of getting involved and are immensely proud of 'their' school. Comments included, 'There is obvious care for the children— every aspect of their lives', and 'The teachers are fantastic!'

