



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Deepcar St John's Church of England Junior School

St Margaret Avenue
Deepcar
Sheffield
S36 2TE

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: Sheffield

Local authority: Sheffield

Dates of inspection: 20 November 2014

Date of last inspection: 9 June 2010

School's unique reference number: 107117

Headteacher: Mrs B Cordle

Inspector's name and number: Malcolm Price (627)

School context

Deepcar St John's Junior School is a two form entry school with 192 pupils currently on roll. The majority of the children come from white British heritage backgrounds; a significant percentage are considered to have special educational needs. The headteacher was in post at the time of the previous inspection. St John's parish church is within walking distance of the school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Deepcar St John's Junior School as a Church of England school are good

- The Christian character of the school is fundamental to its activities and its daily life
- Collective worship supports this distinctive character
- Leadership and teamwork have created a school community marked by positive and caring relationships which enable good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development along with secure academic achievement
- School leaders have been effective in building partnerships with parents, church leaders and the wider community

Areas to improve

- Extend opportunities for all members of the school community, including children, to be involved in evaluating the impact of collective worship on the spiritual life of the school
- Establish a more regular teaching programme for RE in order to embed learning
- Explore ways to assess children's progress in RE, particularly in the application of their learning

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

The Christian character of this school is evident to any visitor; this character is illustrated in the corridors and hall by relevant displays, by the 'Fire for the Journey' banner, and by prayer corners in classrooms – these all reinforce the Christian ethos. However, it is the effect that this character has on children that makes the school distinctive. Children understand that they belong to a church school and that this impacts on their attitudes; they say that belonging to a church school 'makes us feel special and means we are a community' and that 'it makes a difference because we talk about God and Jesus'. They recognise the nurturing ethos of the school by expressing that 'this school changes people – for the better'. This understanding is demonstrated through their very good behaviour and the respect they show to each other. Older children identify that what they learn, for instance in Collective Worship, affects 'how we behave on the playground' and means that 'we are role models for the younger children'. Lessons are engaging and purposeful; learners express an enthusiasm for religious education (RE). Talk for learning is a key feature of all lessons and activities – this encourages children to express their views with confidence. This ethos gives scope for all children, including the more vulnerable, to make good progress both personally and academically. Prayer is a key feature of school life. Children recite the Lord's Prayer and the school prayer; they use the prayer corners for personal reflection and understand the idea of 'throwing a sorry prayer away' to show that 'God forgives us'. School staff and church members are also involved in prayer. Other members of the school community, including staff, parents and governors, articulate the same distinctive character. Parents are highly supportive of the school and its ethos; they value the regular visits to the local church for special occasions and festivals and the worship times in school that they are invited to.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is a key element of every school day and is valued by both children and adults. Children are respectful of it as a special time, listen well and remember what they have heard. They recite key Bible verses and are encouraged to participate through talk and through the acting out of stories – for example, those relating to the season of Advent. Children sing confidently and sensitively and are encouraged to reflect. They particularly enjoy the regular visits from the local vicar and other church members who lead 'Open the Book' worship – these visits help children remember stories such as those about Jonah, Tabitha and the Last Supper. A wide range of displays and artefacts in the hall encourages children to focus on key elements of Christian worship; these include a lit candle, a projected decorative cross and a Bible. Worship is well linked to the school's vision and values; children are able to relate what they learn in worship times to elements of the 'Sparkle and Shine' values - for instance, by explaining how people are 'independent and interdependent'. Children are regularly involved in planning and leading class worship and also have some input, through the school council, into the evaluation of collective worship. There is also some evidence of monitoring by the headteacher, partly through the gathering of parents' comments. However, not all members of the school community are involved in regular monitoring and evaluation to inform development planning.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious education (RE) is well supported by school leaders and by all teaching staff – children are keen to show their work and to talk about what they have learnt. They learn how to interpret parables from the Bible, such as the Widow's Gift and the Good Samaritan, and are encouraged to relate these parables to their own attitudes and behaviour – they understand that 'everyone is our neighbour' and how they have put this into practice 'by raising money for children in need'. They also learn about the ten commandments and their relevance to modern life. Teachers use a range of strategies to promote talk for learning and, as a result, children are thoughtful and reflective in their responses. All children have been presented with a Bible, which they use in lessons – children are proud of this and comment that 'having our own Bible makes us want to read it.' Children also learn about a range of other faiths and speak with some knowledge about the beliefs and practices of Jews and Sikhs. Standards of work in RE are, on the whole, in line with those in other subjects and there is clear progression across the school age range. However, RE is currently taught in blocks within the context of literacy sets and this reduces the scope for teachers to give feedback to children about aspects of spiritual understanding and development. School leaders have plans to alter this pattern in order to provide more regular RE lessons. Teachers need to ensure that a stronger focus is placed on monitoring and assessing how children learn from religion rather than only about religion and that learning objectives are based on progress indicators for RE.

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

The headteacher, senior staff and governors lead by example through their teamwork and commitment to promoting the distinctive Christian character and purpose of the school. All those in leadership express the Christian vision as fundamental to the school's educational mission. School leaders know the school well and are clear about its strengths, its achievements and its areas for development. Governors are involved in the strategic development of the school as a Christian community - for example, one foundation governor has a particular link with monitoring RE; they consider the distinctive character of the school when making leadership appointments. The partnerships between the school and local churches, particularly the parish church, are long-standing and embedded; school and church leaders are proactive in developing mutually beneficial links and feel that children are comfortable in their visits to church. Leaders encourage children to participate in local events and to support charitable causes, including the Samaritan's Purse Christmas boxes and the Cathedral Archer Project. They also promote children's understanding of the wider world, through support for a child in Rwanda, as well as children's understanding of those of other faiths and cultures, for example through their learning about Eid and Hanukkah. There is scope to create more opportunities for children to learn about the culture and faiths of other UK communities. Despite an emphasis on self-evaluation in many aspects of school improvement, the focus areas from the previous report have not yet been fully addressed, particularly in the development of RE. The school does, however, meet statutory requirements.

SIAMS report November 2014 St John's C of E Junior School, Deepcar S36 2TE