

St John's Church of England (Controlled) Primary School

Brook Lane
Walsall Wood
Walsall
WS9 9NA

Diocese: Lichfield

Local authority: Walsall
Date of inspection: 14 October 2011
Date of last inspection: 26 September 2007
School's unique reference number: 104228
Headteacher: Mr Robert Yeomans
Inspector's name and number: Dr David Gentle (209)

School context

St John's serves an area of mixed housing. The 370 pupils are mostly from White British backgrounds although a small number have Indian heritages. The majority of families do not have a strong faith background. The school has been awarded Arts Mark Gold.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St John's Church of England (Controlled) Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

St John's has a special quality derived from its Christian basis that pervades everything it does. Within the framework of the school's exceptionally strong values and relationships, pupils are able to make outstanding progress in all respects.

Established strengths

- The insightful vision of the headteacher, chair of governors and key leaders that is delivered through excellent teamwork by committed and dedicated staff.
- An exceptional learning environment that enables children to make excellent progress.
- Excellent preparation for citizenship.
- Very strong church links and worship that help to establish the school's distinctiveness.

Focus for development

- Review the mission statement engaging all of the school community.

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

All pupils thrive in an excellent learning environment that can be seen to derive from the school's strong Christian character. Visitors to the school are impressed by the calm, peaceful and purposeful environment, seen in the way '*people respect each other*' and the excellent relationships. These values are promoted across the whole curriculum, an example being the frequent use of paired work that strongly reinforces self worth and mutual respect. Behaviour for learning is excellent. The school ethos determines that every child '*knows right from wrong*', impacting well on both moral and spiritual development. Collective worship and other areas of the curriculum, particularly religious education (RE), help to reinforce pupils' understanding, often implicit, that the basis of values is solidly in the Christian faith and beliefs. Some pupils can articulate, for instance, that '*Jesus taught us values*'. The strong culture ensures that all pupils are able to develop strong social conscience. Good contribution to charitable causes, with an understanding of the impact of any fundraising, contributes significantly to pupils' excellent social awareness. The school promotes citizenship very strongly. Cross curricular work, such as The Big 13 enterprise skills programme, ensures that pupils develop excellent leadership and entrepreneurial abilities. Work such as the project on Europe promotes very good understanding of other cultures and other studies, such as a rainforest project, promote high levels of ecological awareness and responsibility. The environment is rich with displays and features that effectively promote the values of the school. An example is the Values Tree that strongly links values to the Christian faith. The many opportunities for prayer and reflection strengthen the spiritual development of all pupils beyond those who make frequent use of these facilities. Every pupil benefits from the very strong cross curricular promotion of awe and wonder. Parents note that their child's

needs are understood by all staff and fully met because *'everybody matters'* and that *'you are valued as a person'*. All pupils are motivated to learn, agreeing that *'we have everything we need to learn'*. Lessons, for instance in RE, are seen to promote learning skills and values that prepare children well for life-long learning. Many pupils state that they enjoy particular aspects of learning such as literacy and numeracy. All can discuss their level of attainment and potential, leading to ownership of learning. All pupils, including those with particular needs, are seen to have excellent inter-personal skills, being able to discuss difficult matters with great maturity. All parents can speak of the progress, often remarkable, that has been made, one commenting that their child has *'grown in all areas'*.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The importance given to collective worship and the significant and meaningful experience offered to pupils is central to maintaining the outstanding distinctive features of the school. All pupils are seen to be respectful and receptive of worship. Collective worship strongly promotes spiritual development beyond awe and wonder, making it clear that the school community bases its values on the Christian belief. All pupils understand that the occasion enables *'thinking time with Jesus'*, a large proportion aligning with this fundamental belief. Collective worship, supported across the curriculum such as within RE, successfully promotes higher orders of thinking, as noted in paired discussion. Collective worship is uncompromisingly founded in the Bible and the word of Jesus through appropriate readings, stories and prayer. Children join in Christian songs with great enthusiasm and little reservation. The specially written School Hymn is an outstanding example of an activity that enables pupils to live the school values, knowing they are Christian based. This contributes to a positive and purposeful start to the day, the majority of children accepting that *'prayers help me during my day'* or that *'God is always with me even in the tough times'*. Individual practical involvement of children in worship is good with skilful planning and delivery to ensure that all children can *'own the service'*. A strong feature of worship is the weekly communion for years five and six at the local church together with services for major festivals. In many cases, this leads to life changing experiences for children and deep reflection on the part of many adults. A large number of children develop a very good understanding of the Christian faith, recognising the significance of Easter to be that *'Jesus sacrificed his life for us'*. Most pupils have a very good understanding of other faiths. Children of other faiths derive great benefit from worship, noting that *'we are all praising God'*.

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

The headteacher's vision and commitment is critical to the shaping of this outstanding Christian school. The chair of governors and relevant school leaders have an impressive understanding of what it is to be a church school. This clarity of vision has led to staff demonstrating outstanding teamwork, evidence that *'everyone knows what we are about'*. All staff reinforce the school values through example and practice. All pupils and parents recognise the importance of the school values, most routing these in the Christian distinctiveness. It is recognised that there would be benefits in every governor becoming engaged in the planned review of vision. Staff evaluation of professional development shows that relevant skills, such as leading worship, are improved. The school seeks pupils' opinions well with focused prompts that give very good evidence for evaluation. This self-evaluation is very secure although may sometimes need to be recorded in a language of evaluation in order to directly inform development. Members of the school council have contributed to the improvement of facilities and equipment, developing very good leadership and communication skills in the process. Through engagement with global charities, the school has widened pupils' understanding of the worldwide Anglican Church, the only issue from the previous inspection. The strong partnership with the church, particularly to promote worship, is seen by parents as an important aspect of the school's distinctiveness. All parents express a very high opinion of the school. They are very pleased with their child's progress and are kept informed on a regular, often daily, basis. They find communication with the school to be easy and productive. Parents typically speak of *'a much better child for coming here'* and that this is *'a fabulous school'*.

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