

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

East Crompton St James' Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

St James Street
Shaw
Oldham
Lancashire OL2 7TD

Diocese: Manchester

Local authority: Oldham
Dates of inspection: 26th March 2013
Date of last inspection: 17th January 2008
School's unique reference number: 105710
Executive Headteacher: Adam Laskey
Inspector's name and number: Nigel Castledine (652)

School context

This is an average-sized school of just over 200 pupils situated near the parish church in modern spacious buildings. Pupils are mainly of white British heritage and most live in the local community. The school is currently experiencing rapid change as it moves forward to fulfil current national educational and management requirements.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of East Crompton St James' as a Church of England school are satisfactory

Because Christian belief is that every child is made in the 'image of God', all pupils are entitled to achieve their true potential. Accordingly, the school's strong sense of renewed purpose aims for the highest standards of education and nurture to be given to every pupil.

Established strengths

- The high quality of caring, trusting relationships shown by adults and children;
- The determination and vision of the new leadership to achieve St James' full potential as the school moves towards excellence in every aspect of school life;
- The school's links with parents and carers, the community it serves and the local church.

Focus for development

- Ensuring the school's Christian ethos and values are made explicit and are central in supporting and enhancing the highest standards of teaching, learning and pupil care;
- Giving renewed focus and purpose to collective worship by ensuring that its planning, delivery and evaluation all involve senior staff, the clergy and the children;
- Providing well-presented faith reflective areas in each classroom to support and enhance the impact of class prayers and the weekly class assembly;
- Giving added relevance to religious education through educational links to other schools where a significant number of pupils come from contrasting major world faith families.

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

Because of the effective and focused leadership of the Executive Headteacher, the school is already moving forward to meet current requirements in good educational practice. Staff are focused on this task and there is a calm, purposeful atmosphere of sustained, intensive work in the school, which continues to support the children's education and the desire for best practice and the highest standards. The school's Christian ethos is evident in the ways the children have embraced change and ably risen to new challenges. Change has not however displaced the impressive way in which pupils care for one another, and in the modelling of good relationships for the pupils to follow, by all adults at the school. It is clear that Christian values continue to encourage, nourish and challenge the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. This is seen in the ways children offer themselves for service on the effective School Council, through sports, school orchestra, brass group or choir, through local and global fund-raising for those less fortunate than themselves and through offering friendship to older members of the community in their much-appreciated visits to a local care home for the elderly, so "making someone's life a little better". The Christian character of the school also supports children in understanding the need for 'appropriate conduct, good

manners and concern for others'. This was evidenced by pupils' behaviour generally being of a very high standard. Parents and carers praised the pupils' respect for one another as "an important part of school life" and described how they felt it helps the children to build "positive, valuable relationships" both in school and in later life.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

There is a very clear sense of reverence to the start of collective worship, as seen in the way the children enter to a background of appropriate music. During worship the pupils were very ready to respond to questions that furthered their understanding of the worship focus. This was evident in thought-provoking responses from children as to what they would like to ask God, including "How do I keep my faith when bad things happen to me?" Such responses exemplify the profound thinking of which the children are capable. From this level of involvement, a move towards establishing a mechanism for the children to be regularly involved in the planning, delivery and evaluation of their worship, alongside local clergy and the school senior staff, would be very beneficial in giving worship added relevance and impact. Children are familiar with aspects of Anglican tradition; for example, as focal points, the hall has faith displays and a small worship table with a cross, candle and books of children's prayers. Scallop shells, as the emblem of St James, are also on display. Anglican tradition is also evident in use of the Lord's Prayer as well as prayers written by children. Local clergy from St James Parish Church are now leading worship each week as well as being around school in a pastoral role. Christian festivals are very much part of school life, with the school and parents celebrating Christmas, Easter and Harvest and observing Advent and Lent. Whilst most festival services take place in the school, the parish church is also used on occasion, such as for an 'Experience Easter' event and other acts of worship. On one day each week, worship takes place in individual classrooms. This could be enriched by the provision of a faith reflective area which, with varying displays and artefacts, would enhance the impact of the worship as well as supporting the daily class prayers.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

Religious education (RE) seen in every class on the day of inspection was appropriate to the church seasons of Lent, Holy Week and Easter. This included simnel cake making, art and crafts, electronic and paper-based book-making, exploring feelings, role-play drama and internet research, all of which were developing children's religious understanding. This shows the scope of RE learning at the school, and included aspects of outstanding teaching. The school follows the diocesan scheme of work which takes Christianity as its core and includes learning about other major world faiths. This latter area could well be enhanced by the school adding relevance with visits to contrasting places of worship of differing faiths, and in linking with other schools where children are predominantly of another major world faith. The school shows good practice in RE assessment including pupils' self-assessment of their learning. The next step is to move on to assess pupil RE attainment in a way that allows for accurate comparisons to be made with their attainment in the other core subjects of the curriculum. RE is taught weekly in a discreet lesson. In some instances of good practice, RE also embraces appropriate elements of learning in personal, health, social and citizenship. Currently, there is an imbalance in children's RE work which is over-focused on learning *about* religion, needing more emphasis on learning *from* religion, which would help pupils to consider how RE influences their every-day thinking, actions and decision-making.

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

The impact of strong and decisive leadership from the highly committed Executive Headteacher, supported by senior staff, is moving the school forward. As part of this advance, further thought needs to be given as to how the school's Christian ethos and faith life can support and enhance the over-arching requirement for the school to provide the highest standards of teaching and learning for all pupils. Many of the school's well-placed and accepted moral values appear implicit, rather than being the explicitly Christ-centred values which are so important to the life of a church school. This is an area which will benefit from appropriate action from school leaders, perhaps as part of the drawing up a new mission or values statement. Parental support for the school is strong, as are links with the parish church. There is an active PTA and an innovative Cookery Club which involves dads as well as mums, children and other family members in opportunities for family learning.