



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### St John's Church of England Primary Academy

Maple Lane, Penge SE20 8HU

**Previous SIAS grade: n/a**

**Current inspection grade: Good**

**Diocese: Rochester**

Local authority: Bromley

Dates of inspection: 16 May 2016

Date of last inspection: n/a

School's unique reference number: 140648

Headteacher: Laura Pearson

Inspector's name and number: Anne Southgate 820

#### School context

St John's is a smaller than average sized primary school within the Aquinas multi-academy Trust. There are greater than average proportions of pupils who have special needs and who are eligible for the pupil premium. The school population is ethnically diverse. The previous school was placed into special measures in January 2013. Following a period of change and uncertainty, the current headteacher was appointed in September 2014. The school joined the Aquinas Trust in April 2016, but has been working with them since January 2016.

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

- The headteacher's clear Christian vision has resulted in rapid progress in all areas.
- The care and support for pupils and their families is very strong and effective.
- The Aquinas Trust has had an immediate and positive impact on the school, particularly in improving religious education (RE).
- The partnership with the church is highly effective.

#### Areas to improve

- Ensure that the biblical basis for the school's Christian values is known by all stakeholders, so that everyone understands the Christian beliefs which underpin the school's improvement.
- Develop pupils' leadership and evaluation of collective worship to increase their engagement and enjoyment.
- Develop pupils' understanding of the belief that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Establish consistency in RE, so that the good practice that exists in some classes, is shared throughout the school.

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

After a turbulent period for the school, it is now making rapid progress. This is due to the Christian character being firmly re-established. Core Christian values of forgiveness, compassion, friendship, thankfulness, justice and trust are well known throughout the school community. These values are the driving force behind pupils' academic, emotional and spiritual development. Pupils talk with ease about how they are encouraged to forgive others, and to restore friendships after arguments. Leaders clearly understand the Christian basis of the values, but not all stakeholders share this understanding. Pupils and their families are given an impressive level of care and support. This has resulted in good attendance, and helps pupils to be ready to learn. As a result, attainment has improved and progress has accelerated. This good progress is underpinned by strong relationships of trust. Pupils are helped to reflect on their behaviour, and they are offered forgiveness and a fresh start. Younger pupils, in particular, relate the school's values to their behaviour. Pupils take time to reflect on their attitudes and to consider their answers to 'big questions'. Pupils appreciate being able to use the class prayer corners to pray and to reflect, particularly when they are feeling sad or stressed. As a result of the strengthened Christian character of the school, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils embrace and celebrate diversity, and they enjoy learning about other cultures and faiths in RE. For example, a pupil commented that the world is more interesting because people have different beliefs.

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

Most pupils enjoy participating in collective worship and they do so enthusiastically. The school's Christian values are explained in worship, and they are related to relevant Bible stories. Pupils can apply worship themes to their daily lives, for example by using the values to think about their behaviour on the playground. Worship often encourages pupils to help others. A current example is the school project to raise money to buy a cow for a village in Uganda. The school community celebrates major Christian festivals in the church. This, together with the regular involvement of the incumbent in school worship, means that pupils understand local Anglican traditions. Pupils are familiar with many Christian stories about Jesus, but few understand the belief that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pupils often lead class worship, and sometimes contribute to whole school worship. However, pupils would like to contribute far more to the leadership of collective worship. Monitoring of worship has become more formalised, but needs to include pupils' views more often. Collective worship includes time for reflection and prayer, and pupils sometimes offer spontaneous prayers. Pupils feel that the many opportunities they have to pray throughout the day, help them to "remember God" and to "feel loved".

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

As a result of working closely with the Aquinas Trust, RE has improved rapidly. In most classes, it is now taught well. Teachers' skilful questioning helps pupils to think deeply. For example, in one lesson, the teacher had encouraged pupils to ask questions and to reflect on what motivated Mother Teresa to devote her life to God. This resulted in an impressive level of understanding. This good teaching is evident in most, but not all of the classes. Pupils' achievement is in line with their achievement in other core subjects, such as English. Teachers help pupils to reflect on their answers. A Year 5 pupil commented that, "RE makes me think because they ask you tricky questions". The support from Aquinas has helped the RE co-ordinator to develop her expertise and to be able to support and train other teachers in the school. As a result, teachers' confidence to enable pupils to learn from religion has increased. This has led both to greater enjoyment and to higher standards. Teaching about religion is well established, so that pupils have a good knowledge of Christian beliefs and practices. Pupils are

confident in expressing their opinions, and they show respect for the beliefs of others. This means that RE contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Most teachers mark and assess pupils' work thoroughly and effectively, but this is not consistent throughout the school. A programme of observations and book scrutiny has been introduced. This is having an impact on raising standards, but it needs to be more extensive to ensure consistently good practice in all classes.

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

The rapid improvement in the school is due to the headteacher's uncompromising Christian vision. The headteacher, with senior leaders and governors have re-established the school as a Christian community and this has had a significant impact both on raising attainment, and on improving well-being. The impact of joining the Aquinas Trust has been immediate and effective, particularly in raising the profile of RE. The partnership with the church is exceptional, and enables both the church and school to serve the local community very well. The church and school work closely together to support the spiritual development of both children and adults. The incumbent, as chair of governors, works effectively with the senior leadership team, to embed and enhance the Christian character of the school. The headteacher's clear, Christian vision is shared with all governors and with staff, so that everyone is working towards a common goal. This means that they all work relentlessly to support pupils, as each individual is "unique and perfect in the eyes of God". New systems for self-evaluation as a church school are written into the school improvement plan. These are now driving improvements underpinned by the Christian values. Arrangements for RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements. Leaders are ensuring that the Christian character of the school continues to be strengthened by ensuring that their vision is shared, and that the Christian values underpin all new policies. This means that good and effective practice in all areas, although not consistent, is steadily increasing.

SIAMS report May 2016 St John's Church of England Primary Academy SE20 8HU