

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### St John's Sevenoaks Church of England Primary School

Bayham Road, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 3XD

**Current SIAMS inspection grade**

**Outstanding**

**Diocese**

**Rochester**

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

Kent

Date of inspection

27 April 2017

Date of last inspection

19 April 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Primary - 118606

Headteacher

Sally Quirk

Inspector's name and number

Anne Southgate 820

#### School context

St John's has expanded significantly since the previous denominational inspection, almost doubling in size. Year 4 is larger than other year groups and has two forms of entry. As a result, there has been new building to accommodate the increased numbers of pupils. The school is now over-subscribed. Pupils come predominantly from the local area and from a range of socio-economic groups. The proportions of pupils for whom the school receives extra funding due to social disadvantage or who have special educational needs are below the national average. The chair of governors is also the parish priest.

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

- The clear Christian vision and values have a deep and positive impact on pupils' behaviour and on relationships across the school.
- The well-being of pupils and of adults is taken very seriously, which results in an exceptionally happy community where pupils learn very well.
- The clear emphasis on enabling each individual to fulfil their potential means that pupils flourish and experience life in all its fullness.

#### Areas to improve

- Develop greater stillness in collective worship to enable deeper reflection and prayer.
- Ensure that pupils can consistently and explicitly link the school's Christian values with their learning.

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

All stakeholders share a clear and explicitly Christian vision, together with Christian values of compassion, forgiveness, tolerance and trust, which are grounded in biblical teaching. These values and the Christian vision of 'all different, all equal, learning together in God's world' drive school improvement in all areas. As a result, St John's is a very happy community, where pupils and adults alike enjoy working. This leads to high attendance, above average attainment and very good progress from pupils. Systems to support good behaviour are clearly based on the school's Christian values. This effectively supports excellent behaviour across the school. All pupils use the values to restore relationships and they reflect on these very well. Pupils sometimes apply the values to their learning, but this is less well developed. The welfare of each individual is taken exceptionally seriously. The parent support advisor's work is highly effective in supporting families, and in helping them to enable their children to flourish. There is an impressive range of clubs and enrichment opportunities, which all pupils are helped to access, regardless of their families' ability to fund these. The school environment provides a wealth of quiet areas for reflection and prayer. This includes a reflection garden where pupils are encouraged to 'be still and know that I am God'. They are able to talk to parish clergy or to use the prayer box, knowing that the clergy will collect their prayers. Consequently spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is strong.

The school's Christian vision underpins pupils' attitudes towards each other. As a result, they are highly sensitive and considerate towards the beliefs and needs of others. Pupils have a developed understanding for their age of the global nature of Christianity and of the variety of expressions this takes. Pupils enjoy learning about Christianity and other religions in religious education (RE). The use of 'big questions' inspires them to ask their own questions, to reflect and to think deeply. Thus RE contributes effectively to pupils' SMSC development and strongly to the school's Christian ethos.

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

All members of the school community, including volunteers, gather together and participate fully in collective worship. This is rightly recognised as a unifying experience for all members of the school. Planning is thorough and thoughtful, with a clear four year plan. This indicates something of the positive and important place worship has within school life. Worship themes include regular coverage of the school's Christian values, as well as teaching about biblical stories, Christian beliefs and Christian festivals. As a result, pupils' knowledge and understanding of God's relationship with the world is very good. Pupils can explain with clarity Christian beliefs such as that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is aided by lighting three candles on one candelabra at the start of each act of worship. Pupils have a deep understanding of the importance of Jesus for Christians. Older pupils use Anglican sentences to invite the school community to worship. Pupils also lead prayers and participate in drama. Class groups lead festival services in church, and younger pupils lead collective worship at school as a class. A prayer day led to the publishing of a 'St John's prayer book', which contains pupils' prayers, and is now used regularly in worship. Therefore all pupils feel involved in the leadership of worship throughout the year. Pupils are fully engaged in acts of worship, but sometimes they lack a sense of stillness, which means that the experience of deeper prayerfulness is occasionally missed. There is a wide range of adult leaders of worship. This includes all teachers, parish clergy and the local Baptist minister. This means that pupils' experience of worship is rich and varied. The close relationship with St John's church means that pupils gain a strong understanding of local Anglican practice, including participating in the mass three times each year. This develops their understanding of the significance of the Eucharist for Christians very well.

Pupils often reflect on the message of worship throughout the day, and sometimes discuss this at home. They are frequently inspired by collective worship to help others, and this is related to their daily school lives. For example, pupils raised money to support 'flush away poverty' in Africa, when the school toilets were being refurbished. Pupils take turns to evaluate worship. Their thoughts are analysed carefully, and together with evaluation by senior leaders and governors, they lead to constant improvements, such as the ever increasing involvement of pupils in leading worship.

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

The headteacher, chair of governors and other senior leaders confidently place Christian distinctiveness at the very centre of their work. An emphasis on enabling each and every child to flourish and to experience life in all its fullness has resulted in a school where pupils achieve well, and where they are also happy and healthy individuals. The investment in systems to support children and their families is impressive, and it ensures that the school offers deeply Christian service to the local community. Leaders, including governors have a thorough understanding of the strengths and areas of development needed. This is aided by regular and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the

school's Christian foundation, which includes all groups of stakeholders. It ensures that actions to improve are implemented very quickly and efficiently. Statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are fully met and development points from the previous denominational inspection have been closely addressed resulting in clear improvements. RE is very well managed by a highly organised leader who has transformed practice. This includes the introduction of question led learning and ensuring that learning is recorded in a wide range of exciting ways. As a result, pupils enjoy RE and achieve highly against national expectations. Worship is very well led and managed. Governors take an appropriate part in monitoring and evaluating the impact of the programme of the school's Christian ethos and values. This contributes well to the highly effective practice in evidence across the school.

The partnership with the parish church is strong and mutually beneficial. School and church are regarded as two branches of the same Christian outreach to the community, and they support each other very well. There are strong relationships with the local community. For example, pupils welcome residents of a local nursing home to school several times throughout the year. Strategic support for developing professionally whilst working in a church school is given. For example, leaders access diocesan training and cascade this effectively to staff. New teachers are supported so that they quickly gain an understanding of the centrality of the school's Christian character. The headteacher has shared her good practice with other church and school leaders by speaking at Lambeth Palace on behalf of the Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership.

SIAMS report April 2017 St John's CE (VC) Primary School, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 3XD