

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St John's Church of England Primary School

Cunningham Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 9EW

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Diocese

Rochester

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

Kent

Date

4 December 2017

Date of last inspection

4 October 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary controlled primary 118611

Headteacher

Dan Turvey

Inspector's name and number

Anne Southgate 820

School context

St John's is larger than the average sized primary school. Pupils come mainly from the local area and they are from a variety of social backgrounds. Most pupils are of White British heritage, but there is a range of other backgrounds and cultures represented in the school. A slightly greater than average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. Fewer pupils than the national average have special needs or disabilities. Most of the senior leaders, including the headteacher, have joined the school in the last two and a half years.

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

- St John's is a very welcoming and supportive school with its vision of 'nurturing the potential in everyone' at its heart.
- The care for each individual ensures that pupils achieve well and that attendance is high.
- Religious education (RE) is very well led.
- The school's Christian values contribute well to the good behaviour in the school.

Areas to improve

- Make the Christian basis to the school's values explicit so that all members of the school community fully understand this.
- Separate RE and worship displays in classrooms so that everyone understands that these are different activities.
- Widen the active participation of pupils in collective worship so that pupils feel a greater sense of ownership of this area.

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

The care and compassion for all of the pupils in the school is palpable. This is grounded in the school vision of 'nurturing the potential in everyone'. Leaders are clear in their belief that everyone is a child of God and should therefore be valued and nurtured. As a result, pupils' achievement is generally above national averages and attendance is high. Pupils from all backgrounds are welcomed. The support given to some families, including refugees, is exceptional. This means that St John's is a school where everyone can thrive. Behaviour is good and relationships between adults and pupils are positive. Pupils are polite and considerate towards each other and towards adults. This is supported very well by the school's values of respect, empathy, courage, inclusivity and honesty. These values are displayed widely around the school and pupils use them to reflect on their attitudes and actions. Pupils appreciate this visual reminder of the school's values. It makes a significant contribution to the good behaviour in the school. The values are linked to biblical teaching on the school's website, but most pupils and adults are not aware of this. Therefore, whilst leaders understand the Christian foundation to the values, others do not know how this is the case.

The school environment encourages pupils to reflect, to ask questions and to pray. As a result, pupils are thoughtful and reflective. Pupils are interested in the beliefs and customs of others and show respect for these. One pupil commented, 'I've learned that we can all have different beliefs and that's ok'. Teaching helps pupils to think carefully, to ask questions and to show empathy for others. Each classroom has a quiet reflection area that poses questions and encourages prayer. Pupils value these and make good use of the interactive displays. In some classrooms, these are confused with RE displays, so that the distinction between the two activities is not clear. In addition, there are reflection areas in corridors and outside. There is a well-used staff prayer board so that pupils see adults modelling reflective and prayerful behaviour. This means that pupils develop well spiritually. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) development is strong. There is a very wide range of clubs and activities. These help pupils to develop their talents and offer them new experiences. RE is generally taught well so that pupils are fully engaged. Most pupils, particularly older pupils, achieve standards at least in line with national expectations.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship, led by school leaders, is inclusive. It helps pupils and adults to reflect on their lives and on the world around them. This results in pupils who are very thoughtful and who are keen to help others. Consequently, the school community supports a number of charities, for example the Make a Wish foundation. These charities are chosen annually by pupils. A wide range of Christian values form the themes for worship and this ensures that pupils are familiar with Bible stories. The Christian background to the school's core values is not explained regularly, so pupils are not familiar with this. Pupils are keen to participate in worship and do so willingly. Many pupils would like to be more actively involved in collective worship more often. A group of older pupils, the Leading Lights, regularly leads aspects of worship. They have recently planned and led an entire act of worship. These pupils also monitor and evaluate daily collective worship. This is complemented by regular governor and senior leader monitoring. This includes monitoring of Christian groups such as 'High Hopes' and 'Life and Soul'. Consequently, leaders are aware of ways to improve pupils' experience, for example, by broadening the range of Christian songs used.

Pupils have a good understanding of the life of Jesus and of key Christian beliefs. They have an age appropriate understanding of the belief that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The school community celebrates Christian festivals and many pupils have a good grasp of the beliefs which underpin these. Aspects of Anglican practice are used. These include the greeting 'peace be with you' and the use of colours to denote the season of the church's year. The school is a prayerful community and pupils are invited to join in with prayers at points throughout the day, as well as in collective worship.

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

The headteacher has a clear Christian vision of nurturing the potential in everyone. This means that both pupils and adults receive very good support so that they can achieve their best. The vision is shared amongst governors, staff and pupils. There is a clear, positive impact of this vision on achievement, on wellbeing and on attendance. Everyone understands that this is a Christian vision, but not everyone can explain why this is so. Senior leaders fully appreciate the Christian basis to the vision, which drives all that they do. The headteacher ensures that statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are fully met.

Leaders listen to stakeholders' views and take them seriously. Self-evaluation is honest and accurate and it involves the views of all groups within the school community. Leaders use their self-evaluation to make improvements and

to form clearly focused action plans. Most parents are very positive about the school and feel that their children are thriving. They feel that their concerns are listened to and that an ethos of transparency has been established. Teachers are able to access appropriate training, including that offered by the diocese. There are close and very helpful relationships with other local church schools. This is effective in helping St John's to develop further, as well as helping teachers to grow as future leaders of church schools. The church is situated about a mile away from the school. This makes frequent visits difficult. Nonetheless, there are regular visits for major festivals and for RE lessons. The school receives good support from the diocese. Leaders, including the RE leader, regularly attend diocesan meetings and training. RE is very well led by an enthusiastic and committed leader. She offers good support to teachers and monitors practice thoroughly. This has been particularly effective with the introduction of the new syllabus 'Understanding Christianity'.

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