

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

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| St John's Church of England Primary Academy | | | |
| Address | Provender Way, Weaving, Maidstone. ME14 5TZ | | |
| Date of inspection | 25 June 2019 | Status of school | Voluntary Aided |
| Diocese | Canterbury | URN | 137615 |

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| Overall Judgement | Grade | Good |
| How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish? | | |
| Additional Judgements | | |
| The impact of collective worship | Grade | Good |
| The effectiveness of religious education (RE) | Grade | Good |

School context

St John's is a primary academy with 437 pupils on roll. The school has a low level of religious and cultural diversity and few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national averages. The school has expanded since the previous denominational inspection with a new headteacher and leadership structure. After a lengthy interregnum, a new vicar is in post at the parish church.

The school's Christian vision

Our school is a place of sanctuary, strength and high achievement where all are heard, respected, encouraged and nurtured. Ever outward looking and rooted in the teachings of Jesus; as stewards of God's creation we aim to grow beyond all we can imagine.

Associated values: friendship, forgiveness, trust, compassion

Key findings

- Under effective leadership, the school has created an inclusive and distinctive Christian vision. It is rooted in biblical principles, guides direction and has energised the community, enabling all to flourish.
- Collective worship is well led, promoting the school vision and its associated values. Currently, however the role of pupils as leaders of worship is underdeveloped.
- There is rapid progress in the teaching and learning of religious education (RE) so that pupils across the whole school encounter and compare the teachings of Christianity and the major world faiths. Pupils' knowledge and understanding is developing very well but opportunities to meet people of different faiths or visit places of worship are limited.
- Continuous reference to the vision and its associated values creates a culture in which all members of the community are nurtured and treated with dignity and respect. Relationships across the school are highly supportive and pupil behaviour is extremely good.
- Extensive opportunities are given for pupils to ask big questions and take action on environmental issues as 'stewards of God's creation'. An outdoor space for quiet reflection is in place but not yet fully developed.

Areas for development

- Develop pupils' leadership of worship to further improve interest and engagement.
- Enrich the RE curriculum with opportunities to meet people and visit different places of worship in order to deepen pupils' understanding of a range of beliefs and cultures.
- Continue to develop the outdoor environment to provide an inspiring space in which the community are supported in their spiritual thinking and development.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Inspection findings

All stakeholder groups were involved in creating the vision, bringing shared enthusiasm to its implementation. It is linked to biblical principles and is strengthened through ongoing professional staff development. Parents are highly supportive of all that the school does through the vision and its centrality to decisions, policies and practices. A review of the admissions policy has made the school more inclusive, reflecting the local area. Leaders are mindful of current church school thinking in improving the school's practice. Worship is well led and provides an inclusive space in which the vision and associated values are explored and applied to daily life. There are established links with St Mary's church, Boxley, and its daughter church, St John's, which meets in the school. Clergy visit each week, leading worship and offering nurture and support. A service level agreement with Canterbury Diocese effectively provides resources and ongoing advice and training for staff and governors. The school monitors and evaluates all aspects of its practice, drawing on the perspective of all stakeholders in shaping its plans. Since the previous denominational inspection, the school has addressed the action points, successfully linking its values to Bible stories and providing more challenge in RE. The curriculum helps pupils to engage with different cultures and a link with Nepal is underway. The school is a safe, respectful place where everyone is valued. Any incidents of a prejudicial nature are taken seriously and followed up swiftly. As a result, they are very rare.

The school provides a broad, balanced, engaging curriculum, tailored to the needs and interests of individual pupils. The percentage of pupils reaching expected standards of attainment is higher than national averages. Pupils working at greater depth and overall progress measures, however, are in the average range. Fewer pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds reach higher levels of attainment although this is often because of complex needs. However, support is in place to help them to do so. Early identification and appropriate provision for pupils with various needs supports them well in their learning, providing a sanctuary in line with the vision. The school has a clear definition of spirituality and has identified opportunities for its progressive development throughout the school. Pupils are encouraged to ask big questions. They challenge and express ideas across different subjects and using a variety of media.

In line with its vision to be 'stewards of God's creation', the school is particularly strong in challenging exploitation of the natural world. It has a Green Flag award for its work and pupils speak with conviction about making a difference to the environment. 'Ever outward looking', and so reflecting the vision, they write letters to parliament, 'Run for the Rainforest' and engage in local litter picking. Pupils champion particular causes and the community supports a range of local and national charities. Pupils are encouraged to be the best they can be, learning from and applying Jesus' teaching. Pupils and adults reference the parables associated with the school values. For example, they talk about forgiveness and friendship when settling disputes. Consequently, conduct throughout the school is extremely good.

School attendance is higher than average, including for most vulnerable groups, indicating that the majority of pupils enjoy coming to school. The school works closely with external agencies to help families with difficulties. Exclusions are extremely rare. There is a clear, age-appropriate policy for sex and relationships education that promotes healthy relationships. In response to the mental health needs of some pupils, staff have received training on attachment disorder. St John's is now acknowledged by the local authority as an 'attachment friendly' school, providing a sanctuary in support of its vision. Teachers speak positively of the mutual support which they receive. Staff turnover is low and there is a happy, productive atmosphere.

Every school day starts with a well-planned and structured act of worship. Staff and pupils reflect on themes that include the school's vision and values, illustrating them with relevant Bible stories and with Jesus' teaching. Worship is varied, providing moments of quiet reflection, songs, prayers and visual images to engage pupils. They particularly enjoy drama. Some Anglican prayers and liturgy are used, supporting pupils' understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Staff and clergy receive training and ongoing support. Pupils regularly monitor worship, but opportunities to lead are not frequent enough. Other Christian organisations and visitors lead worship each term. Pupils join in strongly with The Lord's Prayer. An imaginative, recently installed prayer tree is well used. Pupils speak warmly of the people and issues they pray for. Christian festivals are celebrated with special events and services which parents enjoy attending. Each summer, Year 6 pupils go 'on pilgrimage' to Boxley church where they plan and lead a leaver's service. The church gives Bibles to each pupil and has helped to finance a new,

innovative sanctuary area in the school grounds. This is increasingly used for reflection, listening and discussion. Currently, pupils do not experience the Eucharist. Statutory obligations are met.

The school follows the Kent Agreed Syllabus for RE. Reflecting the Church of England's statement of entitlement, RE receives an appropriate allocation of time and resources. It is taught as an academic subject and standards match other core subjects. The school has adopted 'Understanding Christianity', which encourages asking big questions, learning key theological concepts, developing religious literacy and analysing texts. This scheme provides a marked increase in challenge. Pupils learn about the impact of Christianity on British and other cultures. They enjoy well-planned, engaging activities. RE enables pupils to learn about a range of world faiths, giving insight into different cultures and beliefs. Increasingly, they make links and comparisons between them but have limited opportunities to meet people or visit places of worship of different faiths. In line with its vision, RE successfully provides a safe space in which to explore their own and others' beliefs. RE is well led, giving pupils in parallel classes equivalent experiences. Staff have access to relevant training and are supported through monitoring and feedback. An assessment system helps staff to pinpoint areas where pupils need additional support, adjusting their teaching appropriately.



The effectiveness of RE is Good

RE is monitored regularly using lesson observations, reviews of pupil work and interviews with pupils. Records show that teaching and learning is consistently good and sometimes excellent. The school has responded to staff questionnaires, providing appropriate training so that teachers have gained confidence in subject knowledge for a range of faiths. Assessment indicates that pupils broadly work at the expected level and at greater depth in line with other core subjects. Pupils are building on their previous learning year on year and staff are increasingly developing approaches that support them in working at greater depth. Pupils can record their ideas with electronic devices at times. This offers support to some vulnerable pupils, helping to capture their thoughts without always having to write.

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| Headteacher | Dan Smith |
| Inspector's name and number | Melanie Williams 911 |