

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St John's Church of England Infant and Nursery School

Gills Hill Lane, Radlett, Hertfordshire, WD7 8DD	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	St Albans
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Date of inspection	26 January 2018
Date of last inspection	12 February 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled Infant and Nursery 117383
Headteacher / Acting Executive Headteacher	Alice Aharon
Acting Head of School	Davinia Leggett
Inspector's name and number	Lindsay Fraser 107

School context

St John's Infant and Nursery School is a two-form entry voluntary controlled school, close to St John's Church and within walking distance of Christ Church, Radlett. There are currently 208 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities is below the national average. The percentage for whom the school receives extra funding due to social disadvantage is also below the national average. The headteacher, who has been in post since April 2014, is currently in the third term of an acting executive headship with responsibility for the local non-church junior school as well as St John's.

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

- The headteacher has provided inspirational leadership in developing the school's distinctive Christian character, building highly effective relationships between all members of the school community.
- The school's distinctive Christian character has a significant impact on all aspects of school life including pupils' achievements and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC).
- The partnership between the church and school is vigorous and the exceptional contribution made by the vicar and clergy team is influential in supporting an understanding of Christian faith and service.
- The outstanding leadership of the subject leader for religious education (RE) ensures that religious education contributes significantly to the school's Christian character and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils.
- Through their dedication, skills and vision based on the school's Christian character, governors seek to ensure the needs of all pupils are met.

All Areas to improve

- Ensure that collective worship further impacts upon the pupils' daily lives through discussions with pupils and developing the role of the worship council.
- Review the website to ensure that it makes the strong distinctively Christian character of this voluntary controlled school obvious and explicit.

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

The Christian character of St John's Church of England Infant and Nursery School is clearly evident throughout the whole school. Relationships at all levels are excellent. All members of the school community, parents, staff, pupils and governors can articulate the school's Christian values and how these influence behaviour and relationships, attitudes and learning. Pupils know that biblical stories are the inspiration for their school values. They also understand that their values are common to other faiths. Pupils achieve well by the time they move on to the junior school because teachers strive to ensure the curriculum is exciting, challenging and engaging. Those pupils who are disadvantaged make very good progress due to the excellent level of support for each individual child. The headteacher and all staff exemplify Christian service by providing whatever extra support is required to enable each pupil to make good progress. The Christian character underpins the way in which the school approaches pupil absence through identifying what help can be given to families to improve attendance. Likewise, the school uses fixed term exclusions in very rare circumstances and only for an identified benefit to the pupil. The school provides excellent opportunities for parents to learn how to help their pupils' learning and development, including workshops such as supporting their children's mental well-being. Because of the determination of the staff to prepare pupils to be active participants in a global culture, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) is excellent. A wide range of enrichment activities beyond the curriculum enables pupils to develop varied interests and skills. Through financial prudence the school subsidises activities in order that every pupil can participate. This includes the residential trip for pupils in Year 2 which provides opportunities for pupils to develop greater independence and responsibility in preparation for their transition to the junior school. Pupils are continually challenged to be independent, critical and reflective thinkers. For example, in the Reception class pupils learn about creation, using the Biblical account whilst also considering other beliefs. Pupils at this young age can express confidently their own beliefs and some know that these are different from the beliefs of their parents. Pupils from all faiths, excited by their learning in religious education (RE), are keen to explore their own faiths in more detail. The quality of teaching and learning in RE is inspiring and inclusive and therefore contributes significantly to developing the Christian character because pupils are developing an excellent understanding of key aspects of Christian belief. To ensure that pupils understand that Christianity is a world faith the school is working with the vicar to develop links with a school overseas. Pupils are developing an excellent understanding of diversity in all its forms because the school provides a wealth of first hand opportunities for pupils to experience people's different lifestyles. For example, they can see the challenges faced by those who are disabled, those who are homeless and those who face economic challenges. As a result, pupils are enthused to contribute to such causes as shoebox appeals, harvest donations and donations to foodbanks. The school works closely with local churches to ensure vulnerable families in the area receive hampers during summer and Christmas holidays. One family explained how much this had meant to their enjoyment of Christmas. Pupils are developing an excellent understanding of and respect for diversity in faith and culture. This is because they are encouraged to explore and celebrate their own cultural heritage and the cultural heritage of others from a very early age. Pupils also benefit from a range of visitors from different faiths whilst all pupils visit St Albans Abbey, the Neasden Hindu Temple and the local synagogue. The school also has strong links with a local Jewish school which has enabled staff from each school to visit and share with the pupils how each school celebrates their own festivals.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils clearly value collective worship as an important part of the school day. Many refer to enjoying the calm and peaceful atmosphere of collective worship and a time when they can talk to God and God can listen to their prayers. They very much like to listen to stories from the Bible and enjoy the activities which help them understand the school's Christian values. They are beginning to link their values to stories from the Bible and the teachings of Jesus, although they are at the early stages of articulating how these impact upon their own lives. For example, they understand that their current value of patience can be linked to the patience shown by the three kings in their long journey to seek the Messiah. Pupils demonstrate a very good knowledge and understanding of God, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is because they have participated in a 'Trinity Day' organised and led by the collective worship leader. Staff benefited from her subject expertise, enabling them to deliver teaching and learning activities, further supported by members of the clergy team. A vibrant display of the pupils' portrayal of the Trinity in the school hall serves as an excellent reminder of its meaning for pupils as they worship. Pupils have a good understanding of the nature of prayer and many use prayers in their day to day lives, especially to pray for their friends and those in need. There are prayer and reflection areas in each classroom and pupils use these areas in times of need. One governor identified notable progress in the thoughtfulness of their prayers. Pupils know and demonstrate a good understanding of the Lord's Prayer because the clergy team have taught them actions which make the words meaningful. Pupils also understand prayer in terms of the wider community through their participation in the Radlett Remembrance Day service where some pupils are given the responsibility of reading and sharing their own prayers.

Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship is in place, although this is limited to observation of the delivery of collective worship rather than the impact on pupils. However, a worship council of Year 2 pupils has very recently been established. Their responsibilities include monitoring worship and one member has already observed that some pupils did not sing during worship. The pupil identified that this was because some pupils were no longer enjoying the songs. Consequently, new songs have been introduced and increased the enjoyment and quality of singing. Pupils often take an active part in worship through role play and drama and the worship group's next responsibility is to be involved in planning and delivering worship. The worship group also have requested more visitors to collective worship because they like to learn about different types of faith traditions. Pupils already benefit from a range of leaders, including teaching staff and members of the clergy team. The different styles of their delivery provide pupils with a varied experience of worship. Pupils particularly enjoy the services held in the two local Anglican churches. A beginning of term reflective service takes place for pupils in St John's Church whilst pupils are joined by their parents for celebratory services and Christian festivals in the larger Christ Church. Pupils particularly enjoy the presence of their families at services so that 'they can all worship together'. Worshipping in two churches enables pupils to understand features common to all Anglican churches as well as differences. Older pupils can explain the distinctive features of worship and that worship can take place anywhere. Pupils have a good understanding of the church year because the worship leader ensures that planning for collective worship is thorough and consistent.

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

The school has made significant progress as a church school since the previous inspection. Following her appointment, the headteacher, supported by a dedicated governing body, has substantially developed the school's Christian character and an understanding is now shared by the whole school community of what it means to be a church school. As a result, all leaders ensure that the school's distinctive Christian character permeates every area of the curriculum, staff morale, pupil well-being and relationships with the local and wider communities. Whilst the website does not yet fully reflect the outstanding distinctive Christian character of this school, it is evident from minutes of meetings, the school development plan and policies that Christian values underpin all decisions and strategic thinking. This includes rigorous monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school including finance, standards and well-being. Policies are based on a statement of intent that the school's Christian values are fundamental to the implementation of each policy. As a result, standards and progress in all areas of pupils' development are high. Statutory requirements for collective worship and RE are met. The excellent leadership of the headteacher has led to the development of expertise and leadership skills in other staff. This has enabled the subject leader for RE to substantially raise standards in RE, especially in the development of staff and pupils' understanding of Christianity. The headteacher has also supported the leader of collective worship in developing its importance in the daily life of the school. The distinctive Christian ethos has been at the forefront of the decision to appoint the headteacher as the acting executive headteacher of this school and the junior school. The governors' dedication to succession planning and recruitment within the school's Christian context, has enabled the school to maintain its ethos and standards during this shared headship. Teachers, who have taken on extra leadership, have been exceptionally well supported in their professional development. Consequently, there has been mutual benefit to both schools in terms of ethos, continuity, standards and professional development. Links with the diocese are excellent. Staff regularly attend diocesan training and the diocese are supporting the school in its current strategic development planning. Relationships with the local churches and community are excellent. Pupils and staff benefit from the expertise and support of the clergy team whilst many pupils, including those of other faiths or none, attend church activities, such as 'Messy Church' and support the charitable work of Churches Together in Radlett.

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