



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

### Wimborne, St John's Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

**St John's Hill**  
**Wimborne**  
**Dorset**  
**BH21 1 BX**

**Diocese: Salisbury**

Local authority: Dorset

Dates of inspection: 9 June 2014

Date of last inspection: 14 July 2009

School's unique reference number: 113771

Headteacher: Mrs Elizabeth West

Inspector's name and number: Marcia Headon 761

#### School context

St John's Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School caters for children from Reception to Year 4 and is a small school of 157 children. Almost all the children are from a predominantly white British background. The proportion of children who have special educational needs is near the national average as is the proportion of children in receipt of free school meals. It has recently been designated as a Teaching School and is in the process of applying to become part of a multi-academy trust.

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

- The headteacher provides outstanding, forward-thinking and compassionate leadership.
- The school knows its pupils very well and meets the needs of all pupils, emotionally, socially and academically.
- The strong Christian values which totally permeate the work of the school are very clearly supported by all stakeholders.
- The pupils enjoy and join in enthusiastically in collective acts of worship and Religious Education (RE). The pupil worship team play a significant role in planning and evaluating collective worship.
- RE is enhanced by the provision of Godly play and enrichment sessions.
- Prayer plays a very important part in the life of the school and pupils think deeply about their prayers.
- Exceedingly strong and productive relationships exist with St John's Church.

#### Areas to improve

- Develop evaluation among parents to enhance their view of the distinctiveness of the school as a church school.
- Include RE lessons in the school lesson observation cycle.

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

The school's strongly nurturing, inclusive and caring ethos ensures that the needs of all children are well catered for. Pupils throughout the school achieve highly with standards in Key Stage 1 being well above national averages. Pupils' progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is outstanding. Pupils with special educational needs make equally good progress as their peers and the gap between those in receipt of pupil premium and other pupils is narrowing. Any pupils who are vulnerable are quickly identified and exceptional care is taken to support them via a nurture group, breakfast club, discussions with external agencies or other means of support. The school's three core values of love, friendship and forgiveness permeate the whole curriculum, and are strongly rooted in Christian theology. The way in which these values were identified involved the whole school and means all in the school possess a good understanding of how important the values are and how they link to the Bible. They are lived out in the life of the school. For example they underpin each policy. Pupils talk about the reasons for forgiveness and love in relation to the behaviour system which operates. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very strong. Pupils show respect to one another and to staff and consideration to pupils of other faiths. They behave well, listen to one another, show tolerance and easily identify that other faiths also have value systems and these may be similar to their own Christian values. In a Year 2 RE lesson looking at how communities live, the values of other faiths in relation to sharing and humility were discussed most maturely by the pupils. Opportunities for spirituality are carefully planned throughout the whole curriculum and the pupils talked enthusiastically about the chance for reflection at the recently installed spiritual ball in the garden. Pupils show a good understanding of the role of the Anglican church worldwide, mentioning Anglican churches in Africa and Australia and missionary work. They support charities, for example Water Aid and Julia's House, and are very conscious of the needs of those less fortunate than themselves. They experience different Anglican traditions through visits to other churches locally and within the County. The agreed syllabus is carefully woven into the school's creative curriculum. RE lessons are planned effectively to stimulate pupil interest and as a result the pupils are fully engaged. The school meets the national expectation to teach Christianity and other faiths with Hinduism, Judaism and Islam being taught. The excellent 'floor' book showing their RE work which each class has indicates the wide variety of topics covered. These demonstrate the extremely original way in which some topics have been covered and show that pupils consider both knowledge and belief and meaning. Work has been moderated and is of an equal standard with the core subjects. RE makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning. The school's values are reinforced through the RE curriculum which is richly enhanced by Godly play and enrichment time. However, the monitoring of teaching of RE specifically is less well developed.

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

Collective worship and the centrality of prayer have a hugely positive impact upon the life of the school. The pupils are very enthusiastic about collective worship, whether it is in the adjoining church or in the school hall. They particularly enjoy worship in the adjoining church which is usually led by members of the community other than teachers. The themes are carefully linked to the values which the school is considering as part of the Values for Life scheme. The pupil worship team, which is made up of representatives from each year group, is very active in making suggestions and is a model of good practice. There is always interest in the minutes of this group which are prominently displayed around school for all pupils to see. This group changes termly so that many pupils are involved at some stage in their school life. Pupils participate fully in collective worship, listening attentively, eagerly volunteering to join in, singing with enjoyment and praying respectfully. Pupils respond well to established routines

such as the lighting of a candle, the bringing of toy animals to represent their classes, taking a cross and Bible to the table and they recognise that this makes church or the hall a special place for them at that time. Worship is very well planned by the RE subject leader in conjunction with the church's Children and Outreach Coordinator, a foundation governor and the pupil worship team. It follows the Anglican church calendar. Worship takes innovative forms such as the Easter Experience, of which Year 2 and Year 4 spoke with real understanding. Worship is also developing pupils' understanding of the nature of the Trinity in an age appropriate manner. Staff feel affirmed by collective worship and by the singing. Prayer is a very strong feature of the school. Pupils talk easily about what prayer means to them and how it helps them. Prayers are said before lunch and at the end of the day. Using their own ideas pupils have recently rewritten the school prayer with the emphasis upon four key types of prayer. They have introduced pebbles to help them focus. Each classroom has reflective corner and a prayer tree is placed in the welcome area and is well used. Art in outdoor spaces is being developed to allow more reflective spaces. Collective worship on festivals such as Christmas and Easter is very well attended by parents as are celebration assemblies. Collective worship is evaluated regularly by pupils and governors and all seek to improve the experience for everyone.

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

Under the well-focussed, forward-looking direction of the headteacher the school has a clear Christian vision for its mission and development as a church school. This is totally linked to the values of the school which underpin all of its work and the headteacher models the Christian values of the school at all times. The needs of all learners are of paramount importance to her, she knows them and their families well and is always quick to respond to any difficulties. The curriculum is very broad, balanced and distinctive because of the addition of Godly play and enrichment time which further enhances the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of pupils. Arrangements for RE and collective worship meet all statutory requirements. The Governing Body play an active role in the life of the school. It understands the school very well and know its strengths and areas for development. Governors visit frequently, and have attended training courses. Following the previous SIAS inspection the Governing Body conscientiously drew up an effective action plan to address the points raised. The recommendations from the previous inspection have now been met fully. The school's development plan is well designed and the governors are currently considering the advantages of becoming a multi-academy trust in conjunction with other church schools and community schools. The school's self-evaluation is both very accurate and perceptive but parents are not involved in any evaluation on the distinctiveness of the school's Christian character. The school takes the professional development of all staff seriously. Staff have attended training courses run by the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) and officers from the DBE visit the school to offer advice and support. All teachers have received professional development in the teaching of RE. RE is well resourced. The current RE subject leader has been appointed as the new deputy headteacher. Links with the local church next door are exceptionally strong. The relationship between the two is a seamless one of excellent integration and collaboration. The church's Children and Outreach Coordinator is a valuable asset to the school helping with collective worship and Godly play. The school uses the church buildings extensively and church also uses the school during holiday times. Links with other churches and the local community are also very strong. Parents are totally supportive of the school. One parent said, 'the school nurtures children spiritually, emotionally and academically and makes them rounded individuals'.

SIAMS report June 2014 St John's CE VC First Wimborne BH21 1BX