

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

### St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Crescent Road, Friern Barnet, London N11 3LB

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>London</b>
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Barnet
Date/s of inspection	21 June 2017
Date of last inspection	April 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	101319
Headteacher	Graham Gunn
Inspector's name and number	John Viner NS144

#### School context

St John's is a smaller than average primary school and nursery, located in Friern Barnet and serving the parish of St John the Evangelist. Its 248 pupils are drawn from the immediate area. There is a higher than average proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language and a slightly higher than average proportion with special educational needs. A lower than average proportion of disadvantaged pupils is eligible for additional government funding. Over half the pupils attend church. Pupils make good progress and standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are above national averages.

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

- The headteacher, incumbent and governors share and articulate an ambitious Christian vision for the school that ensures that it lives out its mission of faith, excellence and enjoyment.
- Christian values are evident in every aspect of the school's life and inspire its many contributions to the community.
- Worship and prayer are the heartbeat of the school, affirming adults and pupils, regardless of their faith or belief.
- The rich and fulfilling religious education (RE) curriculum gives pupils a deep understanding of Christianity and key world faiths so that they recognise similarities and celebrate difference.
- The strong and effective partnership with the parish church unite them as a shining light of Christian love in the community they serve.

#### Areas to improve

- Strengthen the systems and processes of assessment in RE so that teachers have a more accurate understanding of pupils' spiritual development when planning lessons.

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

The school is grounded in Christian values, which are expressed in its motto - Faith, Excellence and Enjoyment - and expanded by reference to the biblical 'Fruits of the Spirit' (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and self-control). Pupils not only articulate these fruits but they understand that they provide a foundation for their lives and compel them to works of compassion for others. Parents confirm that these Christian values, which the school promotes, define its identity and are evident in every aspect of its work. They inspire the excellent, warm and productive relationships between and among adults and learners, which make the school a harmonious and loving community.

Pupils acknowledge that through the school's Christian character, they understand that they are safe, valued and important and, as a result, they come to school regularly, behave well and work hard. Because of this, they make good progress and achieve high standards. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well so that they respond thoughtfully and develop attitudes of compassion and mutual respect. From the moment they join the school, pupils are encouraged to recognise that they are spiritual beings. Throughout the school there is a shared and growing understanding of spirituality which promotes self-esteem and inspires pupils to good works.

The school is rightly proud of the works of Christian compassion that it undertakes in the community. Together with a rich and interesting curriculum, these opportunities enrich the experience of pupils. As a result, they recognise that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith and develop high levels of understanding of, and respect for diversity. Parents and governors say that this is living out its mission by putting faith into action. Pupils are excited and challenged by RE, know that it plays a major role in defining the school's Christian character and are enthusiastic in learning about faith and belief. More than that however: they understand that faith leads to action.

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

Collective worship is the heartbeat of the school. It takes place each day and its central place in school life confirms its importance. Worship is inclusive and inspiring: it engages all who attend, whether adults or pupils. All are affirmed by it, regardless of their faith or belief. Parents agree that worship and prayer help their children to lay down strong foundations for their life. Many give examples of times when their children pray or sing at home, drawing on their experience at school. Parents of other faiths say that, by taking part in school worship, their children deepen their own faith.

Worship is skilfully and professionally planned under the leadership of the incumbent so that it strongly underpins the school's Christian values. Worship themes are inspirational, offering high levels of spiritual reflection and challenging pupils to take responsibility for their own actions. Pupils recognise that their desire to reach out to others often starts from what they experience in worship. A range of leaders, including headteacher, staff, governors and clergy, ensure that worship is fresh and interesting, engaging pupils and holding their interest. Pupils come to worship reverently, sit attentively and participate enthusiastically. Collective worship is biblical, rooted in the person of Jesus. It is also Trinitarian, and, even in the youngest years, pupils can explain that Christians regard God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pupils make an excellent contribution to worship by leading many aspects of it, such as reading and praying. This helps to develop their public and spiritual confidence. Worship is distinctly Anglican and, through simple liturgies and the use of a prayer table, with a cross and candles, pupils have an excellent experience of Anglican tradition and practice. This is further strengthened by the school Eucharist, which takes place in the parish church at least once each term.

From the moment they join the school, pupils develop a living appreciation of the nature and purpose of prayer. There are many excellent opportunities for them to learn how to craft their own prayers for use in acts of worship so that prayer becomes a natural part of the rhythm of life. The weekly lunchtime prayer group, which some pupils attend, enables them to develop the habit of praying with and for others. There are also occasions when pupils can reflect and pray personally and privately. The reflection areas in classrooms help to provide a focus and an opportunity. Worship is effectively monitored by leaders and governors, who take pupils' views into account so that there is ongoing development and planned improvement.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding**

RE has a high priority in the school. Pupils make good progress from the time they enter the school, whatever their starting points, and achieve standards that are in line with national expectations and often above. These are similar to standards in other core subjects and work in books indicates that pupils take the same level of care in their presentation of RE as they do in other areas. Pupils universally agree that they are excited by RE and learn a lot

from it. Because of the shared sense of spirituality that characterises the school, they quickly develop significant depth and maturity in their thinking and acquire the higher skills of enquiry, reflection and analysis. Teaching is consistently good, and some is exceptional, leading to outstanding progress in the maturity of pupils' responses. Where teaching is not of this very high standard it is because teachers do not always recognise pupils' high spiritual starting points when planning their lessons.

The school has invested much time and effort in developing its curriculum, taking on the new diocesan syllabus, which is enhanced by units of work developed by the incumbent. This exciting curriculum is enriched by many interesting visits to places of worship and visitors who come into school to talk about their faith. Pupils say that they especially like the opportunities to learn about other faiths and parents agree, saying that the school prepares their children well for a multicultural world. The curriculum is generally well-balanced so that pupils not only develop an excellent understanding of Christianity but also learn key facts about other world faiths. At its best, the programme of study enables pupils to revisit topics at intervals, which helps to consolidate understanding. This rich experience ensures that RE makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As pupils move through the school, they acquire a depth of understanding that enables them to make connections between different aspects of faith and belief.

There is an effective system of regular assessment so that teachers appreciate their pupils' progress. The system remains under development and is currently somewhat limited because it does not always link to what might be expected at each age and assumes that progress is linear rather than organic. Thus teachers do not always know how best to promote pupils' deeper spiritual development, and this is also evident in their marking and feedback.

RE is strongly led by an effective leader who has good specialist subject knowledge. She has a clear understanding of the subject's strengths and areas for development and is ably supported by the incumbent and by diocesan officers. As a result, RE continues to make a major contribution to pupils' deep understanding of faith and belief.

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

The headteacher, incumbent and governors consistently and confidently articulate an ambitious Christian vision for the school. This vision of the school as an expression of Christian love is lived out in the daily life of the school, it is shared by key staff and is leading the school's development as a place of excellence. The clear recognition of the underlying Christian values helps to drive this vision and has a positive impact on the development and achievement of pupils and the enrichment of their lives. There are excellent systems for keeping the school's Christian distinctiveness under review. As a result, leaders and governors have a thorough appreciation of the school's Christian character: they understand its strengths and areas for development. All work together to secure excellence in all aspects of the school's work. They have a clear understanding and anticipation of the school's future leadership needs and have robust plans to meet them. Governors have secured the high status and excellent leadership of RE and play a key role in monitoring both it and collective worship.

Leaders and governors ensure that the whole curriculum reflects the school's Christian values so that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in all aspects of their learning. The curriculum is rich and offers pupils exciting opportunities for adventurous activities as an element of living out the school's declared mission. School policies generally, but not consistently, reflect the school's Christian values in their implementation.

A significant strength of the school lies in excellent and productive local partnerships. There are many links with community groups and a carefully planned placement programme enables pupils from all years to make considerable contributions to their work. This outreach to the community is of substantial and mutual benefit, adding capacity to community initiatives and enriching the lives of pupils. As a result, pupils leave the school with a genuine desire to help others, backed by experience. In addition to local links, the school enjoys many international links, with opportunities to visit other schools and host visitors from them.

There is a very strong partnership with the parish church that adds significantly to the lives of both school and church. The incumbent plays a key role in the life of the school, helping to meet the spiritual needs of staff, pupils and their families. This partnership is celebrated by parents of all faiths and recognised by all members of the wider school community as a light of hope in the community they serve.