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

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| **St John’s Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**  Coombe Avenue  Weymouth  Dorset  DT4 7TP  **Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding**  **Current inspection grade: Good**  **Diocese:** Salisbury  Local authority: Dorset  Dates of inspection: 24 May 2016  Date of last inspection: 9 June 2011  School’s unique reference number: 113838  Headteacher: Amanda Aze  Inspector’s name and number: David Hatrey 844 |
| **School context**  St. John’s Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is an average size school with 240 children on roll. The number of children who receive pupil premium funding is broadly in line with national averages, whilst the number of children who have English as an additional language is significantly below. The number of children who have special educational needs support is just above national averages**.** |
| **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. John’s as a Church of England school are good.**   * The leadership team’s enthusiasm and dedication has helped create a church school based securely upon distinct Christian values. * The Christian distinctiveness is clearly reflected in its support for families and children who are nurtured and feel valued. * The religious education (RE) subject leader’s expertise is making a good contribution to teaching and learning, raising children’s progress and enhancing their attitude towards the subject. * A warm and caring Christian ethos has been created where good relationships between all members of the school are attributed to Jesus’ teaching. |
| **Areas to improve**   * Establish an agreed definition of spirituality with planned high quality experiences through which children can express their ideas in a variety of innovative ways. * Enable children to recognise how the messages given in worship can inspire their lives and choices. * Draw upon the expertise of the RE subject co-ordinator to develop the quality of teaching and learning in the subject across the school so that all children are excited by the RE. |

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| **The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good at meeting the needs of all learners.**  St. John’s recently reviewed its distinctive Christian values and extended them to six. They are courage, compassion, truthfulness, friendship, forgiveness and respect. These are increasingly and effectively being woven into teaching and the life of the school, although some, such as respect, have yet to be explored. Children have a growing understanding of these core values and are often able to link them to Bible stories. Children recognise that their values come from the teachings of Jesus, that ‘this is how He would want us to live’. There is a strong emphasis on values having a relevance to daily lives. Within lessons, children are challenged to apply values to explore how they make a difference in daily situations. Religious education (RE) supports this very well. Prominent displays remind children of values and how these are seen in action. They confidently identify how values have influenced their lives and attitudes to others. They are aware that values have created a caring environment where they feel safe and special to God. This ethos encourages children to articulate their ideas knowing they will be listened to with respect even if others do not agree. Staff fully support and are committed to the school’s Christian vision. They model the core values in their own relationships with children and parents. Parents confirmed that staff are always available to respond to their needs and show genuine care. Children show the same care for others in need either by words or actions. Bullying and name calling are very rare; children refer to the values to help resolve minor disputes in a thoughtful way. “Spirit of St. John’s” awards are given to children who show the ‘fruits of the spirit’ in action. These are prestigious and are celebrated in school and on the web site. Provision for spirituality and reflection has been enhanced. At present however there is no agreed definition of spirituality from which all staff work, neither are there planned opportunities to develop these through all curriculum areas. Positive links with a Kenyan school has enabled children to consider how Christians in other parts of the world show their faith and how cultures change. Teaching about world faiths encourages comparisons between traditions and cultures and inform the children’s own beliefs. |
| **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.**  Collective worship has a high profile in school life. The gathering of the school community is recognised as a time to share with God. Each week an aspect of the current value is explored so that its relevance in everyday situations is explored. Links between Biblical teaching and values are made explicit. Class worship extends this further when themes are discussed at an age appropriate level. Class reflection diaries record ideas and thoughts developed in worship. These have been developed with an emphasis on children’s responses which show a steadily growing understanding and greater depth of thinking. Older children have their own reflection diaries and the encouragement of more creative ways to express their thoughts is helping them articulate their ideas. Children lead worship from Key stage 2 with support from the youth chaplain who nurtures their confidence. The school’s thoughtful but critical evaluation recognises that this can be developed further through more regular opportunities. Children have a good understanding of prayer. ‘Connecting with God’ was how many children explained prayer. Younger children composed thank you prayers, quickly moving on to ‘teaspoon’ prayers which include thank you, please and sorry. A prayer wall encourages children to write their own prayers to address any issues they have. Older children’s understanding of prayer is developing. They pray for friends, others in distress or to ask God questions. Children feel they can use prayer anywhere, talking openly, and have found this valuable. Creative prayer spaces around the school stimulate thoughtful prayer responses. All children have a good knowledge of Jesus and are able to articulate why He is important for them. Creative teaching enables younger children to develop an understanding of the Trinity. The governor’s Christian distinctiveness committee monitors and evaluates worship effectively, involving children. Improvements have included longer periods of reflection and the introduction of reflection diaries. Children felt messages and teaching in worship were clear. Whilst they enjoyed this time many could not articulate how this has helped them personally. |
| **The effectiveness of the religious education is good.**Attainment in RE at the end of Years 2 and 6 is comparable with other core subjects with standards in at least in line with national expectations. Children make good progress in RE as reflected in work from their books. An enquiry approach readily engages children in learning. They form questions which are explored in response to pictures, DVDs or artefacts, starting from their own ideas. Responses show that they reshape these ideas, wrestling to form new understanding. Working collaboratively, they are challenged to justify their thoughts, recognising how what they learn could impact upon their daily lives. Use of RE theme weeks, such as Pentecost, allows children to explore its significance in greater depth. They enjoy responding creatively using art, music or drama. Children are confident to share ideas using religious vocabulary with accuracy. There is a good balance of learning about and learning from religions. Children’s moral understanding is developing and is supported by planning for skills and opportunities to develop thinking and reflection. The quality of leadership in RE is very good. New initiatives, such as ‘teaching Christian concepts’ and the Discovery RE scheme, are making a positive difference to the quality of RE as they become embedded. They effectively support the teaching of Christian values and enrich the distinctive Christian ethos. The quality of teaching and learning is good and is developing due to the staff’s openness to new ideas and the RE co-ordinator’s expertise. In order to achieve outstanding the school needs to share this expertise so that all children are excited by RE, using the higher order thinking skills consistently in their learning. |
| **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding.**  The leadership team has a very clear vision for the school as a church school firmly based on distinctive Christian values. Their enthusiasm and dedication has created an ethos with high expectations for children to achieve their potential as well as enabling them to experience Christian values and how they contribute to everyday life. Equally apparent is the high profile given to RE and worship and how together they enrich the school’s ethos. The Christian distinctiveness is reflected in compassionate nurture and care for families and children. This is seen in the substantial support for new families or those experiencing family crisis which has a marked and valued impact. An example was seen when a staff member, aware of family worries, spoke to a child not in their class which was supportive; the child appreciating that they were valued. Specially trained staff to support and raise children’s self-esteem and help emotional issues is very effective. Robust systems to monitor the tracking of pupil progress are in place and swift action is taken when children need further interventions. At the same time each child’s wellbeing is promoted as they are ‘all special to God’. Governors are pro-active in their work, committed to the vision and provide effective challenge and support. The Christian distinctiveness committee monitors worship which has led to significant changes. They also led the successful review of the school’s Christian values which were subsequently extended. Further training has accurately focused upon specific needs, such as how to develop the teaching of Christian concepts effectively. This has drawn upon Diocesan expertise and the auditing of the school’s provision. Forming a cluster to work with other church schools locally has enabled more staff to develop their knowledge and skills whilst providing partnerships to share ideas and moderate work. This has had a positive impact on children’s learning and progress. The local church is committed to the school and makes a significant contribution to its life. They are active in leading worship and welcome the school’s celebration of Christian festivals in church. The vicar as chair of governors plays a very significant role on the governing body and is well supported by other church members. Children talk about this as their church. Parents are frequently involved in school life. They are aware of the current Christian value through activities which they can do at home with their children and families. They are full of praise for the school’s work. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship. |

SIAMS report May 2016 St. John’s CE VA Primary School Weymouth DT4 7TP