

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Tisbury St Johns Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	
Weaveland Road Tisbury Salisbury Wiltshire SP3 6HJ	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Salisbury
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Wiltshire
Date of inspection	23 November 2016
Date of last inspection	13 December 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 126388
Headteacher	Lisa Portch
Inspector's name and number	Penny Burnside 772

School context

St John's is smaller than the average-sized primary school with 111 children on roll. The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs is higher than average. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals has risen and is now above the national average. Children in Key Stages 1 and 2 are organised in mixed-age classes. Most of the children in Year 6 in 2016 joined this school later than the Reception year. Since the previous inspection, there have been considerable changes in staffing. The headteacher has been in post since September 2015.

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

- The school's core values are clearly expressed and make a positive difference to children's everyday lives. Whilst the school's leaders are sure that these are explicitly Christian values, they are sensitive when talking about them as such, because they recognise the diverse nature of the families who choose this school.
- Although there are different definitions of spirituality within the school community, all groups value the rich opportunities provided for spiritual development.
- Knowledgeable and skilled governors are actively involved in the daily life of the school and make a substantial contribution to the effectiveness and continuing development of its Christian ethos.
- The recent adoption of *Aspect Leadership* as a system for improving teaching and learning is helping the relatively new team to strengthen teaching in religious education (RE).

Areas to improve

- Ensure children's experience of worship is enriched by planning more opportunities for them to be actively involved in leading, planning and evaluation.
- Strengthen systems for monitoring, evaluating and developing the school's Christian distinctiveness and effectiveness so that all areas benefit from the same level of attention as RE.
- Ensure that children understand why Christians worship Jesus Christ by helping them to make links between events recorded in the Bible and the ways in which believers in this country and around the world practise their faith today.

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

The five core values of kindness, honesty, perseverance, respect and responsibility are evident throughout the school environment and referred to by adults as shaping and defining the school. One child explained that, 'they help the school to be a better place.' Children recognise that the values contribute towards good behaviour for example, in resolving disagreements in the playground, 'because you can sort it out there and then.' Whilst the values are taught in collective worship with explicit references to their roots in the Bible, not all members of the community are happy to talk about them in explicitly Christian terms. The school handles this apparent tension well, by encouraging honest conversation and welcoming a range of opinions. As one child said, 'We don't mind what people say because that's what they think.' Children see this lived-out by adults. For example, the questions in the parents' surveys successfully encourage individual responses, and this prompted one parent to write, 'All religions are welcome, which is evidence of Christianity in this school.' A striking example of the values in action is the way in which even very young children listen respectfully to one another. This is at times necessary for this particular school community because deep thinking, which sometimes involves lengthy responses, for example in RE lessons, is encouraged. Children enjoy RE and show understanding and respect for others. Their understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith however is limited. Since the last inspection, many opportunities for spiritual development have been identified and they occur naturally as part of the school's rich and creative curriculum provision. These include reflection time in worship, 'philosophy corner,' where the questions sometimes relate to the school's Christian values and a mindfulness club where children frequently talk about God. The creation of the Griffin class, providing additional specific support for a wide range of needs, is making a significant contribution to the whole-school ethos of nurture for the individual child.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Different members of the school community agree that collective worship is important, but the reasons behind this differ. Parents, including some who acknowledge that they would not ordinarily attend a church service, welcome opportunities to join with the school community to celebrate children's achievements in a Christian context, such as the popular Friday assemblies where there is 'standing-room only'. Other adults refer to the significance for children of celebrating Christian festivals saying, 'All the important things in children's lives are celebrated in the church.' Children say that assembly is where they learn about Christian values. The school involves a number of visitors, including a governor, clergy and an 'Open the Book' team to enrich children's experience of worship. Children talk with particular enthusiasm of the 'Open the Book' sessions, saying they like the Bible stories and enjoy joining-in. Opportunities at other times for children to be more actively involved, particularly in leading or planning, are limited. Since the last inspection, the school has involved children a little in evaluating worship, but the current approach is not yet helping leaders know how worship might be improved. Worship themes support the school's core values. Everyone who leads worship contributes towards planning and although the teaching team is relatively new, all teachers are expected to lead worship. Some children speak confidently about God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit saying for example, 'It's perplexing – almost like a puzzle which no-one will understand until they get to Heaven,' but some children struggle to understand the significance in worship of the Trinity, and of Jesus Christ in particular. The 'worship walls' in classrooms provide a good example of the school's planning for the impact of collective worship to extend beyond the daily act of worship. Where these work well, worship themes are discussed further and children independently add their own thoughts and prayers to the worship wall. A particularly effective approach seen in one class is an 'Open the Book' big scrapbook, where children's responses are kept and which provides opportunities for children to reflect over time.

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

The headteacher demonstrates her commitment to driving forward the Christian ethos of the school by making Christian values a focus during development days for staff and governors. Her personal vision, summed up in this quote, 'Every child is a different kind of flower and all together make this world a beautiful garden,' is displayed prominently alongside the core values and list of Fruit of the Spirit. Standards are rising, especially in Key Stage 1 and the headteacher quotes the school's values as contributing towards these improvements. For example, a number of children have joined the school from other schools and the headteacher describes their experience of the Christian ethos, and the modelling of Christian values by other children, as helping them to settle in the school and make progress in their learning. Governors carry-out their work with an equally strong vision, describing the school as a place of 'warm fires and open doors.' They work strategically, using their specialist skills, to support the recently-formed staff team as they develop as possible future leaders of church schools. One governor, for example, supports the leadership of collective worship. Another is working alongside teachers to help introduce new RE materials. The headteacher is currently the leader for collective worship and RE and, supported by these

knowledgeable and skilled governors, she ensures that both have a high profile. The recent turnover of staff however has resulted in slower than expected progress in driving improvement in these areas. Priorities identified in the previous inspection have been addressed, although some aspects, for example monitoring of the impact of collective worship in a systematic way, are still developing. Recent monitoring of RE, as part of the school's *Aspect Leadership* programme, is resulting in improvements in teaching and providing rich professional development for teachers and governors. Parent surveys, specifically concerning the Christian character of the school, are a strong feature. Links with the church are good and because of this children know members of the parish well. This strengthens their sense of connection with the local church, which they regard as 'a happy place.' The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship and RE.

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