

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St John's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Boreham Road, Warminster, Wiltshire BA12 9JY

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Salisbury
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	1 July 2017
Name of multi-academy trust	Acorn Education Trust
Date of inspection	7 July 2017
Date of last inspection	9 July 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary Academy 144854
Headteacher	Berkeley Basinger-Adams
Inspector's name and number	Marcia Headon 761

School context

St John's is a smaller-than-average sized primary school of 114 pupils aged 4-11. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is in line with the national average, although the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs/disabilities is above the national average. In September 2015, a new headteacher joined the school. The school became an academy as part of the Acorn Education Trust in July 2017. In July 2015, the school was graded by Ofsted as requires improvement. A monitoring visit in January 2017 reported the school was taking effective action towards becoming a good school.

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

- Governors are very strongly committed to the development of the school as a church school and are determined to strengthen its Christian character as an academy.
- Christian teaching has sustained the personal well-being, good behaviour and strong relationships within the school during a period of considerable change.
- Strong links with the local church have supported pupils' spiritual development especially through the 'spiritual journey' and 'experience days' which the church has initiated.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that pupils understand the connections between the core values of the school and the teachings of Jesus which give them examples of how to live their lives.
- Develop pupils' involvement in the planning and leading of whole-school collective worship so their understanding of the purposes and impact of worship is strengthened.
- Develop a shared understanding of spirituality across all staff so they can more effectively use opportunities within the school to deepen pupils' spiritual thinking and expression.

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

The five core Christian values of love, trust, respect, justice and friendship were introduced in January 2017 after consultation with pupils, staff and the governing body. They have a high profile around the school, with displays in classrooms and pupils able to nominate others whom they consider have demonstrated the values in everyday life. Many pupils explain how the values affect their lives both in school and out of school. Pupils recognise the values of trust and honesty as being very important to them. They are taught the value of respect not only for others but themselves. They show the impact of this in many aspects of life. They show pride and respect in their work, as is shown by their emphasis upon presentation and handwriting. Pupils consider the value of friendship to be very important. They welcome new pupils to the school warmly. Pupils show tolerance and care towards those less fortunate than themselves. A visitor from Ghana was very moved when the children gave him a cross from the school as his school had none. They raise considerable sums of money for charity, and at Harvest help by donating to the local food bank. At St John's, pupils are well cared for, their needs are considered and staff feel it vitally important that they live out the value of love in the way they look after them. The school is a highly inclusive community. The staff go the extra mile to help pupils, for example by modifying the timetable for pupils who find some lessons too challenging, or by providing extra help for a child with medical needs. Pupils whose attendance is not good are supported to help them come to school regularly. Behaviour in school is generally good. Restorative justice is used as part of behaviour management in school and this is strongly linked to the values. However, the explicit Christian nature of the values with their links to biblical stories has not yet been fully understood by pupils. They are also not clear about the links between the Christian values, their learning power values and the Golden Rules of the school. Leaders are aware that they have only just begun this 'journey'. Pupils feel a great loyalty to their school. Because of the care and support given by the school as a result of its Christian ethos and belief that all children are unique, achievement is improving rapidly. Attainment in the Year 6 tests in 2017 has increased dramatically and the differences between disadvantaged groups, those who have special educational needs/disabilities and other pupils in the school are diminishing. Currently, there is no agreed definition of spirituality across the school, although opportunities for spiritual enhancement are developed by journey and experience days and pupils are beginning to express their ideas with more confidence. The school has begun to map opportunities for spiritual development across the curriculum but this is relatively recent. Pupils show positive attitudes towards religious education (RE). It makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Morally, the value of fairness is a major theme in topics such as Fairtrade. Socially, pupils are given a variety of activities which involve sharing and discussions and cooperating with one another. Cultural development is established through the study of other faiths and the spiritual development can be seen by the increasing depth of questions which pupils are asking.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The impact of worship is good because time for worship is valued by all and seen as important in the life of the school. Themes for collective worship are planned by the headteacher and a foundation governor and are based around 'Values for Life' and the church calendar. These are then developed further in weekly class worship. Pupils record their thoughts in class reflection diaries. Worship is distinctly Christian and normally uses biblical stories, rooted in the person and character of Jesus, to illustrate its message. Pupils describe worship as being a place where they listen and learn new stories. They particularly enjoy 'Open the Book' sessions where they participate in the actions or take part in the drama. They remember 'Open the Book' stories about Noah and Daniel and the Prodigal Son. Pupils like celebration worship where they 'see their friends get rewards'. They also enjoy worship in the local church, which takes place at least twice per term. These events are very well attended by parents, and pupils participate in reading and leading prayers; sometimes a whole class leads a part of this worship. Daily collective worship routinely opens with a pupil saying a Christian greeting and a special opening prayer written by the recently formed Spirituality Council. This incorporates the core Christian values of the school. Candles are lit to represent the Trinity and coloured cloths linked to the liturgical year are placed on the worship table. Pupils' understanding of the Trinity and the liturgical colours is at an early stage of development. Pupils sing enthusiastically and have a good knowledge of the Lord's Prayer, which is used to close the worship. Older pupils have led worship for younger pupils in class worship, but pupils are not routinely involved in planning or leading collective worship for all. Evaluation of worship by pupils is developing. As a result, pupils are now asked to come out and say an impromptu prayer, but this is very recent. Staff are not involved in evaluation, and that conducted by governors is very informal. Prayer is interwoven through the school day with prayers at break, lunchtime and before going home. Pupils show a good understanding of the nature and purpose of prayer. Reflective areas are established in classrooms and the school has a spiritual garden which is currently being redeveloped. The majority of pupils use this area sensibly but report that not all pupils treat it with the respect it deserves. Worship includes all members of staff and they report that they feel affirmed by it.

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

The headteacher has a distinct vision of how he wishes the school to develop as a church school. However, he has not yet fully involved the staff in developing the vision or made sure all staff are aware of how fully his vision is underpinned by the Christian character of the school. He has effectively developed a committed staff team who wish the school to flourish as a church school. Since his appointment, the headteacher has placed an emphasis upon raising standards and achievement. At the same time, he has successfully introduced initiatives to refocus the emphasis upon Christian distinctiveness. It is now much more evident to the community that the school is a church school. The school development plan for both 2016 and 2017 contain actions about church school distinctiveness to take the school forward. Governors are fully committed to the school and have addressed the points from the previous inspection conscientiously. They are aware that less emphasis has been placed on the Christian distinctiveness over previous years. Although they have not as yet completed an audit of this in order to be able to pinpoint exactly the areas for development, they do have a Christian distinctiveness development plan. They were very determined that the Christian character of the school should be preserved and enhanced when they joined an academy trust and took great care to visit schools in other trusts before making any decision as to which trust to join. They have ensured that they have kept themselves up to date by attending regular training at the Diocese. Despite a long period when the church has had a vacancy for its rector, links with the local church have remained very strong. Members from the church have been the driving force behind the 'journey' and 'experience' days for the school and these have had a significant impact in developing pupils' spirituality. Church members contribute regularly to collective worship, especially the 'Open the Book' sessions. Pupils' work is displayed in the church and events in the life of the school are reported to the church council. The church annual report contains a very full account of the extensive links with the school. The school has sought to develop its staff as leaders of church schools. The headteacher has attended training at the Diocese, more recently on Understanding Christianity, and the leader for RE has attended briefing sessions. The school has developed good links with the local community. It recently participated in a community event, providing part of a garden display in the town. The school showed its Christian ethos very effectively by the word 'love' being shown in the plants displayed. Parents are very supportive of the school. They appreciate its Christian character and its strong links with the local church, and view it as a place which cares about the personal well-being of their children and teaches them strong values. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

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