



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St James' Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

Park Lane
Alderholt
Fordingbridge
SP6 3AJ

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Salisbury

Local authority: Dorset

Dates of inspection: 25 September 2015

Date of last inspection: 1 December 2010

School's unique reference number: 113752

Acting Headteacher: Kathryn Cousins

Inspector's name and number: Linda Windsor (747)

School context

St James' is a smaller than average first school with 104 pupils on roll, aged from 4 to 9 years old. 10.5% of its pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and are supported at school. This is a little above the national average. 10.5% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is below the national average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Attendance is good. The school is a Rights Respecting School and a Bronze Level Eco School. At present, there is an acting headteacher and an acting assistant headteacher in post.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St James' First School as a Church of England school are good

- There are exceptionally good links with the local community, especially the local clergy and churches.
- A committed staff, who are excellent role models, promote the Christian ethos of love and care that is evident across the school.
- The Christian ethos underpins all aspects of school life and is seen as central to its success.
- The focus is on all children as unique and valued individuals who do their best every day.
- Quality experiences enable pupils to develop a personal spirituality with opportunities for deep thinking and a growing understanding of the natural world.

Areas to improve

- The school leadership team, including foundation governors, to develop a more rigorous, systematic approach to the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship and religious education to ensure its positive impact.
- Use the school's Christian ethos to reshape the Christian values, in consultation with all stakeholders, so that they are clear and are linked to biblical teachings more explicitly and meaningfully.

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

The Christian vision is made clear in the school motto which references being part of God's family and to being loving, learning and caring, as Jesus taught us. The pupils know the motto well and are able to explain what it means and how it influences them. One child said, "I think about it in the playground and in class. It helps me learn and behave better." As a result, the vast majority of pupils in this school do very well academically and are consistently above the national average in all areas. Vulnerable pupils do well too, achieving an average point score above national expectations. All pupils are seen as unique individuals in God's family: all are valued and supported in a way that best suits their needs. The school is aware of the need to improve outcomes for the most able pupils. The expectation of good behaviour is seen across the school. Pupils are clear about the Christian ethos espoused by the school and they are clear about how they should act. Consequently, pupils take responsibility for their own behaviour and are considerate and supportive of others in school, especially those who find it more challenging. Relationships are, therefore, excellent across the school with all the adults being role models, living the school's Christian mission each day. As a Rights Respecting school, there has been a drive to make links between pupils' rights and responsibilities with appropriate biblical teachings. Whilst there are learning values in place, the Christian values are not yet clearly articulated or understood by all. The school recognises this and has plans to more clearly identify its chosen values, in consultation with staff, pupils, parents and governors. Pupils demonstrate compassion and commitment in organising a range of charitable events, raising significant sums of money to support their chosen charities. A Macmillan coffee morning, on the day of inspection, did really well, raising a significant amount of money and was supported by parents, grandparents and others from the village. Pupils understand that there are others, locally, nationally and globally, who need their support. This understanding of the diversity of the world is very well supported by religious education in school, when pupils learn about a range of cultures and faiths, including the diversity of Christianity practices in other countries. As an Eco School, this emphasis on local through to global issues is apparent and pupils talk with passion about events that affect the world, both natural and man-made. The Outdoor Learning Curriculum provides pupils with high quality learning opportunities as well as encouraging a growing sense of spirituality. Parents agree that the school's Christian ethos plays a key part in its success, one parent saying, "We moved from a community school and I can see a difference in the behaviour of the children and in the respect shown by all." A foster parent expressed his pleasure at how well his fostered child had settled in the school, with the friendliness of the pupils and the support of the staff having ensured a smooth transition from the previously attended inner city school. This exemplifies how effectively the school lives its Christian vision.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is a focal point for all within the school day. It is a time of community, praise, celebration, reflection and prayer. It is well planned to link to the school's Christian ethos and includes biblical teachings that illustrate expected moral values. All key Christian festivals are celebrated, either in school or in the local church. Worship has a variety of formats and is led by staff and, on a weekly basis, visitors to the school. These include local clergy of varying Christian denominations, foundation governors and others. Pupils participate enthusiastically in worship, leading prayer, acting Bible stories, lighting the candle and responding to the worship content appropriately. Most worship is as a whole school but pupils value the weekly class worship, when they have the opportunity to reflect more deeply on the current theme. Worship Time reflection books illustrate the deeper thinking and the spiritual development that result from worship over time. The worship observed, led by the headteacher, was excellent. Pupils participated fully and appropriately. The singing was joyous and is a strength of the school. Pupils led prayers confidently and naturally. The use of prayer goes much wider than just worship sessions. Pupils talk about using prayer at any time, to ask for help, to say thank you, to pray for others. They show an excellent understanding of prayer as talking to God and can describe how it helps them. One child said, "Prayer calms me down so I can do better." Pupils have a growing

understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and this concept is regularly referred to in both worship and in religious education. Parents and grandparents regularly attend the school's Friday worship as well as other services, such as Harvest, Christmas and the Leavers' Service. They spoke highly of their enjoyment in sharing this part of the school week with their children. Foundation governors are very involved in regularly delivering worship. They understand that they have a role in monitoring and evaluating worship in a systematic way so that they can more fully understand its impact on the school as a church school and that this aspect needs to be refreshed. The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship.

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

This school has had significant changes within the leadership team over the past four years. The acting headteacher, previously the school's assistant head, has accurately evaluated the school and is providing strong leadership, ably supported by other senior leaders and by governors. As a consequence, parents and pupils are very confident in the school and in its ability to continue to improve in all aspects. The foundation governors are involved in the school and have a good understanding of their role in support and challenge. They meet termly to discuss issues relating to the school as a church school but are aware of the need to implement a more robust system of monitoring and evaluation for both worship and religious education. The leadership, including governors, display honesty and integrity in their assessment of the school, recognising the influence of the past turbulence in leadership. The more stable year ahead will allow for a more effective understanding of the strengths and areas to be improved within the school. Exceptional relationships across the community benefit all involved. The school and church work very closely together and support each other in a range of ways, including Messy Church and the ReCreate community festival. The school also works closely with local schools and academies, supports teacher training initiatives and makes excellent use of diocesan advice and training. Three previous senior leaders of the school are now headteachers in other church schools and the acting headteacher has benefitted from diocesan advice and support. The school benefits from a stable staff who are in accord with the Christian ethos of the school and who work extremely well together to ensure effective outcomes, both academically and pastorally. The RE leader has attended diocesan training and has a clear plan for RE that ensures both high quality outcomes and good links to support the school's Christian ethos. The RE leader is currently working on the assessment of RE to ensure that it is accurate and that it informs future planning and development within the subject. Parents' praise for the school is enthusiastic and, despite the leadership changes, feel the school will go from strength to strength, agreeing that there has been a seamless transition and that the acting headteacher, well known by all, is "brilliant!" The school meets, and often exceeds, the statutory requirements for RE. All previous inspection action development points have been addressed

SIAMS report September 2015 St James' Church of England First School, Park Lane, Alderholt , Fordingbridge, Dorset SP6 3AJ