



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

### St James Church of England VC First School.

Gaunts Common  
Wimborne  
Dorset  
BH21 4JN

**Previous SIAS Grade: Good**

**Current SIAMS Grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: Salisbury**

Local authority: Dorset  
Dates of inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> November 2015  
Date of last inspection: 26<sup>th</sup> November 2010  
School's unique reference number: 113761

Headteacher: Jacqui Booth  
Inspector's name and number: Lorraine Pugh 819

#### School context

St James Church of England Voluntary Controlled First school is a rural school with 120 pupils. Teaching is arranged into four classes. The majority of its pupils are of white British heritage. Special educational needs are lower than the national average. Although pupils come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds levels of deprivation are low. The most recent Ofsted report (2014) judged the school to be outstanding in all areas. The previous SIAS report (2010) judged the school to be good.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. James First School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

- The school's strong emphasis on explicit Christian Values significantly impact on the daily behaviour and individual development of pupils.
- There are clear links between the school's Christian values, collective worship and religious education with each having Jesus and the teachings of the Bible as their focus.
- The commitment and vision of the Headteacher, staff governors and clergy in ensuring the school continually reviews and develops its Christian vision.
- The secure partnerships between the school, parents and church community in ensuring the school's outstanding effectiveness as a distinctively Christian school.

#### Areas to improve

- Development of RE assessment procedures in line with the New Primary Curriculum requirements.
- Development of outside worship spaces to provide increased opportunities for spiritual development.

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

The school's Christian values are clearly understood and frequently referred to by adults and pupils. Therefore, pupils are able to explain confidently how the values support their personal relationships and behaviour. Pupil conflict is speedily resolved with an emphasis on the values of forgiveness and reconciliation. Pastoral care and high academic achievement is central in the school's approach to the Christian ethos. Christian values of respect and kindness support high expectations. Learning takes place within this supportive environment where pupils feel safe and able to focus on their learning. Pupils with special educational needs make especially good progress due to the efforts made by the school in addressing their individual needs. The Headteacher is highly ambitious for the school and this ambition is supported by the work of her staff and governors. As a result academic standards consistently exceed national levels with almost all pupils reaching the expected levels of attainment for their age. A recent staff survey was very positive with one member stating, 'This is an amazing school and I am proud to be part of it'. Pupils are encouraged to learn from their mistakes and they are very willing to push themselves to achieve higher. Religious Education (RE) teaching is highly effective, challenging the children's thinking with questions such as, 'Was Jesus a good leader?' Pupil work shows a good balance between the gaining of knowledge and pupils' independent ideas. Quality resources that enhance and enrich the subject support excellent attitudes in RE and knowledgeable teaching. Religious festivals are celebrated through the Christian year and pupils, as a result of their active participation, are able to explain their meaning. Pupils know that they are part of a multi-faith world and are able to talk with enthusiasm about their learning of other faiths. Pupils are able to explain how they use the school's reflective spaces and the school's provision for personal prayer is strongly supporting spiritual and emotional development. Spirituality understanding and development has been a strong focus for the school since the last inspection and spiritual opportunities are now firmly embedded into school provision. Adults know each child well and the pupils know that they are cared for. The school's nurturing and compassionate atmosphere provides a happy and calm learning environment with mutual respect clearly evident throughout the whole school community.

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

Collective worship is an outstanding feature of the school. It is an integral part of school life and led by staff and regular visitors. Behaviour is exemplary and pupils are eager to participate. They talk confidently about school values and how they support their behaviour. Stimulating resources and Anglican traditions ensure that pupils gain a rich experience that captures their attention and interest. Jesus and his central position within Christianity is embedded within worship themes and pupils confidently discuss his teaching. Bible stories are a significant feature of worship and pupils talk about their favourite stories enthusiastically, aware that the stories support our own behaviour. The regular 'Open the Book' team are very popular visitors and the pupils enjoy learning from their dramatizations of Bible stories. Daniel is a particularly popular character with the pupils and they are able to confidently explain how God helped him when he was badly tricked by the King. Adult and child led prayer with reflection time are key features and pupils are able to share how personal prayer supports them. Pupils understand the Trinity at a level appropriate to their age because the adults leading worship make sure that language is simple and within their understanding. For example the worship candle has three wicks to represent God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit all as one. Pupils enjoy being participators in worship and they enjoy attending church services. Worship includes time for prayer and reflection. Although the school has plans to develop an outside worship area opportunities to use the school's beautiful outside space are currently limited. Pupils explain prayer as, 'Time for giving thanks and for asking for help'. Impact evidence for collective worship is written in a Reflection book. Worship evaluations are regularly made and pupil views form an especially important part of this with their ideas incorporated into future provision. Pupil voice has directed how pupils like to be seated and how they like to pray – for example, the choice in having their eyes closed or open.

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

The Headteacher and school governors are passionate that the school places Christianity at the heart of its vision. They ensure that the school's distinctively Christian character has a high profile to all members of the school community. Strong partnerships between the school's leadership and staff exist within an ethos of trust, respect and collaboration. This enables the school to successfully continually improve its provision for its pupils. Links with Salisbury Diocese ensures staff and governors benefit from personal, professional and spiritual development. The Headteacher uses her experience to support other headteachers with their development as Church school leaders, especially with spiritual development. Highly efficient monitoring and evaluation systems contribute very effectively to the school's effectiveness. The school uses the Dorset Agreed Syllabus that supports and enriches high quality learning. The school's RE leader is now exploring new ways of assessing RE without levels to ensure that RE remains central in the life of the school. Leadership evaluations by all leaders are successful in ensuring RE and Collective worship impact on the Christian development of the pupils which is a strong link to the core Christian values of the school. Governors are fully aware of the strengths of the school and make significant contributions to its development. Development areas from the previous SIAS inspection have been successfully addressed. Parents say the school gives their children opportunities to encounter faith in a way that promotes understanding and engagement. They are pleased that the school ensures their children know about other faiths. The newly appointed vicar has quickly become a regular visitor and active member of the governing body. Members of the church were successful in maintaining strong partnerships with the school during the interregnum period until the new vicar joined the community. Strong partnerships between St. James Church as well as local Methodist and Baptist clergy give the pupils and staff rich experiences and support. This enhances pupils' sense of belonging to the church and their understanding of Christian belief. Local and international links established by the school contribute successfully to the pupils' understanding of other communities. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their learning of other faiths and visits they have made to other faith buildings. They are keen to explain differences and similarities and why there should be respect between different faiths. Adult and child led charity work is a strong feature of the school and pupils of all ages confidently explain how this work impacts on their lives and that of others.