

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### St James' Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior school

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| Sandrock Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 3PR |                               |
| <b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>              | <b>Good</b>                   |
| <b>Diocese</b>                                     | <b>Rochester</b>              |
| Previous SIAMS inspection grade                    | Good                          |
| Local authority                                    | Kent                          |
| Date of inspection                                 | 21 June 2018                  |
| Date of last inspection                            | 22 March 2013                 |
| Type of school and unique reference number         | 118610                        |
| Executive headteacher                              | John Tutt                     |
| Inspector's name and number                        | Patrick Boughton-Reynolds 897 |

#### School context

St James' Church of England junior school is a three form entry school situated in the town of Tunbridge Wells. It shares the same site as St James' CE infant school and the executive headteacher is responsible for both schools. The infant school is the main feeder school. The majority of pupils are White British. The numbers of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those from disadvantaged backgrounds are significantly below the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average. These pupils come from a wide range of ethnic groups.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Saint James' as a Church of England school are good

- The Christian values of the school are firmly lived out in the daily actions of pupils and staff.
- Effective Christian leadership ensures that the school is continually improving the academic achievement, personal development and wellbeing of all learners, regardless of their ability and background.
- Worship is engaging and is a vital expression of the Christian identity of the school.
- Religious education (RE) makes a strong contribution to developing pupils' understanding of Christianity and to their spiritual, moral, cultural and social (SMSC) development.

#### Areas to improve

- Review and redefine the school's Christian vision in consultation with the wider school community and in the light of recent thinking by the Church of England so that there is a shared and clear understanding of the distinctiveness of St James' as a church school.
- Ensure that the refreshed vision forms the basis for strategic development and underpins all the school's policies and practice to enable provision to be consistently informed by the school's Christian character.
- Increase opportunities for prayer and quiet reflection in the school day, so that pupils can develop their personal spirituality.
- Extend the number of pupils involved in reviewing and leading worship, in order that they drive improvement for this aspect of the life of the school.

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

The Christian character of the school is strong and is expressed in the daily life of the school through its Christian values of co-operation, courage, friendship, forgiveness, honesty and trust. The biblical motivations for these values are explored and developed well through collective worship. As a result, pupils see these values as essential in their development at school, and they aim to live them out from the playground to the classroom. Pupils know that the school wants them to do well, not just in relation to academic results but also to be 'a generally nice person' as one Year 4 pupil stated. The Christian values of 'kindness' and 'care' are referred to frequently by all stakeholder groups as being of key importance, more so than the school's chosen value of 'co-operation'. The school has realised the need to redefine its values. It is working with the infant school to establish a common set of core Christian values to be shared by both schools. The Christian character of the school strengthens the relationships between all members of the school community, and provides for the wellbeing of the community. One pupil explained Christian values as 'things we have to keep to make our school a nice school'. Another poignantly added that, without values, 'the school would be dark, and we would be dark and down in our minds'. The value of forgiveness is seen as a key, particularly in regard to behaviour management. Pupils are encouraged to reflect when they misbehave but are reminded by leaders that, 'at St. James', if you are sorry, you will always be forgiven.' 'Shell awards' are given to a class weekly and 'shell cards' are given to pupils as a reward or in recognition for modelling core values. This strategy is effective in highlighting the importance of living out the school's values. However, very few pupils could explain the Christian symbolism of the shell or its connection to St James. The Christian character and values of the school underpin relationships between stakeholders and ensure that pupil behaviour is excellent. School staff members are motivated and work hard for the pupils. Parents say that the ethos gives the school a 'friendly feel' and that although school is 'ambitious academically', it wants pupils to achieve in all areas such as 'sports and chess'. Pupils enjoy the opportunities to pray and reflect, and discuss how it benefits them. However, these moments for personal prayer and silent reflection are limited during worship time and during the school day, and 'reflection areas' are not consistently available and utilised in all classrooms. A number of pupils expressed the desire to spend more time in thought and prayer at school. Christian symbols and high quality artwork decorate the school. Pupils understand these symbols and they are beginning to connect them more deeply with the school's Christian ethos and values. For example, one pupil could link the hall mural, showing a pupil's journey through school, with the idea of the 'journey through life' as represented by the pilgrim shell of St James. Pupils enjoy RE and are challenged by it. Pupils' understanding of Christianity is good, and they are developing an awareness of the diversity within the world wide church. Pupils have a growing appreciation of other world views and their knowledge of the major world religions is secure. Therefore, RE contributes significantly to pupils' SMSC development.

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

The worship programme is well-prepared and engaging. It uses diocesan schemes effectively, and is planned termly in collaboration with the infant school and the incumbent. Worship successfully explores themes from the liturgical calendar as well as school topics and values. Themes cover key moments in the Church year such as Easter and Pentecost, as well as key Christian teachings about the nature of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This contributes significantly to pupils' understanding of Christianity as a living faith. Worship develops personal spirituality and it provides pupils with the opportunity to develop their faith by making them think about Christian beliefs and teachings. It gives them opportunities to pray and to reflect. In the worship observed, the school value of forgiveness was explored through the headteacher's dramatic re-telling of the parable of the prodigal son using props and pupils. Activities like these make worship engaging and relevant in the lives of pupils. Prayer is fundamental to the life of this church school. Pupils read out their own prayers at the start of every worship time and they value doing this. However, opportunities for pupils to take a leading role in worship are limited. Pupils are provided with a rich experience of worship. This is achieved through using a range of worship leaders. For example, clergy from St James' lead worship on Tuesdays and representatives from other Christian denominations lead worship on Fridays. Hymns are sung by the whole school, notably in choral worship each Wednesday, and are a beautiful expression of its spirituality. Worship is predominantly Anglican in nature, although the structure of 'gathering, engaging, responding and sending' is not used daily. The school has addressed an area for development from the previous denominational inspection, and now worship is formally monitored each term, by leaders and by a small number of pupils. This is beginning to provide insight into how worship influences the life of the community and to inform development planning.

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

School leaders ensure a school vision based on Christian values underpins the daily practice of the school. The executive headteacher leads the school well, and has a strategic vision for the school which is based on distinctive Christian values. Leaders can explain how the Christian values of the school impact upon the holistic progress of all pupils. As a result, the school is achieving its mission 'to develop happy, healthy, confident and fulfilled children who strive to be the best they can in all that they do, gaining skills that will last a lifetime.' Governors and leaders ensure that the Christian character of the school implicitly impacts upon all areas; from teaching and learning to admissions and behaviour. However, a clear, cohesive and explicit Christian vision for the school is not articulated by all leaders and governors. Likewise, school policies are not all underpinned by an explicit Christian vision in their text. As a result, there is not a clear, unifying vision that is articulated and understood by all key stakeholders. Leaders have a thorough understanding of school performance, and plan carefully to ensure that pupils' individual needs are met. Good leadership in RE has ensured that the latest programmes of study are being used effectively. This has resulted in an improvement in the quality of teaching in RE. Pupils' understanding of Christianity has improved because 'it's more fun now, more than just writing because we use artwork and have discussions.' Leaders are prepared for future leadership across church schools, through partnerships, meetings and training with local schools and with the diocese. School leaders are forward thinking. They have strengthened the relationship with the infant school, so that the transition to Year 3 is a natural and seamless experience. St James' church is used for whole school celebrations during the year, such as harvest and a leavers service, providing a strong sense of identity for the school community. The incumbent has recently joined the board of governors, adding further to the rich collaboration between the two schools and the local church of St James'. The work with the 'parent rep' group and with the PTA ensures that strong community links are fostered. The arrangements for religious education and collective worship meet statutory requirements.

SIAMS report June 2018 St James' CE Junior School (VC), Tunbridge Wells TN2 3PR