

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St John's Church of England Primary and Nursery School	
Goodwyns Road, Dorking, Surrey. RH4 2LR	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Guildford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Date of academy conversion	November 2013
Name of multi-academy trust	The Good Shepherd Trust
Date of inspection	19 March 2018
Date of last inspection	10 February 2015
Type of school and unique reference number	139721
Headteacher	Mark Richards
Inspector's name and number	Dr Trevor Walker

School context

St John's is a smaller than average primary school and nursery. Nearly half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals and nearly a third are special educational needs (SEN) supported. The proportion of pupils for whom English is their second language is below that national average. The school joined The Good Shepherd Trust in October 2013. The predecessor school failed to provide a good standard of education for many years. In that time there was considerable upheaval, with nine headteachers in nine years and a high staff turnover. The current and substantive headteacher has been in post for three years. Ofsted first inspected the school as an academy in 2016 and it was judged to be good in all respects.

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

- Leadership and governance has enabled and encouraged assured and sustainable progress as a church school.
- The school's Christian character has underpinned much higher standards of achievement, especially with regards to pupil progress in the core subjects.
- Relationships are strong, attitudes of learning are positive and the school is well respected in the local community.
- Collective worship makes a constructive contribution to the strong sense of belonging, and the development and practice of prayerfulness lies at the heart of the school community.
- Religious education (RE) makes a constructive contribution to the Christian character of the school.

Areas to improve

- Explore ways to increase pupil involvement in whole-school worship and planning.
- Further develop the provision in RE by providing deeper challenge for the more able and ensuring that assessment considers how well pupils can master topic, age-related expectations.
- Securely embed a shared working definition of spirituality in order to plan progression through the curriculum.
- Increase pupils' understanding of worldwide, multi-cultural church.

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

St John's has made assured and sustainable progress since the last inspection. The school's stated aim is to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. This is being achieved through the important and enduring changes that have been made and continue to be embedded. Christian character shapes the strong relationships and good behaviour across the school. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive and they demonstrate their enjoyment and commitment to their learning. Christian values of trust, love, co-operation, courage, resilience, and respect underpin the Christian distinctiveness. The values are well known to the children and they provide them with a consistent point of reference. Older pupils can readily link them to the Christian narrative and apply them in their work and lives in school. One example was a child who had demonstrated courage by sharing an uncomfortable truth when it was right for her to do so. However, some of the younger pupils, although able to name all of the values, were less secure in their understanding of the biblical meaning and personal application. Standards in the core subjects of reading, writing and mathematics have rapidly improved, including those of the disadvantaged pupils. Across the school, standards are now in line with national averages. In 2017, pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 was well-above national averages, placing the school in the top band of all school's nationally. Commendable progress is underpinned through an unremitting focus on emotional needs and well being, and by building a stronger sense of reflection and responsibility. Attendance has improved considerably from a very low base and it is now in line with the national average for primary schools. The level of exclusion is below average and the school works effectively to both avoid exclusion and ensure that where it occurs there is a relentless focus on remedying the circumstances that had originally led to the exclusion. The distinctive Christian character of the school provides good support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in helping pupils explore spirituality and there is good evidence of open-ended questioning to be found in the class-based big question books. However, there still remains a need to fully embed a shared definition of spirituality in order to further enhance its progression and expression through the curriculum. The school's distinctive Christian character promotes respect and understanding of diversity and difference through a planned curriculum that engenders respect for others. Pupils take part in their Pupil Parliament where classes elect members to debate and decide matters concerning their school. RE makes a constructive contribution to the character of the school. One parent said that the school: 'sparks an interest in matters of faith'. An understanding of the worldwide and multi-cultural church is not so well developed.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is regarded as being an important time in each school day, and, as such, makes a constructive contribution to the strong sense of belonging that is an evident feature of the school community. The school has set an aim that all pupils should: 'engage in a meaningful and real act of collective worship each day'. Across the week, a balance of whole school and class worship provides inclusive opportunities, for both pupils and adults, to develop their personal spirituality through times of reflection, silence and prayer. All pupils, including those of other faiths or no faith, attend and feel both comfortable and challenged in doing so. References to God the Father, God the son and God the Holy Spirit are a focus at the beginning of all acts of worship. Worship is distinctively Christian and the school's values are at the heart of the practice and planning. Biblical material is regularly explored in order to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith. In the worship seen on the day of the inspection, the Old Testament story of David and Goliath was successfully linked to the value of courage. Anglican traditions are regularly promoted through the celebration of the festivals and seasons of the church's year, although pupils were less secure as to the meaning of some them. A first communion club has been formed to support pupils making their first communion. Pupils and staff attend Holy Communion services on special occasions, for example on Ash Wednesday. A school worship committee has been established consisting of senior school leaders and local church leaders and they plan, thematically, for a term ahead. Pupils also have opportunities to plan and take part in acts of class worship, although they are not involved to the same extent in planning for whole school worship. Pupils respond enthusiastically when asked to participate, but their involvement in leading, for example in the music and calling to worship, is less well developed. The local vicar leads acts of school worship, along with other visitors such as leader of the local Evangelical Free Church. A church group, called Open the Book, Make a much-appreciated and beneficial contribution. The contribution of all visitors is aligned with the school's themes and values.

St John's is a prayerful school and children are encouraged to pray at dedicated moments throughout the course of each day. Some younger pupils said that opportunities for prayer were their favourite part of collective worship. There are classroom reflection areas and at the time of the inspection, these were based on Jesus's 'I am' statements from St John's Gospel. Pupils are encouraged to write their own prayers, both asking and thanking, and these are blessed during the acts of worship. One prayer tree, sited in a corridor is designed for children to choose

an 'emoji' face to express their feelings. Jolly John's Farm, a community-based project based in the school grounds, enables pupils to appreciate and express their wonderment at God's creation. The children, staff and governors carry out monitoring and evaluation and each group have made effective contributions to on-going improvements.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Pupils' attitudes to RE are positive and they say how much they enjoy the subject. One parent reported that her child said: 'Yippee, it's RE today'. Standards in the subject, which are regularly reported to governors, are broadly in line with those of the other core subjects in the curriculum. The school follows the Guildford Diocesan Guidelines for RE and the subject is regarded as being a core element within the curriculum. Faiths other than Christianity are taught for an appropriate amount of the time that is available and these include, Buddhism, Judaism and Hinduism. RE teaching takes place on days that are specifically dedicated to teaching only RE and one whole unit of the subject is covered during the course of the day. These days occur at least once in every half term and they enable pupils to pursue their studies without interruption. Practical and engaging activities are encouraged and pupils say that they value the opportunity to concentrate on RE in a continuous block of time. On the inspection day (an RE day) the Year R play area had been laid out for the last supper with tables, chairs, utensils, imaginary food and drink and biblical costumes. An upper Key Stage 2 class were exploring the symbolism of Easter, and, in another class, pupils were learning about the pillars of Islam. Overall, the teaching is good and teachers possess good subject knowledge and effective questioning that tests pupils' knowledge and understanding. Nevertheless, more able pupils are not always working with sufficient challenge and in some cases there could be more work being presented in books and folders to demonstrate coverage and understanding. Visits to the local church and other religious places help to enhance enthusiasm and understanding.

Since the last inspection the school has successfully developed RE assessment, and pupils' learning outcomes are now matched more accurately to levels of attainment. However, the school recognises a need to consider methods of assessment that are aligned with other areas of the curriculum, based on their mastering age and topic-related expectations. This is especially the case with regard to the more able pupils and the need for them to work at greater depth. While the marking in books offers commendable praise it also needs to provide more feedback so that pupils are aware as to how they can improve their work. Subject leadership is strong and this has successfully moved the subject forward. The leader regularly shares with staff, the best practice that is collected through attending regular diocesan network meetings. She arranges appropriate and effective consultancy and ensures there is well-focused professional learning. Standards of work are moderated across and within the school but this has not been carried out alongside other church schools.

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

Under the inspired leadership of the headteacher, working in close conjunction with the strengths of the deputy headteacher, the school has made notable and sustainable progress since the last inspection. The headteacher has engendered a deeper understanding of what it means to be a church school, based on the God-given value placed on each child and adult in the school's community. The headteacher is well respected by colleagues and parents because of his strong determination to do the best for all the children in the school. This ambition for children and the school community is clearly communicated to the whole staff team. The weekly 'Soliloquy', a newsletter from the headteacher, ensures that everyone 'travels the same road' in ensuring that there is an entitlement based on higher expectations for and from all. Governance completes this transformative team and through a clear view of Christian distinctiveness, and inclusivity, they effectively and accurately monitor and evaluate the impact of developments. In realistically recognising what more there is to do, leaders and governors have set out a clear, realistic and ambitious vision for the school. This is known, understood and embraced by the members of the school community. Strategic planning encompasses the wider view of the school, appropriately incorporating elements of Christian distinctiveness. The staff have effectively learnt together, and continue to learn, about what it means to be a church school. The school's provision for meeting pupils' emotional and behavioural needs is of a high standard. There is a strong emphasis on nurturing pupils who, as a result, are more likely to succeed academically and less likely to be permanently excluded. Partnership with the local church and diocese are close and there is strong pastoral support from the incumbent, along with his active role in developing the school's Christian character. Partnerships with other local churches are well established and fruitful. There is a strong link with the local church secondary school. Parents are wholeheartedly supportive and the school is respected in the local community. Collective worship and RE meets the statutory requirements.