



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

### St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Infant School

Barford Lane  
Churt  
Farnham, Surrey GU10 2JE

**Previous SIAS grade: Outstanding**

**Current SIAMS grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: Guildford**

Local authority: Surrey

Dates of inspection: 26 June 2015

Date of last inspection: 9 July 2010

School's unique reference number: 125184

Headteacher: Angela Harper

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

#### School context

St John's is a smaller than average size infant school with 90 pupils on roll. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average as is the number eligible for the pupil premium. The majority of pupils are from a white British heritage with mainly favourable socio-economic backgrounds. Attendance is in line with national averages. The attainment of children on entry is in line with national expectations.

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

- Pupils speak with confidence and insight about matters of faith and belief.
- Religious education (RE) provides significant opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual awareness and understanding of other faiths and cultures.
- The commitment of the headteacher and other leaders and managers leads to the continual development of the Christian ethos to meet the needs of all pupils.

#### Areas to improve

- Review the relationship between the school vision and the recently revised core Christian values to ensure that all members of the school community can articulate their meaning and purpose.
- Develop collective worship themes so that they more fully reflect the revised core Christian values.
- Evaluate the impact of the new diocesan guidelines for RE on the attainment and progress of pupils.

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

The recent consultation to identify core Christian values involved the whole school community. Pupils and adults are aware of the six values identified as most clearly reflecting the distinctive Christian character of the school. An outstanding aspect of the school's Christian character is that these six values are enhancing an already firmly embedded ethos underpinned by the impact of explicit Christian values on pupils' learning and personal development. Peace, thankfulness, love and compassion, trust, forgiveness and friendship provide a focus for the approach to how social, moral, spiritual, and cultural (SMSC) development is delivered as well as giving collective worship themes clearer meaning. The impact of Christian values is deeply embedded in the everyday behaviour and learning of pupils. Relationships with each other are based on trust and compassion and contribute to the excellent learning environment in which pupils attain high standards academically. The impact of the audit of SMSC provision in 2014 is now bearing fruit in linking RE and other aspects of being a church school, such as prayer, more clearly to pupils' moral and social education. As yet the revised core values have not been linked specifically to the school's vision and how they reflect a distinctively Christian interpretation of the school's motto and logo. Opportunities for pupils to reflect during the school day are good and there is a clear understanding of how spiritual awareness can be promoted throughout the curriculum. An 'International Week' makes a valuable contribution to the pupils' growing appreciation of a range of cultures and the study of world religions in RE helps them understand the differences and similarities between Christianity and other world faiths.

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

Acts of worship are important to pupils because they enable them to appreciate how the Bible teaches them to find peace for themselves and friendship so they can help others. Pupils respond very enthusiastically when asked to participate in worship and this is a reflection of the positive attitudes they have towards acts of worship. The school has created increased opportunities for pupils to be involved in collective worship and this is something that they appreciate. Planning for worship is very thorough and clearly identifies themes that link to the school's values and specific Bible stories. With the recent introduction of a revised set of values, explicitly based on Christian teaching, the school has yet to embed these in the existing planning so that they are more overtly covered and used to complement pupils' spiritual development. Worship is delivered by confident leaders who capture the pupils' attention and give clear messages. Acts of worship have distinct elements of teaching, reflection and prayer. A particularly inspiring part of worship is the pupils' singing. They sing beautifully and with heart. Pupils have a good understanding of prayer as a means of talking to God. Older pupils discuss maturely how God hears prayers and how He responds to them. Younger children explain how prayer makes you feel better because 'God cares for every one of us' and 'wouldn't forget anyone – even if we have been naughty'. There are good opportunities throughout the school day and in every classroom for children to pray. Pupils understand the difference between a prayer at lunch and one at home time to keep them safe at night. Procedures for gathering feedback from children are very good and lead to demonstrable improvements. The leader for collective worship is excellent and fulfils the responsibilities with commitment and drive. Pupils, and their parents, see the links with the parish church to celebrate major Christian festivals as an integral part of the life of the school and an opportunity to remember the real meaning of times such as Easter and Christmas.

### **The effectiveness of religious education is outstanding**

Standards in RE are at least in line with national expectations for all pupils by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 2. A significant number of pupils achieve at higher levels and this represents very good progress over time. Consistently high quality teaching challenges pupils' understanding and encourages them to apply their learning by making links between different topics and subjects. This gives RE relevance to the whole curriculum and to the lives of the children. For example, the very youngest children explored God's world through nature,

science, music, movement, art and the opportunity to wonder as butterflies bred in the classroom were released into the open air. The excitement and care for the butterflies as they flew into the trees was a moment of joy for the children. Similarly, a lesson with older pupils used discovery and exploration of artefacts to identify a range of Christian festivals. They used prior knowledge to piece together what they had found but were also simply fascinated by the objects and the irresistible urge to touch them and, in some instances, try them on. It is this mix of engagement and challenge with first-hand experience and careful lesson preparation that brings about excellent attainment in RE. Assessment of pupils' achievement in RE is very thorough. Pupils' progress is assessed each term and tracked across the school in both their knowledge of RE and what they have learned from their studies. Excellent links with other local schools has enabled moderation of levelling of attainment to ensure that there is consistency and therefore that the school's assessments are accurate. The marking of pupils' work relates specifically to RE skills and concepts and generally helps to identify next steps in learning. The school is implementing new diocesan guidelines for RE but has yet to evaluate the impact that they are making to pupil achievement and engagement in lessons. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards RE. They respond with enthusiasm when asked questions and share their ideas and thoughts eagerly with each other. Links with SMSC are not forced but allowed to develop as they occur naturally in the pupils' learning in RE. Leadership of RE by the headteacher is excellent. She has a clear grasp of the current position of the subject in the school and ensures that it has a high profile within the curriculum.

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

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher of the school as a church school has ensured that it not only maintains the very highest standards but is continually moving forward in developing a Christian distinctiveness that is relevant to the needs of the pupils. The latest development to further promote core Christian values is an excellent example of how the school constantly evaluates its provision and identifies ways to strengthen its Christian ethos. The headteacher is fully supported by senior leaders and governors who are equally committed to the promotion of the school's ethos. Procedures for monitoring the impact of the Christian ethos are very thorough and areas for ongoing development have been accurately identified. Self-evaluation is secure and systems to gather evidence that inform governors are comprehensive. Governors' involvement in monitoring RE and collective worship is effective. A particular strength of this has been the governors' interviews with pupils from each class to gather their views first-hand. Links with the local church are strong and the two communities are seen by pupils and parents as an essential part of being a church school. Staff training in SMSC, Christian values and feedback from diocesan RE courses means that they are kept well informed about latest developments as a church school. The vicar is fully involved in the life of the school and well known to pupils. The celebration of major Christian festivals in the church is regarded as an integral part of the pupils' education by their parents. The school has benefited from links with the diocese and other church schools in the area that have improved accuracy of RE assessment and enabled external moderation by other teachers. Parents feel that the school's Christian ethos helps their children to begin to understand and explore faith and belief but in such a way that lets their children make up their own minds. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report June 2015 St John's CE VA Infant School Farnham GUI0 2JE