

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St John's Church of England Academy

Bowen's Hill Road, Coleford, Gloucestershire, GL16 8DU

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Diocese	Gloucester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	September 2012
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	N/A
Date/s of inspection	8 November 2016
Date of last inspection	19 October 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 138745
Principal	Jan Wagstaff
Inspector's name and number	Daphne Spitzer No 37

School context

St John's Church of England Academy is located in the small town of Coleford in the Forest of Dean, an area of social and economic deprivation. There are 200 children on roll. The vast majority of children are from white British heritage families. The numbers of children with special educational needs and/or physical disabilities (SEND) are above the national average. The numbers of children who are eligible to receive additional funding through the pupil premium grant are above the national average. In September 2012 the school converted to academy status and has since made a variety of improvements to its accommodation. Following a period of significant staff instability, in March 2016 the school was judged by Ofsted to be inadequate. A new pre-school group was set up within the school in April 2016.

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

- The school's Christian values are having a significant impact on children's personal development and well-being but are not yet sufficiently embedded to have an impact on their academic achievement
- Effective actions are being taken to enhance prayer and reflection within the daily life of the school and these are enhancing children's spiritual development
- Through the work of the ethos committee, governors have a good overview of the school's Christian character but this has not been used effectively to secure improved academic achievement

Areas to improve

- Review the school's values and embed them by linking them explicitly to Biblical teaching, ensuring they promote children's academic achievement as well as their personal and spiritual development.
- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation of the school's effectiveness as a church school are robust and that emerging issues form part of the strategic planning for improvement.
- Increase opportunities for children to actively participate and engage in worship in order to further develop a greater understanding of this important aspect of the day

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

St John's Church of England Academy is a warm and welcoming Christian community. The school's Christian ethos creates an inclusive environment in which each and every child is valued. As a result, children enjoy school and this is reflected in their good attendance. Behaviour and relationships between children are good. This is because the value of friendship, based on the life of Jesus, is firmly rooted in Christian teaching. In this way the school's Christian ethos is effectively promoting children's personal development and well-being. However, although values which support learning, such as courage and perseverance, are recognised by children, they are not applied at a personal level because they are not embedded in the life of the school. As a result, the school's Christian character is not fully developed and this is contributing to the children's low academic achievement. The recent visit of 'Prayer Spaces' has had an impact on children's spiritual development. This is evident in the way it promoted children's feelings of self-worth and raised self-esteem, affirming their understanding that they are loved by God. This was also reflected in a religious education (RE) lesson for the early years when the parable of the Lost Sheep was used to similar effect. This is an example of the way that RE is effective in promoting spiritual development. Children demonstrate an open and positive attitude towards people of other faiths and cultures. Their developing understanding is a result of the effective way that RE is taught as well as the way spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is promoted. Recent visits to a Hindu temple and mosque, described by children as a 'privilege', have widened children's experiences and are creating positive attitudes. Children talk of the need to show respect for others and how they can now see others' points of view.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is an important time in the daily life of St John's Academy. Children and staff describe worship as a special time to be 'all together', creating a strong sense of Christian fellowship; further strengthened by the inclusion of the pre-school and on Fridays by parents and family members. Worship promotes Christian values very effectively. An act of worship led by a group of children used the story of Namaan and Elisha to illustrate the Christian value of trusting in God. Planning for worship, since the start of this school year, has explicitly linked the term's Christian value with a key Bible story such as the recent value of thankfulness and the story of Jesus and the ten lepers. Explicit links are also being made between Christian values and the church calendar, thereby deepening children's appreciation of the significance of Christian festivals. Children are developing an understanding of the Trinity by the lighting of three candles and the words of welcome spoken at the start of worship. Spiritual development is promoted very well by worship. For instance, by the lively heartfelt singing of the whole community. Children as well as staff lead prayers and a time of guided reflection at the end of worship further promotes the Christian message. Prayer is integral to daily life at St John's. The recent visit of Prayer Spaces has been very effective in promoting personal spirituality. Children say prayer has a calming effect and it helps them to understand themselves. Children are developing a good understanding of ecumenical as well as Anglican practice. This is because the school is welcomed to the Baptist Church for celebration of Christian festivals since the recent closure of St John's Church. Worship is monitored very well by governors and the coordinator, who regularly listens to children's views and ensures that issues raised have been addressed. Older children plan and lead worship themselves and in this way develop a strong awareness of its impact on the school community. Although there is a variety of leaders, including the vicar of St John's, worship mainly takes place as a large whole school setting in the hall. This reduces opportunities for active participation and developing personal spirituality.

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

The principal and other leaders have been effective in providing direction for the school's distinctive Christian character over the past two years. The governors' commitment to the school's Christian foundation is reflected in the way that all issues from the last inspection have been fully addressed. Improvements to the school building have been well considered. Building work has not only enabled the whole school to be together in one building but has increased its capacity to promote spirituality, evident in the prayer stations recently introduced by Year 6 children. Governors have recognised the need to widen children's experiences of diversity and now fund visits to places of worship of other faiths as well as to Gloucester Cathedral. The self-evaluation process and strategic planning led by the ethos committee is partially effective. Governors monitor and evaluate the impact of aspects of the church school such as spiritual development, collective worship and RE. However this is not sufficiently rigorous enough to ensure that the school's Christian character contributes to improvement in academic achievement. Staff mobility and ongoing staff absence have limited the impact of the school's Christian values on its effectiveness as a church school. The school's partnership with the diocese is good and professional development has been used to good effect. For example, in regard to collective worship and RE. Parents contribute very well to the life of the school. An example of their partnership is their involvement in the staff recruitment process. The newly appointed RE leader is raising the subject's profile. For instance, by her introduction of books for the recording of learning in Key Stage 2. This is enabling more effective marking which will help children to understand their next steps in learning. The school and church work together very effectively. The recent church initiative called 'the Mustard Tree' set up in

the school hall with staff support has been welcomed and appreciated by parents and the local community. A group of local residents from the church community lead 'Open the Book' worship each week. This is an example of the church's contribution to the life of the school which is much appreciated by children and staff. The school plays a key role in the local community on Remembrance Day by standing alongside others in the town. The statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are bring met.

SIAMS report, November 2016, St Johns Church of England Academy, Coleford, GL16 8DU