



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

### St James' Church of England Primary Academy

High Street,

Isle of Grain,

Rochester

ME3 0BS

**Diocese: Rochester**

Local authority: Medway

Dates of inspection: 24 September 2014

Date of last inspection: 11 January 2011

School's unique reference number: 138974

Headteacher: Mrs Virginia Wilson

Inspector's name and number: Tricia Martin NS 105

#### School context

St James' Church of England Primary Academy is a one form entry school with an integral Children's Centre. It is situated at the eastern end of the Hoo Peninsular. The original school was established in 1864 since when it has been rebuilt and continues to be extended. The school has 135 pupils which are drawn from the immediate area and are from almost entirely White British heritage. Attainment on entry is lower than average. The school has had a turbulent history over the last few years which resulted in leadership by a number of temporary headteachers. For the last three years, the school has had a stable leadership and management team. They have successfully led the school out of Special Measures. The very recent Ofsted inspection judged the school to be good in all areas.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St James' Primary Academy as a Church of England school are good

- The school has made rapid and sustained progress in raising standards
- The learning environment is purposeful and engaging
- The Christian ethos has been reclaimed and is underpinned by Gospel Values
- There has been a significant impact by the leadership and management of the school resulting in an improved attendance rate and a vastly decreased exclusion rate

#### Areas to improve

- Embed the school's distinctive Gospel values so that they are fully understood by all stakeholders
- Involve pupils in evaluating collective worship and show the impact of identified improvements
- Develop and embed robust assessment procedures linked to the RE eight level scale of attainment through the development of teachers' subject knowledge in religious

education (RE)

- Improve school documentation to explicitly proclaim the academy's Christian foundation and values

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

St James' Academy has made remarkable progress since its last inspection. The progress has been rapid and is sustained. This is because of a change of culture in the school. Teaching and learning standards have been raised significantly. Behaviour and attendance have improved dramatically. The Christian ethos, which was very weak, now underpins the work of the school. Consequently, the recent Ofsted inspection affirmed the accelerated progress in academic achievement. Pupils are engaged in learning as a result of imaginative and well planned teaching which is matched to meet their needs. The appointment of a Home School Worker and Learning Mentor enables families to have greater involvement with in their children's learning resulting in families learning together. The school successfully promotes good personal self-esteem which, in turn, results in pupils' positive attitude towards their work. The school has identified four Christian values on which their ethos is founded. These are thankfulness, fellowship, compassion and friendship. Pupils refer to displays of these values in their classrooms and are beginning to understand how these values impact upon their daily lives. A year six pupil explained how she would carry these values to secondary school with her in her heart even if her new school has different school rules. Younger pupils are developing their ability to articulate the root and impact of the school's Christian values. They talk about the reflection areas in their classrooms and are developing confidence in using them. Once the Christian values are fully embedded across the life of the school, the school will be well placed to aspire to outstanding in this area.

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

Pupils clearly enjoy worship. Worship is a major contributor to the pupils' spiritual development. This is a result of good planning which provides rich experiences of the Christian faith. One pupil described worship as a time "when you praise God and He's always there for you." Worship plays an important part in the pupils' school day and they highlighted singing (particularly when led by a local priest) and prayer as special elements for them. Prayer plays an important part in the wider life of the school with the pupils' own prayers being included in class prayers. The use of pupil leadership in worship is developing. For example, Year 6 pupils have the opportunity to be involved in a prayer meeting which leads to them planning and leading some acts of worship. As an Anglican Academy, the pupils' experience of worship is based on the Diocesan Plans which promote an understanding of Christianity as practised in the Church of England. The school regularly experiences worship in the local church which deepens their understanding of the local Anglican community and the Christian heritage of the area. All teachers now lead worship which broadens the pupils' experience of different worshipping styles. Stories and activities used in worship capture the imagination of the pupils, consequently they are attentive and engaged. Parents are welcomed to their child's class-led worship. This means that families, as well as staff and pupils, understand the core Christian values of the school. Leadership of worship is good. It has the potential to move towards outstanding when pupils are fully involved in the evaluation and leadership of inspirational worship. Collective worship meets legal requirements.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

The school follows the Diocesan syllabus for Religious Education. This ensures that the pupils gain a good understanding of Christianity and of the other major world faiths. The progress made by pupils is good and in line with other core subjects. This is supported by consistent marking which encourages a dialogue with pupils and which identifies areas in which pupils can

improve. Teaching and learning are good. The pupils are engaged in their lessons and readily ask and answer challenging questions. The creative activities employed by teachers enable the pupils to explore ideas and concepts through art and drama for example. Year 6 pupils have been exploring what it means to be tempted by examining the part played by the serpent in the Adam and Eve creation story. Their work shows empathy and sensitivity. Good leadership and management of the subject ensure that RE remains a focus for development and has sufficient time allocated to the subject in the school. Sensitive subjects such as death and belief are explored with integrity and maturity. Assessment in RE is developing. Moderation of pupils' work and levelling against the RE assessment levels need to be embedded and refined. To enable this to happen, staff need to be given the opportunity to further develop their subject knowledge. RE meets legal requirements.

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

Strong leadership and management have led to rapid improvement in the progress of pupils and in standards of achievement. The Christian values which underpin the ethos of the school have been identified and are in the process of being developed in all areas of school life. The Christian vision of the school has a good impact on the well-being of the school community. Parents are encouraged into school. Pupil attendance and parental attendance at parent consultation evenings have increased. The partnership of learning between school and home has been effective in improving relationships and consequently the school has increased its number of pupils. The geographical location of the school and the context of the local church make it difficult for the school to develop stronger relationships with parish, deanery and diocese. Despite this, the school ensures that pupils have the opportunity to experience Diocesan events. A local priest supports the school through by regularly leading worship and by serving on the governing body. Future leaders are being supported and encouraged to take on additional responsibility. The school documentation is not sufficiently explicit about its Christian values and foundation.

SIAMS report September 2014 St James' Church of England Primary Academy, Isle of Grain, Kent

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