



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St John and St Francis Church School

Westonzoyland Road, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA6 5PB

Current SIAMS grade: Satisfactory

Diocese: Bath and Wells

Local authority: Somerset

Dates of inspection: 8 July 2015

Date of last inspection: N/A

School's unique reference number: 123845

Headteacher: Christopher Marshall

Inspector's name and number: Daphne Spitzer NS No 37

School context

St John and St Francis Church School serves the immediate area on the outskirts of Bridgwater and is a 2 form entry with 400 children on roll. The large majority of children are from white British heritage families. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or physical disabilities is below the national average as are the numbers eligible to be in receipt of the Pupil Premium. The school converted to become an academy in April 2013 and is part of the Bath and Wells Multi Academy Trust. The headteacher was appointed in September 2013. There has been a significant turnover of staff, including the leadership team and governors since the last inspection

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St John and St Francis as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- The impact of the Christian value of friendship is significant in developing good relationships between the children, and a strong sense of community
- Clergy make good contributions to collective worship, religious education and the promotion of the school's distinctive Christian character
- Collective worship promotes the school's distinctive Christian values which impact on the whole life of the school

Areas to improve

- Develop a shared understanding of spirituality in order to raise academic achievement and personal development
- Raise the quality of the subject leadership of religious education in order to raise standards and the relevance of the subject for children
- Governors and school leaders to monitor and evaluate all aspects of the school's distinctive Christian character, including the whole school community

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

St John and St Francis Church School is an inclusive and friendly Christian community. Over the recent period there has been a concerted approach to improving the school's distinctive Christian character with the result that behaviour and relationships between children are good. Children say that the values of friendship and forgiveness are important in creating good relationships and this is useful at playtimes. Children enjoy school and recognise it as a happy community where older children know and care for younger ones and children are supportive of one another. They identify the value of thankfulness as linked to the strength they recognise in their school community. Older children understand the Christian roots of their values and say 'God expects us to use them'. They identify the values of wisdom, hope and friendship as helpful for their learning. However the school's promotion of Christian values which support learning and academic achievement has not had sufficient time to make an impact. As a result, achievement although improving, still requires further improvement. Opportunities for developing spirituality in the curriculum are underdeveloped, although they are evident in religious education (RE). Children are developing an effective understanding of people who live in diverse communities in the UK. For instance, RE as well as a recent whole school focus on the meaning of Britishness has ensured that children understand people of other faiths live in this country. Children recognise Christianity as a global faith; noted for instance by the singers who attended a concert at Wells Cathedral where they were joined by school children from a Kenyan choir.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Collective worship is an important part of the day at St John and St Francis. This is because teaching staff are present so that children say it is a time to come together as a school community to worship God. Collective worship is effective in promoting distinctive Christian values. This is evident in the way the core values have been introduced in worship, linked to a Bible story such as the value of trust with the story of Noah. Children are engaged, participate well and are developing leadership roles such as leading singing in rounds and prayers. Older children have recently planned and led an act of worship which very effectively linked their school's FLOCK rules with the new core Christian values, embedding them in the school's distinctive Christian character. It also affirmed the centrality of the school's distinctive Christian values in collective worship. Spiritual awareness is being developed well by guided reflection at the end of worship and prayers read out from the central children's prayer book. The use by children of new reflective areas focussing on values in classrooms and inside central areas is beginning to have an impact on their spiritual development at a personal level. This is reflected in a child's comment that reading other children's words on displays 'make you think'. Children are developing an understanding of Anglican practice in ways such as the change of coloured cloths to mark the church year; although simple liturgical responses such as greetings have not yet been introduced. A candle is lit which is understood to represent the light of Christ. Worship is enhanced by weekly contributions led by the vicar's team who link with the school's themes as well as introducing Christian concepts such as the Trinity. Worship is coordinated in an effective way by the deputy headteacher whose planning ensures there is continuity and progression of themes based on the school's Christian values; as well as a variety of styles of leaders, settings and changes of groups which enables worship to meet the needs of all children. No formal monitoring or evaluation of worship has yet taken place by governors to assess the impact of worship on the school community.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

Standards in religious education (RE) are satisfactory. Attainment for the majority of children is in line with national expectations. The quality of teaching and learning is good, as observed. However these grades cannot be verified by the subject leader since no observations of lessons throughout the school have been undertaken nor data collated over the recent period

to demonstrate progress between key stages. Teaching observed promoted enquiry and collaborative group skills very well and ensured children enjoyed the subject and found it relevant. For instance, in a Key Stage 2 class, children were engaged in a high quality lesson on the meanings inferred from the story of Jonah and were able to share their views and beliefs with confidence. This is a good example of how religious education is developing children's spirituality. The teacher's good questioning promoted deep thinking as exemplified by comments from children such as 'God was trying to persuade Jonah that life was worth living' or 'You need to make the most of things you have in life'. Religious education promotes Christian values very well. For instance, in a Key Stage 1 class children were exploring the Christian value of friendship, illustrated by the story of Jesus and Zacchaeus; and were clearly able to identify behaviours related to real life that promoted friendship. The curriculum is enhanced by visits to places of worship for Christianity, such as the parish church to develop an understanding of baptism, as well as Exeter Cathedral; and for other faiths such as a synagogue. Leadership of RE has undergone a period of instability since the last inspection. However, an enthusiastic and capable teacher has recently been appointed. She has had appropriate professional development to ensure she is up to date with current initiatives and her self-evaluation of the subject is good. For instance, the curriculum has been reviewed and a previous scheme of work reinstated to meet the school's specific needs. She has very effective plans to raise the profile of RE within the school curriculum, building on good practice already established.

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

The school leadership promote a Christian vision clearly based on explicit Christian values. They have generally maintained the school's Christian distinctiveness throughout the turbulent period since the last inspection, although this has been undertaken mainly in an implicit manner. This is evident in the school's self-evaluation which is thorough and accurate, based on the leadership's knowledge of the school's performance as a church school instead of a structured process involving the views of the whole school community. Now, however, the school has begun the process of monitoring and evaluating its Christian distinctiveness; for instance, a Learning Walk recently undertaken by the vicar was both supportive and challenging. The school's Strategic Improvement Plan which includes the development of the school's Christian distinctiveness is good. This is because it includes the views of parents and identifies appropriate actions to promote academic achievement as well children's personal and spiritual development. Over the last year professional development from within the Diocesan Multi Academy Trust has been effective; staff as a whole have benefitted by developing their understanding of aspects of the school's distinctive Christian character. The school's partnership with parents and the church is good. Parents are supportive of the school's distinctive Christian character and are aware of the school's values from the way the children in particular talk about the link between friendship and forgiveness. The involvement of the local community has increased this year. For instance, the tremendous support for the Easter Bonnet parade was much appreciated by the school. The number of visits to church to celebrate the major Christian festivals has increased and this in turn has been valued by church community and clergy.

SIAMS report July 2015, St John and St Francis Church School, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA6 5PB