



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### St James Church of England Academy

Barbridge Road  
Bulkington  
Warwickshire  
CV12 9PF

**Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding**

**Current SIAMS grade: Good**

**Diocese: Coventry**

Local Authority: N/A

Date of inspection: 10 March 2015

Date of last inspection: March 2010

School's unique reference number: 125627

Headteacher: Michelle Cuskelly

Inspector's name and number: Sally Naish 780

#### School context

St James is an average size junior school with 221 pupils serving the village of Bulkington. The school admits pupils from a local community infant school. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who are entitled to receive the pupil premium is about the national average. The majority of children are from a White British heritage. The school became an academy in April 2014 and, following changes in leadership, a new headteacher has been in post from January 2015. There have also been changes in the governing body. There are very effective links with local churches.

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

- Christian based leadership and a new school ethos based on Christian values are beginning to make an impact on relationships, progress and achievement.
- The strong relationship with church and community results in mutual support and fellowship.
- Collective worship and religious education (RE) effectively contribute to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC).

#### Areas to improve

- Embed the new school vision and values so that they form a coherent Christian framework to inform and support the daily life of the school and the achievement of all learners.
- Embed effective leadership by governors so that they support, monitor and challenge the school's Christian distinctiveness as a major factor in school improvement.
- Enhance children's understanding of the diversity of church and other faith and cultural communities to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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

The school has been rocked by leadership challenges since the last inspection. This has resulted in a change to academy status under the leadership of the Coventry diocese multi-academy trust. The strength of the school as a church school supported staff, children and parents during this difficult period. A governor noted, 'being a church school cemented us and kept us together'. Distinctive Christian values have been reviewed with staff and governors, enhancing the school's Christian character and supporting SMSC. The school's use of the Values for Life resources supports academic achievement. For example, exploring the values of friendship and peace have made an impact on class behaviour which is exemplary. This is leading to a greater focus by children on their learning and progress. Relationships are strongly based on Jesus' teaching in The Bible and modelled around the school. Children say that rules are based on Christian principles and that incidents where they feel unsafe have reduced and that any problems are well dealt with by staff. They comment, 'there is no time for bullying' but admit they would like more to do at playtimes. Well-trained teaching assistants support children in their learning and there is a nurture unit providing additional curriculum and support in the afternoons. This helps children develop social and empathy skills. Children in the unit were keen to show the boats they had just made with a sail depicting how the disciples might have been feeling when the storm arose on the Sea of Galilee. Children are proud of their school and point out the many Christian displays which they say help them to understand how to live their lives well. Classrooms are bright, stimulating and interesting and the class reflection areas are well cared for and reinforce the current value. The values taught in collective worship and RE permeate through the school. Children refer to the how the current value of service as well as other values of friendship, creativity and peace help them become better people. A newsletter about each value is sent to parents each half term to keep them informed and help them support the values at home. However, as there are numerous values in school they are confusing to remember. Children enjoy RE lessons which are interactive and relate to their interests and experiences. Good examples include a lesson on the wisdom of Solomon in the dispute between two mothers over a baby. This helps children explore good and bad choices and link wisdom to the service of others. As a result of the good teaching in RE, children are developing an insight and respect for the range of faiths and cultures in Britain and around the world. However, staff acknowledge that this is an area they want to develop further.

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

Collective worship permeates the life of the school and is enjoyed and valued by all learners and staff. Themes focus on Christian values and are usually led by staff, clergy and other external presenters. Worship teaches children about major events in the Anglican year and helps them understand about issues both around the world and locally. The use of three candles and appropriate liturgy help children understand the significance of the Trinity. Worship is lively and interactive. It is formally evaluated by a new worship council of older children and their evaluations are subsequently used for future planning. The children understand the significance of liturgical colours and explain that worship helps you understand God's messages for your life. Every Friday a class has the opportunity to present an act of worship themselves before achievements are celebrated. Parents delight in the confidence that this gives the children and are keen to attend. Individual children present acts of worship as well as groups of children for fundraising events like Comic Relief. Children experience worship in both St James' and the local congregational church and know the clergy well because they are regular visitors to school. Children celebrate festivals and events in church and parents say there is standing room only. Prayer is integral to the life of the school with a prayer tree in the hall as a focus point and children know the school prayer and The Lord's Prayer. The reflection areas in every class are used as a focus for end of day prayers which the children write themselves. A parent commented that this has made her child value prayer and feel confident to pray at home. Children's concepts of spirituality are enhanced through reflection journals where they evaluate the current 'values' theme, using it to reflect inwards and then look outwards. The new school council is being given the responsibility of planning a reflection garden as a quiet area to support their spiritual development and to 'help us think'.

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

The new headteacher is described as a breath of fresh air. Both the headteacher and RE and worship coordinator have been involved in the Church School Leadership programme and the insights from this are helping to ensure that Christian distinctiveness is at the heart of the school's improvement strategies. There are plans in place which accurately identify future areas for development. This includes embedding the new school vision and values to inform and support the achievement of all learners. A newly formed governing body is proactive and involved in this process and are aware of their roles and responsibilities. The school is working hard to address issues and improve monitoring and evaluation. With the support of the diocese, staff and governors, progress and achievement are now on track to meet national expectations. The school prides itself on its inclusive and respectful Christian practice. There have been no exclusions and absences are rigorously followed up. The headteacher focuses on the positive and empowers staff and children to achieve their best. The use of pupil premium funding is clearly identified and evaluated. Relationships with local churches and the community and parents are particular strengths. The school is also keen to share good practice with other local schools and build relationships with its feeder school. It acknowledges the considerable valuable support from the diocese. Collective worship and RE meet statutory requirements. RE is well taught due to the commitment of the RE leader who inspires and supports staff. This ensures that teaching and learning in RE affects children's well-being and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Issues from the last inspection have been addressed with good monitoring of RE. Children now have a 'voice' and more responsibility. They are able to express their views through school and worship councils as well as informally to staff. Senior staff listen to their ideas and help them carry them forward. Parents have confidence in the new headteacher and find the weekly newsletters useful. The new website is gradually being populated which will also help communication. The school has the capacity to improve as leaders have a good understanding of performance and distinctiveness based on Christian principles.

SIAMS report March 2015 St James's VC Primary Academy, Bulkington, CV12 9PF