

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

| St John's Church of England Infant School | | | |
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| Address | 4 New Street, Chatham, Kent. ME4 6RH | | |
| Date of inspection | 26 November 2019 | Status of school | Academy inspected as voluntary controlled Medway Anglican Schools Trust (MAST) |
| Diocese | Rochester | URN | 142157 |

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| Overall Judgement | How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish? | Grade | Good |
| Additional Judgement | The impact of collective worship | Grade | Excellent |

School context

St John's is an infant school with 77 pupils on roll. It is a member of the Medway Anglican Schools Trust, a multi-academy trust (MAT) of four schools established in 2015. Pupils are of many different heritages with white British being the largest group. Many pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is above national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national averages. A significant number of pupils are from Muslim families. Two teachers are new to the profession.

The school's Christian vision

St John's family, growing and flourishing in God's love. I am the vine and you are the branches – John 15. By choosing Faith, Love, Kindness and Respect, we can all grow and flourish in God's love.

Key findings

- Collective worship successfully promotes the school's vision and values, creating an inclusive environment in which this highly diverse community can reflect and grow together.
- A creative approach to religious education (RE) engages pupils well and provides a safe environment so that, in line with its vision, pupils can respectfully explore the beliefs and practices of a range of faiths.
- Leaders and governors have a good grasp of the performance and direction of the school. However, formal monitoring and evaluation is not systematic enough and opportunities to drive improvement in language skills and promote the school's vision and values are sometimes lost.
- The school is actively engaged with a number of charities, raising pupils' awareness of local and global issues. The curriculum provides some opportunities to broaden pupils' knowledge of the wider world. However, full advantage is not taken of the diverse range of nationalities within the school.
- The school provides good opportunities for spiritual development but does not have a clear, shared understanding of what spirituality encompasses. Therefore, opportunities for deeper thinking and ideas are sometimes missed.

Areas for development

- Improve formal monitoring, evaluation and feedback systems of the school as a church school so that everyday practice is embedded in ways that explicitly reflect the school's vision.
- Use the diversity within the school, charitable links and the curriculum to help pupils to develop a global perspective that is relevant to the community, in preparation for life in the modern world.
- Develop a shared school understanding of spirituality so that staff recognise and take full advantage of occasions within the curriculum and daily life to explore deeper questions and ideas with pupils.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Inspection findings

The school has established a Christian vision that is rooted in biblical narrative and is well known in the community. Pupils are able to recite and 'sign' the vision, which also supports their language development. Staff and governors attend diocesan training courses to keep abreast of current church school thinking and are steadily bringing policies and planning in line with the vision. High priority is given to collective worship each day as a time to settle and reflect on the school vision. It is highly inclusive, giving respect and dignity to all. RE is taught in a creative, engaging way. The headteacher leads RE across the multi-academy trust of local church schools and disseminates training to all teachers. Strong partnerships with the local church, charities and other organisations support the practical and spiritual needs of the community, helping to maintain a family atmosphere. There are some global links but full advantage is not taken of the range of nationalities, faiths and cultures represented in the school as a vehicle to learn about diversity. A well-attended church has been established in the school, offering further spiritual and practical support to the community. Regular coffee mornings give parents the opportunity to consider life's big questions in a caring environment. Membership of the MAT provides support and budgetary benefits, helping to sustain church school provision in the area. Governors visit the school and report back in meetings about behaviour, progress and the Christian ethos. However, their formal monitoring and evaluation of worship and RE is less frequent and opportunities to drive improvement can be missed. Leaders have ensured that good progress has been made on previous denominational inspection recommendations. The school meets statutory obligations for RE and collective worship.

The school offers a broad curriculum while focusing on the necessary development of core skills. The care and nurture of pupils and families is central to the work of the school as a foundation for all development. The school is quick to identify pupil needs on entry and secure appropriate intervention. For example, it ensures that pupils who need it are well fed, so that they can concentrate and learn. Many pupils enter the school with little English and poor language skills. The progress of pupils who are in the school for all of their infant years is broadly in line with national averages. Despite many interventions, attendance is lower than national averages. Exclusions are very rare, and suitable alternative provision is found. Music, sport and regular outings enhance pupils' experiences. The curriculum encourages questioning and provides space in the day for reflection, supporting pupils' spiritual development. Although many opportunities are provided, the school does not have a clear, shared understanding of spirituality and its development. Consequently, occasions to engage in deeper thinking are not always recognised.

The school vision helps pupils to understand how they should behave. They respect one another and are kind. Pupils readily say sorry, forgive one another and give one another a hug to restore relationships, living out the school's vision to be a family. Behaviour is very good. Through a local charity, pupils meet and learn about people who have experienced deprivation. They are keen to offer help and, in return, benefit from useful role models. A continuing link with the previous vicar, who has moved to Sweden, expands pupils' understanding of the world. Topic work introduces pupils to issues such as animal conservation, provoking concern and fund-raising in response. There is a culture of mutual support in the school team, with staff being prepared to tackle anything in this small setting. Staff feel valued, purposeful and positive about their work. The promotion of healthy relationships is central to the daily life of this community.

Pupils of all faiths and backgrounds participate enthusiastically in worship, helping to set up for the day. They enjoy the familiar structure and are comfortable in this environment. Pupils confidently lead singing, actions and playing instruments. Their feedback has strengthened the use of music. They know songs by heart and break into song during the day. Engagement is particularly strong. Pupils write prayers in class reflection areas which are then said in worship. One child wrote, 'I am thankful for the food on the table'. Quiet reflection on the theme of the day calms pupils so they are ready for learning, helping them to flourish in line with the vision. The school uses some Anglican traditions. Pupils light candles and say the Lord's Prayer with confidence. Festivals, such as Christmas and Easter, are celebrated with services at a local church. Parents greatly appreciate these occasions and attendance is high. Pupils also experience worship at Rochester cathedral each year. They are introduced to Bible stories to promote the vision. For example, the story of the Lost Son, teaches them about love and forgiveness. Parents frequently attend daily worship and enjoy being included. Staff, clergy and other visitors regularly lead worship and there is ongoing training. Relationships with clergy and Church Army staff are very

strong. There is good attendance at church activities held in the school and several children have recently been baptised. Pupils have had a brief introduction to learning about the Eucharist, but this is not a regular feature.

RE is based on the Kent Agreed Syllabus, using diocesan materials for support and an enquiry-based approach. Pupils are introduced to a range of beliefs and encouraged to make links between them and to everyday life. A good range of activities, including drama and craft work, engages pupils and helps to develop their skills, particularly in speaking and listening. Effort is made to extend pupils' vocabulary. However, pupils are not fully secure in using new words. Standards in RE are similar to those in other subjects. Pupils gain confidence in being able to express ideas and their own views safely as they progress through the school. Good practice is shared across the MAT. Senior leaders monitor RE routinely, providing effective feedback to staff and bringing about improving standards of teaching and learning. Through assessment, teachers understand pupils' learning and how to support them in making further progress.

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| Headteacher | Joanne Collman |
| Inspector's name and number | Melanie Williams 911 |