

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### St James Hatcham Church of England Primary School

St James, New Cross, London, SE14 6AD

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Southwark</b>
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Lewisham
Date/s of inspection	23 November 2017
Date of last inspection	September 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	100727
Headteacher	Sonia McFarlane
Inspector's name and number	John Viner NS144

#### School context

St James Hatcham is a smaller than average sized primary school, located in New Cross and serving the parish of St James Hatcham, Deptford. Its 185 pupils are drawn from the immediate area. Almost all pupils are of minority ethnic heritage and around half speak English as an additional language. A higher than average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and an above average proportion receive additional government funding. Over two thirds of the pupils attend church. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are around the national average. The school was recently inspected by Ofsted and judged to be good.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St James Hatcham as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Christian values of love, peace, hope and joy underpin the school, inspire its pupils and define its purpose.
- Collective worship is the heartbeat of the school so that, from the time they arrive to the close of the day, pupils are embraced by prayer.
- There is, throughout the school, a shared sense of spirituality that impacts on pupils' attitudes and affords them opportunities to pose deep questions, across the curriculum.
- Religious education (RE) is well taught and, by the time they leave the school, pupils have an excellent understanding of Christianity and a solid understanding of the other faiths they have studied.
- The powerful partnership with the parish church unites both church and school in their mission to be a Christian witness to the community they serve.

#### Areas to improve

- Develop teachers' questioning skills in RE so that, both in lessons and in their written feedback, they are better able to promote pupils' deeper thinking and analytical skills.

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

The school's uncompromising declaration that it 'raises learners in excellence and Godly character' is underpinned by its promotion of the core Christian values of love, peace, hope and joy. These values are visible in every aspect of the school's work, inspire its staff and define its purpose. Regardless of their own faith or belief, pupils and their parents know and articulate these values. All agree that they make St James a place where Christian love and compassion are the framework around which school life is constructed. The impact of these Christian values is seen in the excellent, respectful and trusting relationships between and among adults and pupils. Pupils say that they look out for each other, are kind to one another and always have an adult to turn to when they are worried. They say that the school is preparing them for the real world by giving them a foundation for their lives. As a result, they are keen to come to school, behave excellently and work hard. Attendance levels are high, pupils make good progress and achieve well, often from low starting points. Parents and pupils agree that its Christian character makes this a place where pupils feel safe, free from bullying and where any examples of poor behaviour are quickly and sensitively dealt with.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very effectively so that, as soon as they join the school, they quickly appreciate diversity and develop positive attitudes of tolerance and respect, regardless of faith or belief. There is a highly developed sense of spirituality, promoted by staff and understood by pupils. As a result, many pupils demonstrate mature attitudes for their age and, across the curriculum, ask profound questions about meaning and purpose. Pupils say that they are excited by RE and understand that it is important. They understand that Christianity is a world faith in the context of a multicultural society. As a result, RE makes an excellent contribution to the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to the school's Christian distinctiveness.

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

Collective worship is the heartbeat of the school. From the time they enter the school to join in the collective 'calm prayer' to the closing classroom prayer at the end of the day, pupils are wrapped in a cloak of prayer and worship. This provides the context for the daily act of collective worship, which pupils recognise as an important aspect of the school community. Worship is inclusive and engaging. It affirms all who attend, regardless of faith or belief. Pupils describe it as 'a time to be thoughtful' and those of other traditions say that it helps to strengthen their own faith. Because it is collectively affirming, pupils behave well in worship and demonstrate highly positive attitudes. They sit quietly and reverently, listen attentively and join in enthusiastically.

Worship is carefully planned by the headteacher, incumbent and RE leader around a series of seasonal themes, the school values and the church's year. It is distinctly Christian, Biblical and rooted in the person and life of Jesus. From an early stage in their time at the school, pupils learn that Christians regard God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They can explain this in ways that are relative to their age and understanding. Worship is led by a variety of leaders including senior staff, teachers, the incumbent and outside visitors. This ensures that pupils always regard it as fresh and interesting. Worship is open to parents who wish to come, and many attend the weekly act of worship that takes place in the parish church. These services, and the regular involvement of parish clergy, ensure that pupils have a thorough understanding of Anglican tradition and practice. When the school assembles to practise singing or celebrate achievement, care is taken that these events are also a part of worship. The school takes part in special events at Southwark Cathedral where pupils sometimes contribute to aspects of the services.

Because the school day is bracketed by prayer, through worship, pupils engage with its nature and purpose. They understand why it is an important part of faith and that it is a personal and spiritual activity. There are many good opportunities for them to read prayers in worship, or write their own prayers for use in worship. There are excellent opportunities for personal thought and prayer in the classroom reflection areas and in the school's chapel. This is a place where pupils can choose to go to be quiet or prayerful and where ongoing prayer concerns are displayed. Pupils have made origami 'peace cranes' to hang in the chapel as part of thinking about Hiroshima. Great care is taken to equip pupils for prayer so that, when they wish to pray, they have a model to use and have the words they will need – 'use the words that God gave you'. Pupils learn that, although they may feel sad, 'God made me good' and this helps to inform their positive attitudes to prayer.

There are effective systems for engaging pupils in the evaluation of worship so that their insights influence its future development. In this way, together with monitoring by leaders and governors, and the work of the governors' Faith Group, planned improvements can take place.

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

RE has a high priority and is accorded the status of a core subject. Since the last inspection the school has done much to strengthen its provision. A new diocesan scheme of work has been introduced, which provides many excellent opportunities to provoke pupils' discussion and deepen their thinking. Because pupils have a well-developed sense of spirituality they are able to take advantage of these opportunities and demonstrate a maturity of thinking that often surpasses expectations for their age. As a result, all pupils make good progress, often from low starting points, and achieve standards that are frequently above national expectations.

Pupils enjoy RE because, they say, their teachers make it fun. They say that they particularly like learning about other faiths. Teachers have responded positively to the challenge of a more demanding curriculum so that the quality of teaching is consistently good and much is outstanding. The work that is set for pupils encourages them to work hard and, as a result, they make exceptional learning gains. However, teachers' questions do not always promote pupils deeper thinking as well as they could because they are sometimes not pitched at a level that is appropriate to the way that children's thinking skills develop. The curriculum is well planned and the balance between Christianity and other faiths is very effective. The curriculum is enriched by visits to places of worship and by visitors from other faiths. Pupils' knowledge of Christianity and their well-developed skills of reflection and analysis, give them confidence they can use in the study of other faiths. As a result, by the time they leave the school, pupils have an excellent understanding of Christianity and the Bible and have a secure understanding of the other faiths they have studied. This makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Religious education is led by a knowledgeable and effective subject leader who, although a long-serving staff member, is relatively new to the role. She is ably assisted by the headteacher and key staff, and has an effective system for rigorous monitoring and evaluation. The incumbent provides excellent support in contributing to the development of teachers' subject knowledge. Overall, leadership of RE results in fine-tuned action planning, rapid intervention where necessary and a commitment to the ongoing development of the subject as a continued strength of the school.

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

The school motto, "Raising learners in excellence and Godly character" captures the shared vision that is lived out by the headteacher, key staff, clergy and governors. This vision underpins every action they take and places Christian distinctiveness at the heart of the school. This is an ambitious and aspirational vision, aimed at achieving the very best outcome for all pupils through a sense that God shapes our character and our lives. The impact of the vision can be seen in the achievement of pupils, many of whom join the school with low starting points, and in the excellent standards of their behaviour and attitudes. It is seen in the excellent support that the school provides for its most challenging pupils and their families, and in leaders' refusal to believe anything but the best of them and for them.

Leaders and governors know the school well and plan to meet the needs they identify. They are very well supported and encouraged by diocesan officers and the school has had many opportunities to share its work in the wider church school community. The governors' Faith Group, keeps the school's Christian distinctiveness under continual and close review. Governors are not afraid to challenge the headteacher when they feel it appropriate. They have secured the excellent leadership of RE and collective worship and are actively engaged in supporting and monitoring each so that high standards are maintained. There are regular meetings with the subject leader so that governors can play a role in the development of RE. They recognise the school's future leadership needs and facilitate middle and senior leaders' access to appropriately targeted and specific training. With governors' encouragement, both the headteacher and deputy head are developing their leadership skills through the support of other church schools.

Parents say that they value the shared commitment of the school's leaders. They respect the headteacher and trust her judgement. Parents say how much they value the school's programme that teaches pupils the value of money within a Christian context and the evidence of the high savings rates achieved by pupils reflect parent's commitment to the project. Links with the local food bank enable pupils to see how Christian compassion applies in a local context while links with a school in Hiroshima and an orphanage in Kenya, give them a global perspective on peace and hope. There is an excellent and productive relationship with the parish church and the regular committed involvement of the incumbent in school life adds significantly to the capacity of the school. The powerful partnership and mutual support of the school and the church mean that, together, they are able to make a significant contribution to the service of their families and their local community.