

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### St John's Church of England Voluntary Controlled School

Tower Road  
Epping  
Essex CM16 5EN

#### Diocese: Chelmsford

Local authority: Essex  
Date of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012  
Date of last inspection: 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2009  
School's unique reference number: 115236  
Headteacher: Mr George Yerosimou  
Inspector's name and number: Mr Andrew Scott 744

#### School context

St John's is a voluntary controlled Church of England 11-16 secondary school with nearly 800 pupils on roll. It is a specialist engineering college. The school is situated in a residential area on the edge of Epping. Its intake is drawn from the town and local countryside and all children in the school's catchment area are welcomed, irrespective of their faith. 88% of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The majority of the remaining 12% are of African Caribbean heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students identified as eligible for free school meals is broadly average but rising. In September 2013, the school will be re-locating to impressive new buildings.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St John's School as a church school are good

The headteacher, supported by members of the leadership team, governors and the Chaplaincy Team, provides the vision and leadership necessary to ensure that all members of the school community are fully aware that this is a Christian school, based on Christian values, with a Christian sense of purpose. Under the headteacher's strong leadership, the school has made considerable improvements over recent years. Christian principles are now firmly embedded in all aspects its life and work and the school's distinctive Christian identity makes a major contribution to its effectiveness.

#### Established strengths

- The quality of leadership in providing the vision and strategic and operational management necessary to maintain and develop the distinctiveness of the school as a church school.
- The Christian values (most notably inclusion, respect and forgiveness) that are securely embedded in all aspects of the life and work of the school.
- The work of the Chaplaincy Team in supporting and taking forward the Christian ethos of the school in a practical way, especially at Key Stage 3.

#### Focus for development

- Producing a formal action plan for the further development of the school as a church school, including Chaplaincy Team activities at Key Stage 4.
- Ensuring all subjects of the curriculum provide explicit opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.
- Ensuring the Thought for the Day is used effectively by all form tutors, and involving governors more in evaluating and developing collective worship.

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

This is a good school where the personal development of pupils, the quality of relationships and standards of behaviour are outstanding. All members of the school community are clear that a significant reason for the school's effectiveness is that the core Christian values of respect, inclusion and forgiveness are securely embedded in all aspects of its life. Students are happy and feel safe and well supported. Parents praise the way that teachers constantly "go the extra mile" for their children, who generally achieve well and make good progress. In lessons, there is a sense of purposeful engagement. Pupils are attentive and 'on task'. The vertical tutoring system is instrumental in fostering respect, which is seen in the way students relate to each other and to members of staff. The priority

given to inclusion is clear in the many ways that the school supports its 'vulnerable' pupils and in the fact that only one student has been permanently excluded in the past decade. The school's approach to behaviour is based on respect and forgiveness. Forgiveness finds practical expression in the use of restorative justice to address wrongdoing. The Chaplaincy Team works closely with the RE department to enhance the spiritual development of pupils, organising highly successful and spiritually uplifting events in Years 7, 8 and 9. Students talk about the profound impact these activities had on them. The school rightly sees RE and the work of the Chaplaincy Team as major contributors to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development, along with work undertaken in Citizenship and creative arts subjects. The school is less secure in its understanding of how other subjects can contribute to SMSC development. The Youth for Christ Group runs a lunchtime club (Rock Solid) and a weekly prayer meeting. These activities contribute towards the overall Christian flavour of the school, as do the Chaplaincy Team notice board and Christian symbols displayed prominently around the school. The Christian identity of the school will be further enhanced in its new premises where there will be a Chaplaincy Room and Peace Garden.

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

Collective worship plays an important part in school life, being used to make explicit its Christian values. Students participate in weekly house assemblies and occasional Friday assemblies. The Chaplaincy Team is involved in the planning and delivery of assemblies, which always end with a prayer and a time of silent reflection. The school is aware of the need to refresh the school prayer, which all students know by heart, and the Chaplaincy Team want pupils to be involved in its revision. Worship is well planned with a focus on major Christian festivals. Students do not currently have the opportunity to participate in or experience the Eucharist at school. Worship is conducted in a manner consistent with the values of respect and inclusion. Pupils are invited to say 'Amen' if they so choose and they feel this shows respect for people of different standpoints. Students speak enthusiastically about assemblies and no pupils are withdrawn. Tutors are well supported in sharing a Thought for the Day on 'non-assembly' days through pre-prepared PowerPoint slides, but it is clear from what pupils say that not all tutors use these effectively. School worship is taken into the community through carol services held in the parish church and on the green, and students participate in the Remembrance Day parade and service. Representatives of non-Christian religions lead some assemblies, and this broadens pupils' understanding of different faiths. During the last SIAS inspection, the following were identified as foci for development: involvement of learners in leading collective worship, and governor involvement in evaluating and developing collective worship. The first of these has been addressed through a rota of form group assemblies led by the students themselves. Actions still need to be taken to enable governors to take a more pro-active role in evaluating and planning collective worship.

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

Effective school leadership has ensured that all members of the school community (not least the pupils) are clear that this is a church school, and they take pride in this. The headteacher, himself a practising Christian, takes the lead in proclaiming the school's Christian vision and values, and in communicating these to all stakeholders in documentation and whenever the opportunity presents itself. The head is supported in this by members of the school leadership team, the Chaplaincy Team and governors, many of whom are committed Christians. There is widespread agreement that the school has improved significantly over recent years and that this improvement is related to the fact that it asserts its Christian character more confidently now than used to be the case. As one parent expressed it, "The school now feels like a Christian community". Parents feel that a genuine partnership exists between them and the school. They say that communication with the school is good and they find the school very supportive. They speak highly of the headteacher and staff. The Chaplaincy Team is instrumental in taking forward the Christian vision of the school in practical ways. Meetings are minuted and action points noted. The recently appointed Assistant Headteacher who coordinates the work of the Chaplaincy Team has already carried out a student survey regarding the Christian ethos and activities of the school, and an action plan is being developed in response to the issues raised. There is a need for a detailed and formal action plan to be produced providing a clear indication as to how the school is going to build on its current successes to develop further as an effective church school. The school is in safe hands with its current headteacher, but succession planning is an area to be considered.