

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **St James Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Gaunts Common

Wimborne

Dorset

BH21 4JN

**Diocese: Salisbury**

Local authority: Dorset

Dates of inspection: 14<sup>th</sup> February, 2008

Date of last inspection: July, 2004

School's unique reference number: 113761

Headteacher: Mrs Audrey Kimber

Inspector's name and number: Rev John Angle (No. 119)

#### **School context**

St James' is a popular small village school, which draws pupils from five other small communities. The school is linked with a cluster of small schools in the area who all share resources and funding to their mutual benefit. It enjoys generous grounds, excellent facilities and is in a very pleasant rural environment.

This is a good Church of England school. There is a strong and permeating Christian ethos, which encourages the development of excellent attitudes and excellent behaviour. The school is a safe and secure learning environment. Children are beginning to develop in confidence, self-esteem and in understanding themselves, relationships and the world community. The school has excellent and affirming support from parents, the local community and the local churches. The school has the capacity to develop from being a good to an outstanding church school.

#### **Established strengths**

- A strong permeating Christian ethos
- A happy "family" atmosphere and a stimulating learning environment
- Excellent leadership, with caring and experienced staff
- Mutually supportive partnerships with parents and the local community

#### **Focus for development**

- Incorporate the development of the school's Christian distinctiveness as an element in the school improvement plan
- Make Christian symbols and evidence of the school's church foundation more prominent in the school community

#### **The school, through its distinctive Christian character, makes good provision to meet the needs of all its learners.**

The school's mission statement says, "every individual should be given the opportunity to develop their unique gifts within a happy and caring Christian environment". The school is fulfilling this objective. There is a strong Christian ethos permeating all aspects of school life and this is particularly seen in children's attitudes and behaviour. The ethos is open, caring and inclusive. All are treated fairly and children feel safe and secure. In a recent survey 100% of children said they were happy in school. All parents in a similar survey confirmed this. Children value themselves, their environment, their peers and their community. They are consulted about life in their school and their views are respected. The School Council plays a major role in defining rules and procedures for various school activities. Pupils flourish as individuals and grow in confidence and self-esteem. Their achievements and efforts are celebrated and healthy life styles are encouraged. A "can do" attitude encourages

perseverance and develops confidence. Pupils work together in a mutually supportive way. They care for each other – the “Friendly Force” of older pupils being a good example. They are learning to reflect on their behaviour and beginning in their own simple way to understand in ordinary day to day school life some of the key Christian values of repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. Staff are excellent role models and their trust, support and mutual care and consideration for each other impacts on the pupils. The school environment and the close links with the local church community encourages pupils’ spiritual development

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

Collective Worship is a very important and special part of the school day. It supports and strengthens the school as a Christian community and is a place where the uniqueness of each individual, made in the image of God, can be celebrated. Acts of worship are well resourced with helpful literature, the effective use of displays and by music which is used sensitively both for celebration and contemplation. Excellent use is made of story-telling to create an imaginative atmosphere and to encourage pupils to develop empathy. There is enthusiastic and committed support from school staff, the local vicar, other church ministers, the foundation governors and members of the community. Parents are also regularly involved on special occasions. Nearly all children are represented at these special times. Pupils are eager to be involved – answering questions, giving practical help, praying, reading and participating in role-play and acting out stories. They listen attentively. Prayer is a significant part of school life with extemporary prayer in collective worship ( “Thank you Lord for teachers, tooth-brushes and tooth-paste” on one occasion following a project on dental hygiene!), written prayers for special occasions and prayer before lunch and the end of the school day. In a recent survey 100% of pupils said they enjoyed worship. They said that it helped them learn about God and about caring for others. Children identify the relevance of what they experience in collective worship to their own life experiences. They appreciate the opportunities they are given to reflect and respond to what is shared with them. The very active involvement of the local vicar in the life of the school and in collective worship ensures that the children are beginning to develop an understanding of Anglican faith and practice. This is supported and encouraged by some of the parents. The school has clear ideas on what contributes to and makes for successful collective worship. The school monitors and evaluates its activities to ensure positive responses and outcomes consistent with their aims and objectives in a sensitive and relevant way.

**The leadership and management of the school as a church school are good.**

The Head supported by the staff and governors actively promote a distinctive vision for the school. Outstanding leadership and effective management from the head and staff working together as a highly committed team maintain a strong, pervasive Christian ethos. This results in outstanding spiritual, moral and social development in the children. The quality of provision in Religious Education is excellent. RE is effective in developing children’s understanding of religion. An emphasis on Christianity gives a strong foundation for religious understanding in the future. Prayer is encouraged. All, particularly parents with new children and new staff, are aware that this is a Christian school within induction processes. Parents are encouraged as co-educators with the school and are welcomed into class. Parental links are strong, so supporting a strong sense of family and community. The school seeks and values the views of parents, learners and members of the community in all aspects of school life. There is effective monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of school life including its Christian distinctiveness. Church partnerships – both Anglican and Methodist are very good and effective in supporting the Head, staff and governors in promoting a distinctive Christian vision for the school and in encouraging Christian values and life styles. There is scope for the further development of these partnerships to the mutual benefit of all.