

**St Laurence CE Junior Academy**

Newington Road

Ramsgate

CT11 0QX

**Previous SIAMS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Good**

**Diocese: Canterbury**

Local authority: N/A

Dates of inspection: 28 April 2015

Date of last inspection:

School's unique reference number: 138592

Headteacher: Michelle Palmer

Inspector's name and number: Revd Derek Bastide (418)

**School context**

St Laurence is a two form entry junior academy. The majority of the pupils are from a British white heritage background and fewer than 5% of the pupils have English as an additional language. The school converted to an academy on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2012 and is sponsored by the Diocese of Canterbury. The present headteacher was appointed in February 2014. In January 2014 the school was inspected by Ofsted and was required to improve. In May 2014 Ofsted made a moderating visit which noted that the school was taking effective action and so no further visits would be required.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Laurence as a Church of England academy are good.

- The energetic leadership of the headteacher has reenergised the academy enabling it to manage effectively with the issues it is dealing with.
- The academy's mission statement (Believe, Achieve, Aspire) is an uncompromising and clear statement of the academy's intention of nurturing every child to succeed.
- The pupils' empathy with each other arising from the academy's Christian values and collective worship leads to high levels of good behaviour.

**Areas to improve**

- Complete work on the assessment of RE, including reflective questioning so as to develop a clear picture of pupil achievement.
- Work with staff in its two community feeder schools in the areas of collective worship and reflection so as to ease pupils' entry into the academy.

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

The academy has identified after consultation with stakeholders a number of distinctively Christian values, which define its Christian character particularly love, forgiveness, hope and

joy. These are displayed around the school, they are known and talked about by all members of the school community and deeply affect school life. These values are becoming embedded in the life of the academy and lead to an ethos of respect and care in which children can flourish. All members of the school feel valued and listened to. The school encourages reflection at all times as it encourages pupils to be aware of their own needs as well as those of others. Children say that there is no bullying, a view supported by parents, and this is one of the impacts of the Christian values upon which school life is based. As one child said 'We are a big family of friends'. Children are encouraged to take special pride in their work – though boasting is not approved of. Underlying this is the conviction that every child is a child of God and therefore both of infinite value and unique. The school Mission Statement, Believe, Achieve and Aspire, emphasises the importance the school places on its pupils reaching their full potential and growing in confidence. Pupils make good individual progress, each child is encouraged to do the best they can and that this is recognised. The academy has constructed a behaviour policy centred on one of its distinctive Christian values, forgiveness. As a result relationships between members of the community are excellent and there is an atmosphere of calm respect. Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development (SMSC) is a significant feature of the academy and one which arises directly from its distinctive Christian values. To focus upon cultural development pupils are introduced to a range of faiths in addition to Christianity. This includes principally Judaism, Islam and Sikhism. Pupils explore similarities and differences between faiths and cultures. They do this by engaging with texts, artefacts and other sources from different cultures and religious backgrounds. A particularly strong focus is the celebration of key religious festivals for children in the academy. A visit to a mosque has been arranged for the near future. Pupils are very aware of others in the community and beyond and appreciate the opportunity to gain informed information. These activities contribute strongly to the children's spiritual development and social awareness.

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

All members of the school community recognise the central role of collective worship in the daily life of the school. It has a very significant place in the school day when the school community comes together to pray, reflect, share and celebrate together. In fact collective worship takes place three times each day: in the morning, at lunchtime and in the afternoon. On Thursdays two classes go on a rota basis to worship in the parish church which is close by. In this way pupils begin to experience different forms of worship drawn normally from Anglican sources. Here children become familiar with the Trinitarian blessing, 'In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'. Worship in school includes Bible stories and children are involved in the telling and acting out these stories as well as assisting with the prayers. Pupils certainly enjoy collective worship and talked with enthusiasm of some of the approaches in the school. They talked about prayer and many claimed that their use of prayer extended beyond their time in school and they talked freely about how prayer can support themselves and others. Each classroom has its own reflection area which children can use for prayer and reflection. These classroom reflection areas are kept fresh and children can be observed using them either to read what is on display, saying a prayer or just reflecting. Pupils are invited to submit requests for prayer. The planning of collective worship falls largely on the coordinator in liaison with the ministry team of the Parish. Whole school collective worship is drawn up each term from guidance from the diocese thus ensuring that worship has a clear focus and continuity. Collective worship is monitored and evaluated by the Trustees and pupils also have their voice especially in planning and arranging their class assemblies. The centrality of prayer and reflection in the life of the academy and the high value placed on worship within it contribute powerfully to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children. The two feeder schools to the academy are community schools and have different approaches to the conduct of collective worship. The staff of the academy are looking at ways of easing the transition for pupils.

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

Religious education (RE) is a crucial element in the academy's distinctive Christian character.

Treated as a core subject it is well resourced in both teaching time and with teaching materials and artefacts. A new, experienced RE co-ordinator has been appointed to extend the effectiveness of RE across the curriculum and, of course, to inject greater levels of subject knowledge. The majority of the time allocated to RE is devoted to Christianity. Other featured religions include Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. Teachers are concerned that pupils should be enriched spiritually by their work in RE as well as extending their factual knowledge of religions. There is a growing focus on children being encouraged to ask deeper questions which greatly enriches the classroom dialogue. A key word in RE, as in the rest of the school, is reflection. A year 6 lesson illustrates this well. The class was studying an aspect of Sikh – the account of Guru Gobind Singh and the founding of the Khalsa. Pupils were reflecting on bravery and commitment and drawing comparisons with the story of Daniel who refused to obey the emperor's command that no one must pray to God. There is much evidence that children empathise with biblical stories such as Daniel. Pupils' enjoyment of RE lesson enhances their desire to learn. They engage in dialogue and accept that they may occasionally disagree. Lessons are well planned with good provision for different levels of ability and also with built in provision for pupil reflection clearly enhances their desire to learn. Pupils' attainment is well in line with national standards. The assessment of RE is changing and staff are looking at this carefully. As a result of the academy's moderation of RE, staff were able to discuss levelling in RE and all the components that are needed such as evidence of verbal contributions and their questions. Pupils gain from their RE both an enrichment of their own spiritual awareness and an awareness of living in a multi-faith society.

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

The headteacher has a very clear vision of how a Church of England academy should be and this is shared by the trustees and the school staff. Underlying this vision lie the academy's chosen distinct Christian values, notably love, joy, hope and forgiveness and the academy's Mission Statement: Believe, Achieve and Aspire! Policies are based on the academy's shared distinctive Christian values. The impact of these values in the academy leads to a much richer life for all. Pupils realise, for example, that forgiveness, although it can be hard at the time, does provide a fresh start and a better way forward. A central focus of the leadership and management of the academy must be pupils' achievement – that pupils should be enabled to achieve their full potential and so find fulfilment. As far as the leadership and management of the academy are concerned this is a central impact of the institution's Christian values. During last academic year the academy was inspected by Ofsted which placed it in the third category, *Needing to Improve* particularly in the area of pupil achievement. The new headteacher confronted the issues immediately and with such effect that on the first monitoring visit the academy was judged to be taking such effective action that no further action was required. This was a whole staff issue but specific mention must be made of the vigorous activity of the headteacher. The impact was a strong focus upon working with children to develop their God given gifts. Academy data demonstrates good progress for all pupils and teachers are assiduous in supporting them. Trustees are closely involved in the governance of the academy which they support '100%.' Trustees are highly ambitious for the pupils and robustly hold senior leaders to account. They are full of praise for the academy and involve themselves in the life of the academy, for example, in evaluating both collective worship and working with the headteacher in evaluating RE. RE and collective worship both have a strong position in the curriculum and both meet the statutory requirements. RE has acquired a new co-ordinator and has recently undergone some revision both in management and content. Pupils demonstrate a strong interest in RE and are working with renewed energy. The academy is highly regarded by parents and by members of the community. Relations with the parish church are excellent – the new vicar leads school worship once each week and welcomes both children and their parents to church on Sundays as well as on many week days. The academy works alongside a strong community of local schools engaged in shared professional development, external

moderation of assessment and strategic planning for the future. School leaders and teachers in the academy find this connection enriching to their work

The areas for development from the last inspection have been fully addressed.

SIAMS report April 2015 St Laurence Junior Academy, Ramsgate CT110QX