

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Thorverton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	
School Lane, Thorverton, Exeter, Devon EX5 5NR	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Exeter
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Name of federation	Exe Valley Federation
Local authority	Devon
Date of inspection	28 September 2017
Date of last inspection	22 October 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled Primary 113376
Executive Headteacher	John Jolliffe
Head of school	Sarah Parkes
Inspector's name and number	Revd David Hatrey 844

School context

Thorverton Church of England Primary is a smaller than average school with 73 children on roll. The majority of children come from a White British heritage. The number of children who are entitled to pupil premium funding is below national averages, whilst the number of children who have special educational needs is in line with national averages. Since 2012 the school has become part of a federation of three village schools in which it is the only church school. In September of this year another church school joined the federation. A new head of teaching and learning was appointed in 2015 and a new executive head in 2016.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Thorverton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- Strong focused leadership has created a cohesive, dedicated staff team who have effectively increased the impact of being a church school.
- Behaviour and relationships are consistently good across the school, children show care to one another and have a real sense of being part of a Christian community.
- Children worship leaders make a significant contribution to developing worship, planning and leading which engages others.

Areas to improve

- Extend the governor system for monitoring and evaluation to include all aspects of worship, particularly conferencing with children which leads to ongoing improvements.
- Deepen the understanding of the school community of the school's distinctive Christian vision so everyone can talk about it more confidently and describe where they see it making a difference to the life of the school.
- Embed the new approaches to spirituality and provide more high quality experiences which enable children to express their deepening ideas in a variety of creative ways.

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

Christian distinctiveness is good because the school's Christian values are well established and recognised by all as an important part of school life. Last year the school family came together to review the values adding some new ones so that these are relevant to the children. The values identified are generosity, truthfulness, courage, perseverance, compassion, trust, friendship, justice, thankfulness, respect, forgiveness and service. Children have good understanding of the values, recognising what they look like in daily life and can describe a number of occasions where they have used them and the difference they make. Most children link Bible stories to the value and have some understanding of their distinctive Christian meaning. Children often recall these stories in some depth, even when they had been considered some time previously. This is a real strength. This is further reinforced by the school council, who meet each week and nominate children for the values award, where they see them showing the value being developed that week or another of the values. They give reasons why the award is made, which are shared so children have a growing appreciation of how these values make a difference to their lives in a variety of contexts. For example, a child responded by supporting a local homeless charity by various fund raising activities. In addition, some children explain that when a new Christian value is considered this had encouraged them to reflect on their actions and what they would do differently. The school has effectively linked these values to 'growth mind set' approaches which develops children's attitudes to learning positively. Thoughtful responses are made by children where they recognise they have used values in their learning, with examples of how courage has encouraged them to persevere. Standards in the school are at least good with the majority of children achieving age-related expectations or in a number of instances the higher levels. Support for disadvantaged children is equally effective with a range of strategies to meet their needs. Their progress is consistently good where they make comparable progress with their peers. The quality of behaviour and relationships stands out as being one of the strengths. These are clearly modelled by staff in their own interactions with children and families. Children work collaboratively and they perceive the importance of the views of others, listening to their ideas as well as celebrating success. A good example of this is the buddy system where Year 6 are paired with foundation children and other year group links. Some children are beginning to recognise the links between their behaviour and the Christian character of the school. In the last two years there have been ongoing initiatives to raise the impact of the school's provision for spirituality. 'Windows, mirrors and doors' has been introduced and this approach has provided children with a framework which helps them to think and reflect on spiritual issues. Children are growing in confidence using this approach and can see how it directs their thinking, although it is yet to be fully embedded. When this is used to reflect on values, children develop an understanding of their relevance to daily life. There are more opportunities for reflection with journals being introduced. Comments here indicate there is a growing understanding in their thinking. At present opportunities are not identified in planning nor are children always able to express their deepening ideas in a variety of ways. Effective teaching of RE enables children to develop a good understanding of world faiths. They respect other views and can make perceptive links between their own beliefs and the Christian faith. This is evident in what they say. The school recognises that there are insufficient opportunities to explore cultural diversity and has already established a plan to address this. Religious education is expertly coordinated by the subject leader who has skilfully introduced a number of new initiatives into the school. This has included the 'Understanding Christianity' project where new units are well developed. She has also led training on this for other schools. The quality of teaching is good, so children are engaged in creative work which they increasingly enjoy. Religious education makes a strong contribution to the Christian ethos of the school where teaching does support children's understanding of the Christian values. However, there are occasions when opportunities arise when children's understanding could be deepened, but these are not always taken.

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

Collective worship is good because children are engaged, there are greater opportunities to contribute and they feel that it makes a difference to their lives and thinking. The new leadership team recognised that collective worship was not having the impact they know it should. As a consequence, through listening to children, using questionnaires, a number of significant changes have been implemented. At the heart of this has been the creation of a young worship group. These children are increasingly contributing their ideas to the termly planning and they help to shape the celebration of festivals which are held in church. They undertake dramas which reinforce key points and deepen children's understanding. In several instances they are writing dramas themselves, revealing their understanding. In addition, they prepare the hall for worship, bringing in new songs as well as listening to peers for further ways to develop this further. The head of teaching and learning, as leader for collective worship, has developed the termly plan where each week an aspect of the value is explored. By introducing a published resource, she has provided a simple Anglican structure for worship. This allows all staff to lead worship, whilst the coordinator has welcomed the involvement of church leaders from the community. This has provided a variety of approaches to worship for children to experience, which was another of their requests. Planning includes the celebration of the main Christian festivals, which are significant occasions in the life of the school. These experiences

enable children to talk about festivals in some detail describing their significance for Christians. Children also requested that there be more opportunities for them to contribute to dramas and the chance to share their prayers. Children share their ideas thoughtfully with a peer, this helps them to make choices, shape their beliefs and consider how they can respond. An emphasis on the visual through different media engages them. Another request from children was to include more examples of inspirational people, who have shown these values and make a difference. Children are confident to talk about experiences and how they have influenced their thinking and actions. These are enhanced when they are followed up in class or through the additional times for spiritual reflection. Worship is securely linked to biblical ideas, either through a story or verses of scripture. Young children talk about Jesus' life and several of the stories told. Others talk about the Trinity and are able to recall ideas from their creative work which they developed in RE. They explored Trinity symbols they had created and the significance of these and the colours used, their responses showed a depth of ideas. More recently the vicar has worked with each class on, 'Thy Kingdom Come,' a project focusing on prayer. Children considered different types of prayer and why they might use them and wrote prayers on bunting which were then displayed. Their prayers show that children appreciate that this is a way of sharing any of their ideas with God and the different parts they can include. Prayers of older children show a greater depth of maturity, notably as they respond to national incidents which are thought through. The leadership continues to evaluate and refine collective worship and this is increasingly being supported by governors. When governors undertake observations of worship they have now begun to include discussions with children, which informs their understanding of the impact the current provision is making. This has only recently begun so it has not yet made a significant impact in further developing worship.

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

Leadership and management is good because the new head of school and executive head have brought renewed focus and rigour to the life of the church school. In 2016 the school was involved in creating a joint federation vision of, 'Challenge, Discover and Succeed'. It is well integrated into teaching and learning and children understand it well. More recently, governors and leadership have discerned that this is not a distinctive Christian vision reflecting their Christian heritage and values. Led strongly by the vicar, they have reviewed it and added notes to explain a Christian understanding of the three core themes. As this has only just been completed and introduced to children it is at an early stage of development. It is very evident that governors and leaders have a clear Christian vision and are working to fulfil this. The school's Christian distinctiveness is apparent in a number of areas, notably in the quality of collective worship and RE, but also in the depth of relationships and behaviour. The school operates as a Christian community, children see one another as being special to God and treat each accordingly. This is reflected in the range of provision the school has put in place to meet the diverse needs of all children. Case studies provide examples of where this has made significant differences to children and their families, enabling them to make a full contribution to the life of the school and achieve their potential. The executive head and head of school are actively involved in ongoing astute evaluation of the impact of its current provision. The detailed pupil tracking and reviews of pupil performance is a good example of this. In addition, they consider all aspects of being a church school. Governors are become increasingly involved in this process, they recently reviewed the impact of being a church school. Their learning walks and observations are now much more focused, involving seeking children's opinions. These are now beginning to be used to form actions. Their enthusiasm and commitment indicates they are in a good position to continue to develop. The re-establishment of the governors' ethos team demonstrates this as they draw upon diocesan adviser knowledge to inform their evaluation work. The school draws upon continuing professional development training to raise the impact of RE notably through the 'Understanding Christianity' and assessment in RE. Relationships with the local community and particularly the church is a strength. The church contributes fully to school life, through leading worship and providing foundation governors, notably celebrating the festivals. The community is welcomed into school as well as sharing in its life. Whilst the school draws upon the skills of the other schools in the federation, it is at the forefront of work in RE, collective worship and Christian values. It shares good practice in RE in particular through the coordinator. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report September 2017 Thorverton CE VC Primary School, Thorverton, Exeter, Devon EX5 5NR