

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Thurlestone All Saints' Church of England Primary Academy

Thurlestone, Kingsbridge, Devon TQ7 3NB

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Exeter
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Name of multi academy trust	Learning Academy Partnership
Date of academy conversion	1 April 2017
Date of inspection	28 November 2017
Date of last inspection	28 November 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary academy 144074
Executive headteacher	Susan Rowe-Jones
Inspector's name and number	Andrew Rickett (201)

School context

Thurlestone All Saints' is a smaller than average size primary school with 122 children on roll. They are arranged into five class groups. The majority of children are from a White British heritage and a range of socio-economic backgrounds. The number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is below the national average as is the number entitled to receive the pupil premium. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. The school forms part of the South Hams Hub of the Learning Academy Partnership (LAP) which it joined on 1 April 2017. The Hub is led by an executive headteacher who is also substantive headteacher at All Saints'.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Thurlestone All Saints' Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- An explicit Christian vision based on values underpinned by biblical teaching makes a significant contribution to the children's personal wellbeing and their academic progress.
- Acts of worship are inspirational and give children experiences in which they confidently explore faith and belief.
- Leaders and managers are passionate about the school's Christian vision and ensure that it has meaning and purpose for all members of the school community.

Areas to improve

- Develop the use of the school's shared understanding of spirituality so that it has an impact on the quality of religious education (RE) and the wider curriculum.
- Develop the use of higher order 'big questions' to enable children to engage in their learning by challenging their thinking and equipping them with the language to respond in greater depth.
- Develop assessment in RE to reflect the expectations of learning strategies such as 'Philosophy for Children' on outcomes.

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

The school's values lie at the heart of how they, as a community coming together, empower children to aspire to excellence in their learning. At the root of these values is an understanding that education is concerned with transforming children's lives. This is based on a biblical interpretation of living life in all its fullness and securely places the vision within a Christian context. The school is outstanding because of the extent to which its vision and accompanying ethos make a significant impact on the children's personal development and the progress they make in their learning. Children are fully aware of the six core values and articulate how they reflect the school's distinctive Christian ethos. They speak of friendship and fairness in terms of values that Jesus taught through the stories He told. They explain how endurance helps them to be resilient in their learning and relationships. The school, which is situated close to the sea, uses the image of values as seagulls soaring to reflect the school's vision for children to aspire to excellence. Children understand what this means and how it is lived out in the life of the school and use a shared language to articulate it. The ethos manifests itself in the classroom through teaching and learning that allows children to learn from mistakes, to take risks and grow in confidence to accept challenge. Children make progress in their learning to achieve outcomes that are at least in line with national averages. Children with SEND and those who receive pupil premium funding make better than expected progress with many now achieving at the same level as other children. The school has worked hard to develop its understanding of spirituality and has agreed a shared definition that explores self, others, the world and the beyond through a framework based on reflection through Windows, Mirrors and Doors. This is becoming established in subjects such as religious education (RE) where it enhances the quality of learning by giving children the opportunity to think about big questions in greater depth. The use of these questions across the wider curriculum is still developing, as is the language children are acquiring to support them explain their thoughts and ideas in greater depth. However, when these opportunities occur, they make an excellent contribution to the children's moral and social development. Children have a powerful awareness of the need to show respect and dignity to others regardless of who they are. This is reflected in the excellent quality of relationships throughout the school community. Parents speak of the warmth of the welcome they receive from the moment they walk into the school reception area and talk with admiration of the commitment from teachers for the welfare of their children. Children say that they are safe in school and know that adults are there to look after them. The school is aware of the need to keep reminding children that modern Britain is a diverse country where differences are celebrated. The school is vigilant in looking for opportunities where children can be given first hand experiences for this to be explored.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Acts of worship at Thurlestone All Saints' are regarded by children and adults as a special time in the school day and one that gives them opportunities to express the school's distinctive Christian ethos. Whether children themselves have a personal faith or not, they agree that collective worship is special because it 'isn't like other times in the school day'. They appreciate and value this difference saying that it gives them time to be still and reflect on 'things that are important'. Improvements in planning and structure since the previous inspection has given collective worship greater purpose with more clearly identified themes giving messages a clearer direction. Themes are based on biblical stories that help children understand the school's core values and this is supplemented by resources such as 'Roots and Fruits' which add a further dimension to the children's appreciation of how values impact on their lives. For instance, children deepen their understanding of their own core values through aspects such as trust or forgiveness. Acts of worship are distinctively Christian and provide good opportunities for children to develop their understanding of Anglican tradition. Young children, for example, explain how the lighting of a candle represents Jesus as 'the light of the world' and that it helps them reflect when they are still or praying. There are many opportunities to pray in the life of the school and children have an excellent grasp of the meaning and purpose of prayer. They know that prayers can ask God for help for others and themselves, to say thank you or sorry. Older children have the maturity to explore whether prayers will always be answered but are adamant that God listens to everyone's prayers whether they have a faith or not because 'He created us all as equals'. Younger children explain with confidence that they pray to God by sending Him messages to say thank you for the world and the things in it. They are developing their understanding that prayers help in life and some show maturity when explaining how prayer can give courage when times are hard. Older children know that prayers are not used to test God or ask for material things. Like younger children, they say that prayers can bring hope when times are tough. Children have a very mature appreciation of the nature of the Trinity and its complexity. They confidently talk about God as Father and Jesus as the Son. Older children are beginning to use their appreciation of the nature of the Trinity to help them explain God. The establishment of an ethos team has given children greater opportunities to be involved in evaluating collective worship and the wider Christian ethos. The Local Ethos and Communication Group similarly carry out regular observations of worship as well as learning walks and these give them an insight into the school's strengths.

The effectiveness of religious education is outstanding

Religious education makes a significant contribution to the children's developing spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. It does this very effectively by encouraging children to reflect on what they learn in RE through the school's values and this enhances their understanding and appreciation of faith and belief. Children engage in this reflection of what they have learnt because they have a secure knowledge of Christianity and other world religions upon which they are developing their own appreciation of how those who have a religious faith use that as a guide in their lives. Teachers manage this in a very sensitive and appropriate way that ensures RE is inclusive. This is reflected in events such as the recent whole school interfaith experiences when children visited a mosque and the cathedral as well as learning about Hinduism and Sikhism from visitors to the school. Children talk about these experiences with excitement and recognition that all faiths should be respected. Furthermore, children have a growing understanding of links between different faith traditions and use this to enhance their learning. The school's RE leader and the trust's Christian Distinctiveness Lead have an excellent grasp of the latest developments in RE and ensure that the school's provision changes to meet these requirements. For example, the introduction in September 2017 of individual RE books for each child from Year 1 is a recognition that assessing standards and progress of new initiatives such as 'Understanding Christianity' need a different way of capturing the children's work other than just using class 'floor books'. These have been replaced with class scrapbooks that capture learning such as children's verbal comments from discussions. In this way, using individual books and class scrapbooks, teachers have a more complete picture of each child upon which to base their assessment. The school has worked hard to develop assessment of RE and have devised a set of criteria, based on the requirements of the locally agreed RE syllabus and assessment models from Salisbury Diocese, that are increasingly being used to assess children's progress against the raised expectations of resources such as 'Understanding Christianity'. Teachers are delivering this new resource with confidence and children respond with enthusiasm and a real sense of excitement when challenged in their thinking. Teaching of RE is at least consistently good across the school with many examples of individual high quality practice. The school has yet to bring these individual examples of good practice together so that teachers use a range of them to deepen even further the children's understanding. For example, the use of a technique called 'Philosophy for Children' in one class equipped children with the language to explore difficult concepts with confidence. This approach to enhance learning in RE is not being used consistently across all class groups.

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

The continual development of the school's distinctive Christian ethos is at the centre of decisions made by the school's leaders and managers. An excellent example of this is the reason for joining the LAP academy trust and how that would support the school to develop a more meaningful ethos. This has been very successful and all members of the school community recognise the positive difference in the school since the appointment of the executive headteacher and the encouragement from the trust to raise the profile of collective worship and RE. The passion and commitment of the executive headteacher to the Christian ethos has been central to the improvements made. She has a very clear articulation of what it means to be a church school and has ensured that the school has benefitted from expertise from within the academy trust. This has been particularly effective through the advice and support of the trust's Christian Distinctiveness Lead who has worked closely with staff delivering high quality professional training that has made a significant impact on provision for RE and collective worship. Governors in the Local Committee, led by two very able co-chairs, are fully supportive of the work of the school's leaders to raise the profile of the Christian ethos. Through the work of the Local Ethos and Communication Group, they have a clear grasp of the school's strengths as a church school and, because they carry out regular monitoring of its impact, have a good understanding of what needs to be done to continue to improve. The vicar makes an important contribution to this committee and has developed his understanding of what it means to be a church school and has greater confidence and skills to evaluate the impact of the ethos. A good example of this is the work being done to develop closer links between the school and church communities. The introduction of monthly collective worship held in the church, to which parents and members of the church community are invited, is a reflection of how its profile has been raised. The support from the school and the trust in supporting the development of the school's RE leader, who has been in post since April 2017, is an excellent example of how future leaders are being nurtured from within the schools in the trust. She has been proactive in developing new initiatives and has grown considerably in confidence to take a full part in developing her subject. The support from the trust's Christian Distinctiveness Lead has been excellent and together with the executive headteacher they make a strong team. The school has also benefitted from close links with the diocese and the advice received from them to help develop areas such as assessment in RE. Parents recognise the extent to which the profile of RE and collective worship has been enhanced and say that this has been done in such a gentle and inclusive way that, whether you have a personal faith or not, the Christian ethos helps their children become better people. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.