

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Thomas and St Anne's CE VC Primary School

Hanwood Shrewsbury Shropshire SY5 8JN

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Diocese

Hereford

Previous SIAS inspection grade

Outstanding

Local authority

Shropshire

Date of inspection

19 March 2018

Date of last inspection

10 December 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Primary 123525

Headteacher

Kate Budd

Inspector's name and number

Duncan Jones 813

School context

St Thomas and St Anne's CE Primary School is a smaller than average school with 103 children currently on roll. There is also a 20 place Local Authority nursery on site. The school serves a wide, rural community. The percentage of disadvantaged children is around national average, but the percentage of children receiving support for special educational needs is slightly above average. The vast majority of children are White British, with English as their first language. Since the last inspection there has been a restructuring and a significant change to staffing. This includes the strengthening of middle leadership. The school works with a group of neighbouring schools on issues of common interest.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Thomas and St Anne CE Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- Behaviour is a very high standard and is shaped by Christian values of honesty, respect and forgiveness.
- As a result of effective teaching in religious education (RE), children develop excellent understanding and respect for difference and diversity.
- The partnership between school, church and home ensures that a strong sense of community is created and children's lives are enriched.
- Global links are highly effective, ensuring that children gain a good understanding of injustice and take action as a result.
- Staff are very effectively developed as future leaders, ensuring the school has good capacity to grow as a church school.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that the school's Christian vision and core values are well known by all adults and children. Enable children to relate the vision and values to teaching from the Bible and to the way they choose to live their lives.
- Develop a shared understanding of spirituality which will enable staff to plan for experiences of spirituality in the curriculum.
- Enable children to plan, lead and evaluate collective worship regularly to increase further children's engagement with worship.
- Develop governors' monitoring of the school's distinctively Christian character, so that it leads to further improvement of the school's provision.

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

St Thomas and St Anne's CE Primary School is a warm, caring community where all are valued and cherished as individuals. This is summed up by the school's motto, 'working together to achieve our best'. The school focuses on a set of twelve Christian values, one each half term, which form the basis for collective worship and are displayed around the school. The Christian values are clearly the driving force for a wide variety of actions and policies adopted by the school. For example, the very high standard of behaviour in the school is due to a focus on Christian values such as respect and honesty. When disagreements occur, staff use values such as forgiveness and justice to help children understand where they have gone wrong and how they might change their actions in the future. However, due to the large number of Christian values, the effective teaching of British Values and the use of other moral codes such as the golden rules for behaviour, children do not have a clear understanding of what their specifically Christian values mean. They can generally talk about the current value, but not all children can describe how the Christian values affect their daily lives and actions. This is one reason why the school is not outstanding.

Academic achievement at St Thomas and St Anne's is strong, including the progress for children who have special educational needs and those who are disadvantaged. This is a result of the school's Christian commitment to caring for every child. The same approach is taken to attendance, where the school offers support to those families for whom attendance is a challenge. As a result, figures for attendance are in line with national average.

Staff enthusiastically embrace occasions when they can develop children's spirituality. These are often based on having an openness to the wonders of creation. Staff and governors all have their own ideas about what spirituality might mean within the context of St Thomas and St Anne's Primary School, but they have not agreed on a shared understanding. This means that staff are unable to plan for experiences in their lessons when they can aim to develop children's personal spirituality.

A strength of the school is children's understanding of and respect for difference and diversity. Through effective teaching in RE, children are fascinated to learn about different faiths and cultures. They say that this helps them to appreciate what different people believe and to know how to show them respect. Through collective worship they learn about the importance of showing compassion to all. The result is that children are very welcoming to any new children who join the school and examples of bullying are extremely rare.

RE lessons are often used to investigate 'big questions' about life and ethical issues. Children enjoy this sort of discussion and being challenged to think deeply. A recent piece of work in Year 6 involved children describing the events leading up to Jesus's crucifixion through the eyes of Pontus Pilate. This made them examine a story critically from a number of different angles and consider whether Pilate was a good or bad man. In ways such as this, RE makes an important contribution to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship occupies an important place in the life of the school. A strength of the school is the wide variety of leaders of collective worship from within the school and from the church who ensure that worship is varied and enriching. As a result, children listen and respond extremely well. Children say that they particularly enjoy worship where they are able to participate, so the 'Open the Book' worship, when children routinely take part acting out a story from the Bible, is keenly anticipated and effective. Worship themes are based on a set of twelve Christian values which are covered every two years.

Worship includes learning about the life and teachings of Jesus and a wider range of Bible stories. Although messages from these stories are followed up in some classes, children do not always fully understand the deeper meaning of the stories they hear. As a result, children cannot confidently retell stories from the Bible or relate key messages to their own lives. This is one reason why collective worship is not yet outstanding.

Children are able to participate in a number of ways during collective worship, showing that the school has made good improvement in this aspect since the last inspection. They enjoy reading prayers and stories, and the introduction of formal greetings and responses led by the children adds to the children's understanding of Anglican liturgy and practice. However, children are not fully involved in planning, leading and evaluating worship on a regular basis.

Through effective teaching in RE and regular references at the beginning of worship, children are developing a good understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Also, as a result of imaginative work in RE, they have good

knowledge of the major Christian festivals and times of the church year such as Holy Week and Easter. Effective links are made between the church's year and Anglican practice, such as the use of liturgical colours.

Prayer is offered during collective worship, where it is valued as a quiet, reflective time of the day. This often includes praying for members of the wider community including the local church, and a prayer group at the church regularly prays for the school. Each classroom has a prayer book and children are invited to contribute prayers which they have written at home or at school. In this way, children are developing an understanding of the value of prayer in their lives.

Governors work actively with the headteacher to monitor the impact of collective worship. As a result of this, improvements are made in the quality of and effectiveness of worship. For example, the introduction of regular prayer responses used at collective worship came as a result of governors' monitoring.

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

The headteacher and her team have a clear vision of the school as an inclusive, caring community which is based on Christian values. This is apparent on the school's website, in newsletters and in displays in the school and parents share this vision of the school. Staff and governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their school. They gauge parents' opinions regularly either through questionnaires or through more informal information gathering at events such as parents' evenings. Governors work with the headteacher to monitor RE and collective worship and resulting improvements are reported in the school development plan and improvements are made in a timely manner. However, governors do not routinely monitor the school's Christian distinctiveness, for example looking at the extent to which the Christian values impact on all members of the school community. This is one reason why the school is not outstanding.

The wellbeing of staff is an important feature of at St Thomas and St Anne's and one which stems from the school's inclusive Christian vision. Staff speak about the welcoming Christian ethos which ensures that new members of staff are quickly welcomed and supported in a 'caring, nurturing' environment. Particularly good provision is made for developing staff at St Thomas and St Anne's. The headteacher is effectively strengthening the role of her middle leaders and all staff are well supported in their professional development. Consequently, the school has good capacity to grow and flourish in the future.

Collective worship and RE are very well led by the headteacher, supported by the middle leaders. In RE in particular there is rapid improvement in standards and in the quality of the curriculum as a result of the introduction of 'Understanding Christianity'. The success of this is due to high quality professional development, use of a coaching model where teachers support one another, and careful trialling of new materials before adopting them across the school. All of this is the result of good leadership. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

Highly effective partnerships are a significant strength of the school. Links between school and church are particularly strong. Not only does the church support the school through leading collective worship and organising events such as Experience Easter, a number of church members help with other aspects of school life such as offering help in the classrooms. The school in turn helps the church through involvement with charities and initiatives supported by the church. This includes promoting Christian Aid week and combining the school's harvest collection with that of the church in order to support the local food bank. Parents feel they are highly valued members of the school and value the sense of community created by home, school and church working together.

The school has made an extremely effective global link through its involvement with a charity which works with schools in Uganda. The school has helped children to understand the issues which prevent children in Uganda receiving a good education, and to realise that what they do through fund raising can make a big difference to other people's lives. Parents describe how children now make links with items they see in the news and the work of the charity. In this way, children are moving beyond compassion to taking social action and developing an understanding of injustice. This shows good progress in this area since the last inspection. The school is also developing useful partnerships with local schools which are leading to clear benefits such as working together on priorities in the school development plan.