

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Thurlaston Church Of England Primary School

Desford Road, Thurlaston, Leicestershire, LE9 7TE

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Leicester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Leicestershire
Date of inspection	19 June 2018
Date of last inspection	12 June 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 120201
Headteacher	Gavin Beetham
Inspector's name and number	Angela Dewes
Quality assurance assessor	Allyson Taylor 768

School context

This is a small village primary school. It is voluntary aided. The headteacher has been in post for 11 years. Since the last inspection, the governing body has been reconstituted and a new assistant headteacher appointed. Most pupils are from a white British background. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is above average in some cohorts. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below average. Several pupils transfer mid-year. 10 pupils have joined the school since October.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Thurlaston Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- This is a nurturing school where pupils and staff are valued and enabled to flourish.
- The high standards of achievement and personal development can be attributed to the school's Christian distinctiveness.
- The headteacher provides passionate ethical leadership.
- Parents are appreciative of the way the school develops the whole child.

Areas to improve

- Increase the opportunities pupils have for first-hand experience of diverse cultures and faiths to develop deeper understanding.
- For the governing body to develop a more structured approach to evaluating the school as a church school in order to have a clear understanding of the impact of the school's vision and to hold leaders to account.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to plan collective worship from scratch so that they become confident in developing and leading all aspects of collective worship on a regular basis.

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

The school's Christian vision 'Teaching and living the Christian way of Life' is very evident in the school and is reinforced by the Christian values of perseverance, forgiveness, friendship, thankfulness, generosity, compassion, trust and justice which have a significant impact on all aspects of school life. Throughout the school, the values are displayed and pupils could relate them to Bible stories. The school provides many opportunities for social, moral, spiritual and cultural education (SMSC). In one class, the pupils had explored justice and freedom through the lives of Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King and Aung San Suu Kyi. However, the school does not yet have a shared definition of spirituality that is understood by most adults. Behaviour and relationships are strong and staff and pupils feel valued and nurtured. Staff spoke about how lucky they felt to work at the school and how 'everyone feels part of a team.' All stakeholders spoken to attributed this to the school's Christian character. The school's Christian character is clearly contributing to the academic achievement, personal development and wellbeing of all learners. Pupils are encouraged to be 'the best they can be'. Parents are particularly appreciative of how the school develops the whole child and enables all pupils to experience success. There are a number of pupils with additional needs at the school and these pupils are well supported by caring staff. It is evident that pupils and adults are proud of their school. Various groups spoken to referred to the family atmosphere of the school and spoke about how pupils care for one another. Staff often go the extra mile to support pupils, for example, when settling in pupils who have joined the school during key stage 1 or 2. Since the last inspection, the school has developed reflection areas and the school council spoke enthusiastically about an outdoor reflection area that they had planned and was under construction. Pupils show knowledge of other cultures and faith communities but have relatively few first-hand experiences to develop a depth of understanding, for example through visiting diverse places of worship or enabling pupils of other faiths within the school to share their knowledge and understanding. The school supports another school in Nigeria but is keen to develop links that are mutually beneficial. Religious education (RE) supports the school's Christian character and pupils discussed how work in RE supports the school's values.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

There is strong evidence that collective worship impacts on all aspects of school life including behaviour, relationships and attitudes. The school felt that timetabling collective worship mid-morning gave pupils 'time to step out' of their busy day. Collective worship makes good use of biblical material and enables pupils to make links to their own lives. One pupil explained how stories with morals helped to make them a better person. Pupils have opportunities to participate in readings and prayers during collective worship but there are not yet enough opportunities for pupils to plan all elements of collective worship. The school bases its worship on its values and weekly class worship pays particular attention to these focusing on one value a month. Parents spoken to felt that collective worship helped to develop pupils' understanding of the school's Christian values. The school also makes use of the diocesan themes when planning worship. Pupils show a good awareness of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pupils have opportunities to visit the church but there are not enough opportunities for pupils to use Anglican traditions in worship. The pupils benefit from worship being led by a variety of leaders including the vicar, an 'Open the Book' team, teachers and support staff. The pupils have opportunities to pray and reflect throughout the day. They have a good knowledge of different types of prayer but are less certain of the importance of prayer for people of diverse faiths. Pupils are given opportunities to evaluate collective worship. As a result, the school is visiting the church more often for collective worship rather than just attending for special festivals. This practice is recent and not yet embedded. Staff spoken to said that collective worship encouraged them to reflect and make links to their daily lives.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The school has recently introduced 'Understanding Christianity', which has had a positive impact on teaching and learning. Displays in the classrooms and hall support pupils' learning in RE. RE provides opportunities for pupils to reflect, enquire and to make links between religions and their own lives. Pupils spoken to said that they enjoyed RE and books showed the range of activities they experienced, for example, the youngest children had recorded their work in a big book and made Bible stories out of Lego. Standards of attainment in RE are good. Pupils are very articulate when talking about key concepts in Christianity and books show good evidence of progression. Pupils had a good knowledge of Bible stories and were able to explain that parables had a meaning. In conversations about RE pupils were able to use and explain words such as eternal and omnipotent. Pupils had opportunities to make links between religions but little opportunity to learn about religions other than Christianity through visits to places of

worship or through visits from people of diverse faiths. RE is taught flexibly through single lessons or groups of lessons as appropriate. Theme days have also linked art to religion. Assessment in RE informs planning and the RE coordinator monitors the effectiveness of teaching and learning on a regular basis using a range of methods including pupil interviews. As a result, teachers are challenged to improve practice. The new coordinator, who is the headteacher, has effectively taken over the leadership of RE from the previous leader and understands the need to engage in high quality training around recent developments in RE.

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

The deeply committed leadership of the headteacher has considerable impact on the Christian distinctiveness of the school and is appreciated by everyone spoken to. The school was referred to by one member of staff as being 'soaked in Anglican tradition'. The school has developed strong relationships with parents and the community at large. A member of staff explained how the school felt part of the Thurlaston community. Parents are appreciative of the way the school nurtures its pupils, and the emphasis it has on personal development alongside academic success. They referred to the school as a 'happy, friendly place that has a family feel where everyone looks after each other.' The excellent relationships with parents was attributed to excellent communication and the dedication of the headteacher and staff. The school attributes its high expectations to its Christian ethos. The school development plan supports the development of the school as a church school. The wellbeing of pupils and staff is a strength of the school and is a standing item on a governor committee agenda. The Christian character of the school informs leaders' decision making and leaders are not afraid to make difficult decisions. When debating the future structure of the school the protection of the school's Christian character was an important consideration. Governors monitor the school but have not yet established a structured, minuted approach to evaluating the school as a church school. This lack of systematic monitoring to drive improvements prevents the grade for leadership from being higher. There is a mutually beneficial relationship between the school and the local church and the vicar has supported RE lessons. The school participates in diocesan training and has identified the need to develop future leaders of church schools. Governors too have accessed diocesan training. RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements.

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