



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

All Saints Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

All Saints
Axminster
Devon
EX13 7LX

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Exeter

Local authority: Devon

Date of inspection: 11 November 2014

Date of last inspection: 26 November 2009

School's unique reference number: 113426

Headteacher: Martin O'Mahony

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

School context

All Saints is smaller than the average size primary school with 118 children on roll. It is situated in a rural setting. Children are from a diverse community with a range of socio-economic backgrounds. A significant number come from outside the catchment area. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above with the national average as is the number entitled to receive the pupil premium. Attendance is broadly in line with national expectations. The school entered into a federation with another local voluntary aided primary school in October 2013. The federation is led by an executive headteacher and a single governing body.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of All Saints as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Explicit Christian values are at the heart of children's learning and personal development.
- Messages heard in acts of collective worship make a significant difference to the quality of relationships throughout the school community.
- A strong culture of reflection and accurate identification of improvement from school leadership ensure that the school is continually moving forward as a church school.

Areas to improve

- Deepen the children's understanding, and ability to articulate, core Christian values by linking them more closely with the wider values delivered through collective worship.
- Raise standards in religious education (RE) by ensuring that effective teaching models strategies that enable children to engage in meaningful enquiry and thereby respond at a deeper level to questioning that challenges their thinking.
- Enhance the role of the ethos committee by evolving current monitoring systems to enable it to effectively evaluate the impact of the implementation of new initiatives.

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

Since the creation of the federation in September 2013, the school has been embedding a distinctively Christian set of five core values. They are shared with the other school in the federation. The core values are now part of the life of the school community and are used by both children and adults in their lessons and at other times in the school day. Children, for example, explain clearly how patience, respect, truth as well as love and peace make a difference to their learning in a lesson such as maths. They explain how truth teaches them to be honest with their teachers when they get 'stuck on a problem' and to keep asking for help even though they may have asked for help a number of times. In this way, the core values contribute to the learning environment and to children's overall academic achievement which is consistently above national expectations. As yet, children have not had the opportunity to explore in depth the links between these core values and the wider Christian values used as the basis for the collective worship programme and therefore in developing a richer vocabulary to express their understanding of the core values in greater depth. The social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of the children is good. The use of prayer and reflection areas in classrooms give children times in the school day to consider abstract concepts that transcend the everyday. Religious education, and other areas of the curriculum such as English, contributes to spiritual development through a strong focus on enquiry as a learning strategy. Children respond well to these times and are comfortable to share their views and opinions openly on matters of faith and belief. This openness is a strong characteristic of the quality of relationships throughout the school community. Parents appreciate how the school's Christian ethos promotes a sense of questioning in their children and encourages them to explore difficult concepts relating to faith and belief. In particular parents feel that through this approach the school allows their children to develop individual personalities and to 'become the person they want to be'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Acts of collective worship are outstanding because the messages they deliver, based on explicit Christian teaching, make a significant difference to the lives of children and adults in the school community. Worship also contributes fully to the promotion of the Christian ethos through close links between worship messages and Christian values. Children understand this link very clearly. The links between these more general Christian values and the core Christian values have not yet been fully explored. This is evident in the way that children explain how they use the reflection areas in their classrooms as places that give them opportunities to stop and reflect on what they have heard in worship particularly when it touches their own lives. A greater sense of ownership of these areas by children has been a development since the previous report. Collective worship contributes to the development of the children's personal spirituality through time for reflection and prayer. The impact of these times can make a significant contribution to how children perceive the world and the people who live in it. For example, an act of worship observed on the day of the inspection, focussed on the concept of peace as part of remembrance, but also explored how difficult this can be to achieve. Children respond well to prayer. They have a good understanding of the purpose of prayer and readily share their views on how prayer can be beneficial. For example, one child explained how prayer 'sort of does you good because you know that other people care about you'. Acts of worship are thoroughly planned by the worship co-ordinator working with the ethos committee and headteacher. They also ensure that worship is regularly monitored and evaluated in a process that includes the gathering views of children. Children have good opportunities to participate in worship and with some involvement in its planning and leadership. This is an aspect of worship that needs to be developed. The more regular celebration of worship in the adjacent church and the involvement of a team from the church in 'Open the Book' in worship means that there is a better appreciation by children of the place of the church in the life of the school. Opportunities for children to create displays for the church enhance this feeling of a shared community.

The effectiveness of religious education is good

Standards in RE are consistently above national expectations by the time children leave the school at the end of Key Stage 2. Teaching over time ensures that the majority of children make good progress in RE. Attainment in RE compares well with other core subjects in the curriculum and the assessment of children's achievement in RE is thorough. It includes pupil attainment of their knowledge of RE and understanding of what they have learned from their studies. The recording by every class of what has been covered in each unit of work in 'big books' helps children and teachers to celebrate their work. Teachers also record examples of children's response to questions as a means of providing evidence of their understanding. Both of these activities make a good contribute to overall assessment but the school has yet to realise their full potential by linking 'big books' to the record of children's comments so that they can be used together as more effective evidence of the progress children make through their study of a unit of work. Teaching is confident with good subject knowledge. An emphasis on enquiry in lessons allows children to explore a deeper meaning to what they are learning. Children engage in these opportunities with enthusiasm. At present not enough guidance is given by teachers on the strategies and skills needed by children on how to lead an enquiry. This means that the impact of enquiry on children's achievement is not yet being fully realised. Religious education makes a good contribution to the promotion of the school's Christian ethos and has effective links to their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Children show respect for the views and opinions of others and have a real interest and respect for learning about a range of religions. The enquiry approach encourages children to explore ethical and moral issues connected with faith and belief in an atmosphere of openness and tolerance in the classroom. Leadership of RE is strong. The subject leader has the support and encouragement of the whole leadership team and has an excellent understanding of current developments in the subject. This is being demonstrated in the way the school is already responding to recent national reports on RE and how to improve its quality.

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

The headteacher has an excellent understanding of the purpose of being a church school and articulates a clear vision of how this makes a difference to the lives of every child in the school. He is committed to the continual development of the Christian ethos so that its relevance to the whole school community is always strengthening. The reflective quality of the headteacher's leadership is shared by other school leaders, including the governing body. There are excellent systems in place which constantly gather evidence of the impact of the Christian ethos and, through the emphasis on reflection, school leaders have an accurate grasp of what they need to do to continue to improve. This commitment to improvement is inspirational. School leaders are rapidly developing their understanding of how explicit Christian values contribute to raising academic standards across the curriculum as well as making a significant contribution to the children's wellbeing. The role of the ethos committee in this process is central. This committee is well established with effective systems in place to monitor and evaluate. The systems have not yet been put in place to monitor and evaluate some of the initiatives that have recently been implemented. A particular strength of the school is the close partnership with the other church school in the federation. Although each school has its own character, a shared ethos means that both schools learn from each other through joint meetings and training. This has proved to be very effective in taking both schools forward. The beneficial partnership with the diocese and the support and advice they give is another factor in the success of the school. The involvement of staff in church school self-evaluation and regular professional development ensures that all staff are developing their leadership skills as part of being a church school. Religious education has a high profile in the curriculum and meets the rigorous guidance of the National Society's 'Statement of Entitlement' for RE. Collective worship meets the statutory requirements.