



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Thorner's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

School House Lane
Litton Cheney
Dorset DT2 9AU

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: Salisbury

Local authority: Dorset

Dates of inspection: 3 December 2014

Date of last inspection: 23 February 2010

School's unique reference number: 113804

Headteacher: Jyotsna Chaffey

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

School context

Thorner's is a smaller than average rural primary school with 77 children taught in four class groups. The large majority of children are of a white British heritage and from varied socio-economic backgrounds. The number of children with learning needs is below the national average as is the proportion eligible for the pupil premium. Attendance is slightly above the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Thorner's Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- Christian values underpin the school's approach to relationships and the children's wellbeing.
- Collective worship provides important times in the school day for children to be still and reflect.
- The leadership and management ensure that the ongoing strengthening of the Christian ethos has a high profile as part of overall school development.

Areas to improve

- Identify a set of core Christian values that enable children to develop a deeper understanding of how they underpin the school's approach to their wellbeing and learning.
- Strengthen evaluation of collective worship to ensure the increasing impact of Christian values and their relevance to the lives of the school community.
- Develop assessment in religious education (RE) by systematically gathering evidence that is more fully used to identify children's progress and informs teaching and learning.

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

Children articulate how values such as truth and honesty are important to them as part of the school community. They explain how they learn about these values in collective worship and in some of their lessons and that they try to live them in their relationships with each other. Relationships throughout the school are based on these values as well as care and kindness for one another. They are evident in the way the school approaches behaviour and through its pastoral system. Adults and children have a good understanding that, as a church school, values are taught through Bible stories and that they make a difference to their personal development. The link between values and children's learning is less well understood. The general approach and lack of overall focus to values means that their impact is limited across all aspects of school life. The school is aware of this and has already identified the need to create a core set of values with a stronger underpinning in the school's Christian ethos. The excellent work of the children's ethos committee puts them in a good place to lead this initiative. The good relationships and emphasis on kindness and care helps to create an environment in which children feel safe and secure. They enjoy their lessons and the encouragement of teachers for children to aspire contributes to their learning where standards are at least in line with national expectations by the time they leave the school at the end of key stage 2. Children have a well-developed appreciation of the moral and social responsibility to help others both locally and wider afield. Through their charitable work, children understand the needs of those who are less fortunate than themselves both at home and abroad. Through their studies in RE, they are encouraged to appreciate how their school values are similar to those of other faiths. Children talk with enthusiasm about the prayer corners around the school and how they give them opportunities to write their own prayers and a place to go to when they want time to be still and calm.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The recent introduction of 'Values for Life' as the basis for planning has given collective worship a sharper focus. There is a stronger emphasis on exploring Christian values in greater depth and a more secure link to explicit Bible teaching. Children talk with confidence about the values they have learnt about so far and articulate clearly their root in the teachings of Jesus. The implementation of the full 'Values for Life' programme is at an early stage and their full impact has yet to be realised on the whole school community. The school has addressed the area for development from the previous report to improve the quality of worship planning. Detailed plans are now directly related to values and include specific Bible stories to help children understand a Christian interpretation of them. The school has also improved procedures to monitor the impact of acts of worship and these are now effective. Children contribute their views on worship and governors monitor more regularly. The evaluative aspect of monitoring is still at an early stage. The regular use of the adjacent village hall for collective worship is a good example of the close links between school, the church and village community. It does put some limits to the extent that the school use permanent displays relating to worship but the use of a special table with candle and cross as well as the use of PowerPoint images does convey the message that worship is a distinct and special time in the school day. This is borne out in the comments of children who regard worship and prayer as the two most distinct ways that the school celebrates its Christian ethos. Children respond with respect to the opportunities for reflection and prayer that are an integral part of worship. They have a good understanding that prayer is a time to talk to God and, for those who don't have a personal faith, it gives them the opportunity to be still and think about 'the important bits of life'. Worship planning, the celebration of Christian festivals such as Pentecost provide adequate opportunities for children to explore their understanding of the Trinity. They talk with confidence about God as Father and Jesus his Son but are more hesitant when trying to explain their understanding of the Holy Spirit. The contribution of the rector and the team from 'Open the Book' as well as the celebration of festivals in the local church are helping children to develop their understanding of the church as a community.

The effectiveness of religious education is good

Standards in RE by the time children leave the school at the end of key stage 2 are in line with national expectations for most groups of children. They make good progress in acquiring knowledge and are confident in applying this to explore a deeper understanding. Attainment in RE is comparable to other core subjects in the curriculum. The introduction of a new scheme of work in 2013 has placed greater emphasis on an enquiry approach to the subject and this in turn is giving teachers more confidence to encourage children to ask questions and explore religious concepts in depth. The school has partially addressed the area for development from the previous report to develop assessment so that it is more formal and records achievement. Assessment is not yet fully secure in both knowledge and particularly what children learn from that knowledge. Some moderation has taken place to ensure that assessment is more consistent across the school but sufficient evidence has not yet been gathered to track children's progress and analysed to inform future teaching and learning. The school has been experimenting with a range of assessment models since the last inspection and has yet to settle on one that meets the needs of the children best. The best teaching challenges children through high quality questioning that encourages them think more deeply. Children respond well to these opportunities and enthusiastically share their ideas and show respect for the views of others. This engagement in their learning contributes to the positive attitudes that children have towards RE. Religious education makes an effective contribution to the promotion of the school's Christian ethos through reference to Christian values as they occur in the curriculum. The study of other world faiths, alongside an appropriate coverage of Christianity, contributes well to the children's understanding of the cultural and religious diversity in the world and is helping them to have a better understanding of diversity in modern Britain. Leadership of RE is good. The coordinator is committed to her subject and has a very clear grasp of what needs to be done to continue to improve the RE.

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

The headteacher has ensured that the school's Christian character has moved forward since the previous inspection. She is committed to the development of the church foundation and articulates a clear grasp of what needs to be done to continue to take it forward. The impact of the Christian ethos on the children's personal development is well established throughout the school with a more limited understanding among school leaders of its impact on learning. The areas for development have been largely addressed and new initiatives have strengthened the emphasis on explicit Christian values and the place of collective worship in the life of the school. Some of these initiatives are at an early stage and the leadership and management, including governors, have yet to develop the skills required to monitor and evaluate their impact effectively. The work of the communication and ethos committee provides a firm basis for the ongoing development of a more rigorous approach to monitoring. They have begun a more regular pattern to monitoring worship which has mainly focussed on provision rather than impact. However, the role of the ethos committee, and its growing links with the pupils' ethos council, has raised the profile among children and adults of the Christian ethos. The school has close links with local church communities and their clergy through the team that leads 'Open the Book' assemblies and the contribution the school makes to the parish magazine. There are strong links between the school and the Diocese. These include valuable support in providing further training to deliver high quality acts of worship and the RE coordinator's contribution to Diocesan RE projects. The views of parents have not formally been sought with regard to their contribution to monitoring as a church school.

SIAMS report December 2014 Thorner's CE VA Primary School Dorchester DT2 9AU