

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Dartington Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	
Shinners Bridge Dartington Totnes Devon TQ9 6JD	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Exeter
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Devon
Date of inspection	18 January 2017
Date of last inspection	16 January 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 113394
Headteacher	Jill Mahon
Inspector's name and number	Patricia Morris 626

School context

Dartington is a larger than average primary school with 250 children on role. The majority of children are of White British heritage with a small percentage coming from Traveller families. Mobility is higher than normal with children joining and leaving school other than at the usual starting points. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. The number of children supported by Pupil Premium is in line with the national average. Attendance is below the national average. The school moved to a new site in 2010 but due to structural problems, have been in temporary accommodation since September 2014. The completion of the new build is projected for Spring 2018.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Dartington Primary as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Christian values are made explicit and deeply embedded in the life of the school generating a strong inclusive environment.
- The very strong commitment and dedication of leaders ensures that the school is continually developing its Christian character.
- Opportunities to engage in high quality experiences, especially within Forest Families, empower children to develop a personal spirituality.
- Inspirational collective worship contributes to rich experiences that engage and challenge children.

Areas to improve

- Embed the work of the newly formed Ethos Committee so that it is able to challenge the school as it continues to develop.
- Develop a rigorous system for more formal recording of monitoring and evaluation by foundation governors to enable all governors to be fully informed.
- Provide opportunities for quality discussions so that children gain a greater depth and appreciation of how the mystery of the Trinity is central to a person's faith.

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

Four core Christian values are deeply embedded in the life of the school and underpin all the school does. They are extremely well supported by a further ten values each represented by a Forest Family consisting of family groups from across both key stages. Children speak animatedly of values and their very good behaviour and attitudes reflect how much they are a natural part of their lives. Forest Family sessions are invaluable in endorsing the Christian character of the school. They are regularly used to explore themes linked to values and generate excellent opportunities for children's spiritual development. For example, children used natural materials to weave individual heart mobiles and placed prayers inside to hang in classrooms while personalised wooden circles inscribed with a value decorate prayer trees in reflection areas in classrooms. Similar activities extend to less structured times during the school day such as playtimes, named Out'N>About, which is modelled on the early years approach. The wealth of creative activities available at these times not only enable children to enrich independent learning but also to endorse core values which are apparent in the way they collaborate. Children have a very good sense of spirituality that is enhanced through the Windows, Mirrors, Doors programme and is strongly supported through the Thrive approach, which impacts on children's self-esteem and confidence. The Christian ethos is reflected in exceptional inclusive relationships where all children are nurtured as individuals. Staff know children extremely well and provide exemplary support whatever their needs. Consequently, children feel safe and valued, recognising they are special in the eyes of God. Such attitudes contribute to the way new children are welcomed to the school throughout the year and refugee families who have come to live in the area. For example, one child went home and learnt how to say 'hello' in Arabic to encourage them to feel part of the school family. Religious education (RE) contributes notably to the Christian character of the school and children's spiritual development. Children are fully aware that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith and show respect for diversity and difference in other faith communities. They are excited and challenged in lessons and this is reflected in the depth of children's answers to high quality questions. Attainment is well monitored and in line with other core subjects. Attendance continues to be a challenge but the leaders work in conjunction with the education welfare officer (EWO) who acknowledges they are doing all they can to implement successful strategies to increase attendance.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is highly valued by the school community and is instrumental in supporting the Christian distinctiveness of the school. Worship has played a pivotal role as a time of coming together to celebrate God's love during the recent disruptive times of changing accommodation. Leaders have worked hard to ensure the upheaval can be a positive experience to establish children's understanding that they are part of God's family wherever they worship. The current temporary hall is very challenging with poor acoustics and many draughts. However, joyous singing, children's smiles and their enthusiastic engagement all contribute to the warmth emulated in celebrating a special time with God. They have a profound understanding of the difference between assembling together and the elements necessary for worship. Christian values based on the teachings of Jesus form the foundation of worship. Children strongly believe that 'Christian values help us to be the best we can be'. They are thoroughly engaged in worship and lead many aspects. Prayer has an especially important role. The Lord's Prayer is said and sign language is used, enabling children to really think about what it means. Children write and share their own prayers as individuals and each class take turns in developing a prayer together to share in worship. It then becomes the prayer of the week and is used in every class worship as well as being included in weekly newsletters as an opportunity to share at home. There are very strong links with the local church and team ministry generating a mutually beneficial partnership. Children visit the church for special celebrations in the church year and to support units of work in religious education. An 'Open the Book' team are particularly valued and impact on children's understanding of Bible stories by involving them in role-play. Worship effectively contributes to children's spiritual development through outdoor reflective spaces and an outside altar decorated with well-used prayer flags. Forest Family sessions also provide rich opportunities for prayer and reflection time by ensuring they are an innate part of the meeting. Children's understanding of the Trinity is less secure although they have a simple comprehension of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Worship is well planned and involves staff, clergy and a governor. More stakeholders have become involved in monitoring and evaluating worship and regular reflection is ensuring that worship evolves. This is reflected in the important part it plays in such experiences as Forest Family sessions. However, most of this assessment is informal and leaders recognise the importance of making this more rigorous and formal.

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

The headteacher provides exceptionally effective leadership. She has a clear vision that is well articulated and contributes to creating a Christian environment in which children are nurtured and prepared for future life. Her passion and commitment to do the best for the children in her care, within a Christian ethos, ensures that Christian values are embedded in school life. The deep rooted and meaningful ethos embraces the whole school community.

Governors are extremely supportive and regularly visit the school. This generates a very good knowledge of the strengths and areas for development. The very knowledgeable vice-chair has a high level of skill and is very insightful. He is well respected and is effectively supporting the new chair of governors in her role. Governors are actively involved in moving the school forward such as the recently initiated Ethos Committee to further support and monitor the school's Christian character. The partnership with the church is strong and clergy are seen to support staff as well as children. Self-evaluation involves all groups in the school community. Pupil voice is genuinely valued and children are seen to make a difference. For example, the school council invited Refugee Support Devon in to hold a workshop to develop children's understanding of what is happening in the world today. They work closely with the parent association, initiating opportunities to fund raise for local and national charities. As one child stated, 'The world is God's gift to us so we need to look after it'. Consequently, children make connections with their own lives affirming values of service and compassion. Parent's voice is through a regular Parent Forum that provides a variety of ways for them to work in partnership with the school. Parents say they feel welcome in school and staff listen and are supportive. The RE leader has very good subject knowledge and a coherent vision that contributes to its high priority. The introduction of Gateway learning is paramount in ensuring the whole curriculum is informed by the school's distinctive Christian vision. Christian values are successfully integrated into teaching and reflected in children's learning and behaviour in lessons. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship. Leaders are already working collaboratively with all members of the school community to embrace the challenge of moving to a new school and ensuring a distinctive and welcoming Christian environment.

SIAMS report January 2017 Dartington CE VC Primary School Totnes Devon TQ9 6JD