

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

**Dartington Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**  
**Shinners Bridge**  
**Dartington**  
**Totnes**  
**TQ9 6JD**

Diocese: **Exeter**

Local authority: **Devon**

Dates of inspection: **16<sup>th</sup> January 2012**

Date of last inspection: **10th July 2009**

School's unique reference number: **113394**

Headteacher: **Jill Mahon**

Inspector's name and number: **Wendy Simmons - 127**

### School context

Situated in a large village near the town of Totnes, Dartington is an above average size primary school. Pupils come from the village and a wide surrounding area. Most pupils are from white British backgrounds. The school serves a significant New Age Traveller community. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. Since the last inspection the school has moved to new purpose built premises. The innovative wooden design construction incorporates individual chalet style classrooms within large grounds supporting Forest School activities and many opportunities for outdoor learning and exploration.

**The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Dartington as a Church of England school are good.**

The firmly established Christian ethos is very well led by the headteacher and supported by staff and governors. The school has good links with the local church and community and is supported by the Team Vicar based in Totnes. Children are proud of their school and speak highly of the good range of activities they enjoy.

### Established strengths

- The inclusive Christian care for everyone in the school and the community.
- The positive relationships within the school, the church, and wider local community.
- The outstanding school environment and its opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

### Focus for development

- Enhance the existing provision for monitoring and evaluation of collective worship, involving different stakeholders including pupils to establish one accessible system.
- Develop the capacity of Foundation governance to support the school as a church school

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

The school's mission statement, 'Everything we do is inspired by our enduring mission; to become lifelong learners whose eyes are open to a world of possibilities', is fundamental to

the ongoing attainment and progress of all learners. The identified educational values of creativity, challenge, empathy and compassion and reflection, underpinned by each 'Forest Family's' Christian value, play a significant role in the life of the school. Following a 'deep review' of Christian distinctiveness, following the last inspection, the impact of the school's Christian ethos is highlighted through the ten Christian values based on each class. These are identified by a variety of tree with its own Christian value. For example, Oak – Justice; Beech - Peace. Highlighted through art work, using a variety of media, and displayed around the school, these values help to ensure that the whole school community can reflect upon them. The school's Christian status is celebrated and made clear, from the welcoming reception area, where the school's mission statement is evident, to the reflection trees in each classroom. The school's 'Forest Family's' vertical grouping system encourages older children to support younger members of the school and is supportive to the diverse intake of the school. 'Forest family' Christian values as well as curriculum values are addressed. Children's individual achievements and talents are celebrated as each one is recognised as a unique person with qualities to share. This is an inclusive school with some outstanding initiatives, not least the links with the adjacent special school. Once a week, the 'Good Neighbours' group welcomes children from the special school with their helpers. At the time of the inspection, some children were creating a ramp of sand to accommodate a wheel chair. Spiritual Development is outstanding and is based upon the Diocesan Spiritual Development initiative, Windows, (spiritual awareness); Mirrors, (spiritual reflection) and Doors, (spiritual action). For example reception children displayed spiritual awareness through the notion of caring for everyone, a child made a paper hanging model for his teacher. He said, 'You can hang this on a hook and look at the picture when you are worried'. Older children are very aware of the needs of the wider world. They have an outstanding attitude to care in the community and are willing to find ways to raise funds for those less fortunate than themselves. For example orphanages in India and Africa. Food plays a large part in their expressions of spiritual action through hospitality. For example, children felt that the inspector's meeting with them should be accompanied by a traditional 'Devon' tea, complete with scones, jam the children had made and cream. One child, after a very busy weekend competing in her chosen sport, found the time to make rock buns for the occasion. Effective deployment of staff trained as 'Forest School leaders' at break and 'out n about' times and the use of 'Godly play' teaching approaches mean that the school has an effective and inclusive approach to developing all pupils' spiritual awareness within a Christian values framework of service and compassion, thankfulness, generosity, creativity and friendship. Children are aware of the wider Christian community. For example they remember the visit from Bishop John, his talk about his role as a 'Good shepherd'. Pupil voice is heard through the school's council, the good neighbours group, librarians and citizenship activities. Children enjoy being involved.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.**

The head teacher, as joint co-ordinator with the RE subject leader, makes good provision for worship, through the policy, opportunities for children to reflect and good use of resources. Collective worship planning is good. Based upon the 'Windows, Mirrors, and Doors', initiative, the co-ordinators combine each with Old and New Testament teaching, some SEAL themes together with the Church Calendar. This provides a secure framework for staff and other worship leaders. In this large school, whole school worship is held twice weekly, the other days are either class or team based worship following the weekly theme. For example, the Foundation Stage children join with Nursery children each day after the shared snack and break, for a short prayer time.

In an example of innovative practice each class has its own 'pebbles' used to share their prayers and thoughts during worship. When classes come to whole school worship they bring their class 'pebble' with them. The pebbles are then placed in a bowl of water on the focus table. Children write their own prayers and place their thoughts about worship in their special class reflection corners. This makes a significant contribution to pupil's spiritual development. Children's behaviour and attitude to worship is very good. They enjoy the variety of their worship, sharing examples of the services they have experienced. The impact of memories of the Harvest service, when they took vegetables grown in the school market garden to the

church, was significant for them. The effective use of songs such as 'Abba Father' and the regular use of the Lord's Prayer contribute to the spiritual awareness and development of the children. Currently the school has only an informal system for the evaluation of worship and this limits the opportunities for all, including children, to be involved in developing worship.

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

The visionary headteacher has identified a clear strategy for the continuing development of the school and ensured that, through discussion, the views of all stakeholders have been sought. These good systems and practices of self evaluation are rapidly moving the school forward as a church school. At the time of the inspection the school only has one foundation governor who has, however, worked tirelessly to support the headteacher and the school. Church school self evaluation is therefore underdeveloped due to the current lack of capacity. The new member of the Totnes ministry, as ex-officio, and replacement foundation governor are about to take up their posts. Links with the Team Ministry are limited to a visit from the Totnes based vicar every three weeks to lead worship. Religious Education is well led and the subject leader is making an impact on the development of the subject and the attainment and progress of all children. She has developed the units of study programme using the Devon Agreed Syllabus. Assessment of the children's progress in AT1 and AT2 is based upon the learning outcomes from each lesson. However learners' responses are often verbal or limited to short written comments or reflections. RE makes a good contribution to the distinctiveness of Dartington as a church school. Community Cohesion has been actively addressed through the school's local links, particularly with the adjacent special school. The school has links with Schumacher college and the work of Satish Kumar who has spoken to the children about his beliefs and life in India. Charity fund raising and international links, strengthened through links with orphanages in India and Africa ensure that all children are aware of the needs of others. For example a deeper understanding of Africa through music and a 'Read to Feed' sponsored event has been established. Parents are fully involved with the school through the PTFA. They are familiar with the school and have good relationships with staff. The school has addressed the key issues identified in the last SIAS inspection but recognise that the school is on a journey and there is a need to embed these more firmly. All documents reflect the school's Christian distinctiveness and statutory obligations are met. Parents speak highly of the leadership of the headteacher and staff, particularly those whose children have specific needs.

SIAS report January 2012, Dartington Primary School TQ9 6JD