

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St David's Church of England Primary Academy

Dinham Road, Exeter, Devon EX4 4EE

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Diocese

Exeter

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Date of academy conversion

April 2016

Name of multi-academy trust

Ventrus Multi-Academy Trust

Date of inspection

16 March 2018

Date of last inspection

8 March 2013

Type of school and unique reference number

Primary Academy 142559

Headteacher

Fran Brinicombe

Inspector's name and number

Revd David Hatrey 844

School context

St David's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary is a smaller than average school with 107 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupils who have English as an additional language is above national averages and this has risen significantly since the last inspection. The proportion of pupils who are in receipt of pupil premium funding or who have special educational needs or a disability is above national averages. A new parish priest has recently been appointed. The school became part of the Ventrus Multi Academy Trust in April 2016.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St David's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary as a Church of England school are good

- Pupils have a good understanding of distinctive Christian values and they talk confidently about the difference they make to their lives and attainment.
- A clear definition of spirituality which is shared and promoted by all adults enables pupils to respond to questions of meaning and purpose with a growing maturity.
- The school's enquiry-based curriculum, which is underpinned by Christian values and principles is engaging pupils so they develop good attitudes towards learning.
- Collective worship systematically draws upon biblical themes which allow pupils to develop a detailed knowledge of Jesus and his teaching and link these to their daily lives and learning.

Areas to improve

- Provide more high quality experiences to develop spirituality in order to enable pupils to express their deepening responses in a wider variety of ways.
- Enable pupils to gain a deeper understanding of the school's Christian vision and the links between the vision, values and the care the school offers so they can talk about the difference this makes to their lives and learning.
- Ensure there are regular opportunities for pupils to play a greater role in planning and leading worship and involve pupils more formally in reviewing and developing the school's Christian distinctiveness.

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

Christian values have been well established over a number of years and pupils confidently articulate the difference values make to their choices and attainment. Pupils talk thoughtfully about the values of respect, trust, friendship, compassion, justice, forgiveness and explain what they look like in daily life. For example, pupils talk about how forgiveness, 'helps us to start again'. They describe the distinctive Christian significance of values by relating them to a number of Bible stories which reflect their meaning. Pupils from other world faiths or those who profess no religious belief readily articulate the importance of values and the difference they make to their school community. A frequent response was, 'Using values makes you a better person'. Pupils give examples of where values influence their attitudes, they point to friendship and how they work collaboratively together. Their comments include, 'Values help us work together.' Christian values permeate teaching and learning, so pupils understand how these influence their learning in different areas. The importance of values is reinforced by weekly awards, where pupils nominate a peer who shows the current value. This is shared with the whole school so all understand how values make a difference in a variety of contexts. Behaviour at the school is good and pupils make positive relationships. Pupils see themselves as belonging to this family which is important to them. They feel safe to share ideas knowing they will be respected. Pupils attribute this to the Christian character of the school. The school's Christian distinctiveness is seen in the creative strategies used to raise attendance and the strong relationships developed with parents. Bullying is rare and where it occurs is immediately addressed. The school's Christian values underpin a vibrant curriculum. Using an enquiry approach deepens pupils' enthusiasm for learning, allowing them to take greater responsibility. The school effectively nurtures positive attitudes to learning, enabling pupils to achieve their best. Standards have fluctuated due to unpredictable mobility with larger numbers of pupils joining for whom English is an additional language. The school has established approaches which have raised pupils' attainment so it is broadly in-line with national expectations. Particular attention is given to disadvantaged pupils who are beginning to make progress comparable with their peers. Creative approaches to spirituality are effectively engaging pupils in exploring new ideas. One approach is by posing big questions related to each module of study. This develops a real curiosity for learning, with pupils making thoughtful links between Christian values and biblical teaching. Some pupils respond using poems or pictures, which show a growing depth of maturity and ideas. Whilst there are some good examples of spirituality, the school provides only a limited number of high quality experiences. One of the school's strengths is its inclusive welcome to pupils of all faiths or none. A good example is where the school enabled a pupil who wanted to talk about how she prays to explain this. Opportunities to extend pupils' knowledge of other world faiths through visits, leads them to show a high degree of tolerance and respect for those who hold different views to their own. However, pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural faith is limited. The majority of pupils find religious education (RE) has an importance for daily life. Christian values linked to biblical stories are developed well through RE where pupils are challenged to consider their meaning for them in different contexts.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship enriches pupils' understanding of Christian values and makes a difference to their lives and choices. Pupils' knowledge of Jesus and his teaching is systematically developed through worship and this enables them to make thoughtful links with their daily lives. A number of improvements have increased the impact of worship and enabled pupils to become more involved. One of the best examples is the headteacher's detailed planning for worship. Each half term a Christian value is progressively explored so pupils' understanding is deepened. Planning is closely linked to biblical stories which explore the meaning of the value. Planning is effectively shared with all leaders of worship and this ensures continuity. Leaders bring different approaches to worship which pupils appreciate. Staff and leaders gather pupils' responses to worship through discussions and take action. For example, pupils requested more visual elements to worship, so resources have been expanded. Pupils say that they find worship engaging. They understand that worship has a message which may challenge them and they make links between these and their own behaviour. Links with ICE, a group who offer experiences for worship, have a significant impact. These interactive sessions use rich presentations which challenge pupils' thinking. Pupils talk excitedly about linking messages from these experiences to Jesus' life and the relevance of Christian values. Other developments include introducing a wider range of songs for worship and some opportunities for pupils to lead prayers. Pupils requested the introduction of key stage worship so these acts of worship are related to pupils' ages. Some progress has been made towards the target from the last inspection for pupils to plan, lead and evaluate worship. However, this is not fully established and there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to plan and lead. An ethos committee of pupils has recently been re-established, giving pupils a greater voice and responsibility within worship. This group of pupils are involved in ethos days led by the Ventrus Trust, where they share good practice with other schools in the Trust and bring back ideas to school. Christian festivals are celebrated either at the church or in school and pupils describe these in some detail and often with some thoughtful insights. Pupils are aware of the

significance of these for Christians. Prayer is generally well taught, for example, pupils use different types of prayers to express their ideas. Staff model prayers in class, so pupils' thinking develops, praying more for others as well as responding to national events. Each class has a prominent prayer tree, a space where pupils can reflect, be calm or share ideas in prayer. Pupils value and appreciate these spaces. There is a growing understanding of the Trinity, although this is not fully developed. Links between church and school are growing following the appointment of a new vicar. Weekly worship in church has a distinctive Anglican structure and seasons of the church's year are explored. Monitoring of worship is largely led by the headteacher who makes evaluations which lead to improvements. Governors contribute to this, sharing their conclusions with the headteacher. Pupils' ideas are sought, either after worship or in class which inform actions.

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

Leaders place a high emphasis on the welcome given to parents and pupils who come to the school so that they feel part of this caring community. This emanates from their Christian vision for the school, which is, 'A Christian ethos is at the centre of our community.' This vision is securely rooted in Christian values and in the belief that we are all special to God. Leaders recognise it is the school's responsibility to show God's love in action and meet the needs of all. This shapes the school's work and is particularly evident in the care and nurture shown to families. Staff know pupils well and go beyond expectations to develop relationships and meet a range of diverse needs. Leaders are confident to articulate the impact the vision has on pupils' well-being, personal development and academic achievement. The headteacher has taken effective action to raise the school's Christian distinctiveness. For example, the school ensures that Christian values have a high profile and this nurtures relationships. In addition, a child-centred enquiry curriculum is embedded, which is underpinned by Christian principles, giving spirituality a prominent role. This clearly influences pupils' attitudes to learning and their self esteem in their own God-given ability. Leaders respond with respect, compassion and friendship in supporting the increased number of pupils who have English as an additional language. Leaders believe the school meets the needs of these pupils, ensuring they are made to feel fully included and valued. Leaders believe that they respond just as Jesus would, showing his love. Pupils are aware of the adults' care for them and have an understanding that the school wants them to be successful using all of their talents. However, pupils are not always able to make links or talk about the relationship between the vision, values and care the school shows. Pupils perceive the importance of 'growing in the values' as one described it. Leaders give good support to RE and collective worship and the head has taken responsibility for these areas herself ensuring they have a prominent role. This enables the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship to be fulfilled. Monitoring and evaluation is now more rigorously undertaken and leads to improvements. New governors are increasingly making a contribution through observations, learning walks and discussions with pupils. They are aware of strengths and areas to develop. The work of the Trust complements and extends this with senior leaders and advisers from other linked schools reviewing Christian distinctiveness. The expertise of advisers from the Trust is influential in developing the impact of RE teaching and learning. All evaluations are woven into focused actions which are agreed as part of the whole school development plan. Expertise from the diocese and Trust adds to the evaluations undertaken. Targets from the previous inspection have been addressed, and continue to be developed and embedded. The diocese is supporting the school to introduce the 'Understanding Christianity' resources for RE and providing procedures to evaluate collective worship. The Trust provides leaders to review different aspects of school life which are clearly beneficial and enhance the school's leadership capacity. A good example is the ethos network which supports RE and collective worship leaders. In addition, the Trust has provided new resources for planning collective worship. Links with the church are growing since the appointment of a new vicar. Pupils now say that they feel this is their church. The vicar is already leading worship in church and school and contributing to local governance. New governors from the church are developing their role and beginning to make a difference. Parents celebrate the warm inclusive ethos of the school and recognise the way this nurtures their children and their personal development.

SIAMS report March 2018 St. David's CE VC Primary School, Dinham Road, Exeter, Devon EX4 4EE