

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Drake's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Middle Street
East Budleigh
Budleigh Salterton
Devon
EX9 7DQ

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Exeter

Local authority: Devon

Date of inspection: 24 May 2016

Date of last inspection: 18 May 2011

School's unique reference number: 113429

Executive headteacher: Carron Saunders

Inspector's name and number: Patricia Morris 626

School context

Drake's is a smaller than average primary school with 70 children on roll. The majority of children are of white British heritage. The number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion of children supported by pupil premium is also below the national average. The school federated with an adjacent village primary church school in April 2012 to become the Raleigh Federation Community.

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

- Distinctive Christian values are clearly expressed and embedded in the life of the school successfully impacting on children's very good behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- The quality of relationships and pastoral care based on the Christian ethos ensures that every child is nurtured and feels valued.
- Collective worship is inspirational, engaging all children and contributing to the development of their self-knowledge and spiritual awareness.

Areas to improve

- Raise standards in religious education (RE) by developing a formal and rigorous system of monitoring and evaluation that identifies further improvements.
- Ensure appropriate support enables the religious education co-ordinator to fulfil her role in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.
- Provide a wider range of opportunities to develop all children's understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith.

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

A set of five distinctive core Christian values have been chosen by the school community and are clearly expressed and embedded in the life of the school. Children explain values as 'God's rules for our school'. They have a significant impact and influence on the daily lives and achievements of children. This is seen in the way children interact with each other and the good manners and respect that is a natural part of the Christian ethos. Children compare values to 'a recipe put together to make us better people'. Values are firmly underpinned by the school motto stating 'we are the hands and feet of God'. Children say it means that 'God wants us to use our hands and feet for good and not to hurt each other'. Children explain how displays, such as moulds of each child's foot and a banner of felt hands specially formed in a circle, reflect 'no beginning or ending and show that we are all equal'. Relationships are a strength of the school and strongly underpinned by the Christian ethos. Children know each other very well and feel safe and nurtured. The Christian character successfully contributes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children. This is enhanced through reflection areas in each classroom where children put a ticket in a jar when they see another child showing values in action. A quiet room challenges children through activities linked to the Bible that enable them to have opportunities to think and reflect about big questions or their own feelings. There are designated quiet areas in the school grounds and children talk animatedly about their nearby allotment which acts as an outdoor classroom and contributes positively to their spiritual development. For example, it is not only used for growing but for science activities and as a background for the nativity story. Children have a good understanding of what quotes from the Bible and Christian symbols around the school represent such as 'the dove is a sign of hope'. Parents commend the Christian ethos of the school saying that 'children have been given wings' and 'articulate their relationship with God'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is highly valued and central to the life of the school. They recognise it as a special time to come together to pray to God and learn about Jesus. Children's enthusiasm is reflected in their attentive listening, use of prior knowledge to answer challenging questions and joyous singing. Worship is extremely well planned with imaginative themes closely linked to values. A wide range of leaders contribute to children's rich and varied experience of worship. Prayer has a high profile and when asked to say an impromptu prayer in worship the majority of children were enthusiastic to do so. There is an excellent understanding of prayer. Children know it can be used to help them and to say thank you. They explain that 'God hears every word of our prayers'. Children confidently affirm The Lord's Prayer, the school prayer and are enthusiastic with response blessings. One child had written 'a blessing is like a cuddle with words'. They appreciate prayer boxes in classrooms that encourage them to write their own prayers and are reassured that, by leaving them open, adults know they are to share but, if folded, acknowledge they are personal. Prayer trees are effectively used in classrooms and in church. Children see this consistency as a natural connection between school and church enabling them to feel relaxed in church. This is reflected in the respect when they talk about weekly visits to worship in church. Worship has a strong focus on the Trinity and children have a developing understanding of it as 'three parts of one God'. Spiritual development is successfully promoted through reflection time that is a meaningful part of worship when children are given the opportunity to contemplate on the theme to consider similar situations in their own lives. They recognise the significance of lighting a candle to represent 'Jesus is light of the world'. The partnership between the school and church is exceptionally strong and has been strengthened by the appointment of a 'communities and families worker' who is a highly valuable resource within the school. He works together with the worship co-ordinator to ensure values are reinforced, the liturgical year is recognised and understood by children and Christian festivals are celebrated jointly. This has made an excellent contribution to the increasingly strong community spirit in the village.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards of attainment in religious education (RE) are at least in line with national expectations and other core subjects and sometimes higher. The co-ordinator is a primary lead teacher who has invested a high level of support for staff through the development of comprehensive planning. However, a more equal timetable between the two schools in the federation is necessary in order to enable more rigorous monitoring to take place across the school. The vice chair of governors works closely with the co-ordinator to oversee work scrutiny, discussions with children and learning walks but this is on an informal basis and there are no formal minutes in place to record ways forward. A new scheme to improve the assessment of RE has been implemented this academic year but is not yet embedded to measure impact. The church is used effectively to support children's learning and written work demonstrates substantial links between Christianity and other faiths. Older children make considered comparisons of similarities and differences. This is adeptly reinforced by some first hand experiences such as a recent visit to a Mosque and a return visit to school from the imam. Children were inspired and able to reinforce their learning by sharing this experience with peers in their partner school. Good relationships with teachers are apparent from the way children ask challenging questions and confidently share opinions. Discussions and skilled questioning enable them to extend their thinking and take responsibility for their own opinions. This was seen in an extremely interactive discussion between children in a younger class where children were looking at gifts in a box. One child commented that 'the torch needs a battery to give it power to work but God never runs out of power'. Many cross-curricular links support the contribution of RE to children's spiritual development. This is particularly apparent in planned outdoor activities such as forest school which makes a considerable contribution to children's self-esteem and opportunities for reflection.

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

Leaders articulate and promote a vision based on distinctively Christian values. The headteacher works hard to continually develop a Christian distinctiveness that is purposeful. The whole school community share this vision and are enthusiastic in making their contribution to the Christian ethos of the school. All stakeholders believe that Christian values are 'naturally woven' into every action and experience of school life. The governing body, including the chair of governors, have been recently appointed and are developing their understanding of what it means to govern a church school. They are committed to developing the Christian ethos and working towards expanding the Christian distinctiveness of the school. There are close links with the Diocese and the involvement of the local vicar and the 'community and families worker' make a very good contribution to all aspects of school life. Fund raising, supporting fair trade and enterprise projects in the community contribute to children's awareness of the needs of others. Parents say they are well informed and have opportunities to give their views on the school. They are involved in a variety of aspects of school life and say they want to do these things because they feel valued. They are particularly appreciative of the extended family atmosphere that included a recent design technology project that was extended to grandparents. Parents endorse the nurturing, pastoral care given to their children. They are adamant that the supportive Christian ethos is as valuable as the curriculum in the education of children saying 'values give guidance for decision making in our children's future and are a good basis for how to live their lives.'