**National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report**

|  |
| --- |
| **Parrett and Axe Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**  Fairoak Way  Mosterton  Beaminster  Dorset  DT8 3JQ  **Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding**  **Current inspection grade: Good**  **Diocese: Salisbury**  Local authority: Dorset  Dates of inspection: 25 February 2016  Date of last inspection: 2 March 2011  School’s unique reference number: 113807  Headteacher: Nigel Evans  Inspector’s name and number: Penny Burnside 772 |
| **School context**  Parrett and Axe is a smaller than average primary school with 121 children on roll. It serves the villages of Mosterton, South Perrott and Chedington. The percentage of children with additional needs is above the national average. Formerly a school of four classes, it has just become a five-class school. It benefits from good support from the Beaminster area clergy team. The subject leader for religious education left the school at Christmas to take up the headship of another local primary school. The headteacher took on the temporary leadership of RE at the start of this term. |
| **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Parrett and Axe VA Primary School as a Church of England school are good**   * A strongly supportive and inclusive culture, rooted in the Christian values of compassion, mutual respect, honesty and trust, enables children and adults to flourish * Strong partnerships with local churches enrich the experiences offered to children * The Christian ethos encourages deep thinking about matters of faith and enables all members of the school community to talk about them openly and with confidence |
| **Areas to improve**   * Make more explicit the theological basis of the core values so that adults as well as children can talk with confidence about the school’s distinctive Christian character * For the new RE leader to ensure that the systems for recording assessment in RE which have recently been introduced become well-established in order to provide secure judgements about pupils’ attainment in the subject |
| **The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good at meeting the needs of all learners**  Parrett and Axe successfully lives out its aim of being ‘a place where the Christian faith is at the centre of everything and encompasses all aspects of school life.’ Collective worship and RE play a significant role in making this a reality. The school’s underlying Christian ‘story’ is described as ‘taking people under their wing’, offering love and kindness ‘to *every*body,’ and showing friendship which perseveres. Children’s wide knowledge of Bible stories, along with their ability to think deeply, enables them to make clear links between Christian values and the behaviour and relationships they experience in school. Pupils explain that the school’s Christian character makes a difference saying, ‘You’re like a character in God’s story.’ The effects of this can be seen both inside and outside the school, with examples given of mathematics lessons and an inter-school cross country competition where children chose spontaneously to support other children. Parents recognise that this begins with children’s first experiences in school: teachers’ planning in the Foundation Stage states explicitly, ‘remind children daily of how we behave in a Christian way to all members of the class.’ As a result, relationships are excellent, standards are good, and attainment is generally in line with national expectations. Pupils with special educational needs and those in receipt of the pupil premium grant perform well because staff know them well and tailor their teaching to meet their needs.Mutual trust and perseverance feature strongly in the school’s approach to improving attendance. Parents comment on the excellent support for families. The school’s approach to spiritual development contributes significantly to children’s ability to think deeply. Children acknowledge that the school ‘gives you that extra thoughtfulness,’ and a current project on mindfulness is further enriching previous work on ‘windows, mirrors and doors.’ Reflective areas and the quiet garden, where people can go ‘to get peace’ or ‘if you’re sad,’ are also effective aspects of the school’s provision. Children are genuinely excited about Find-Out Fridays and ‘Liquid Church’ because the activities are memorable and challenge them to reflect deeply. There is some challenging and exciting work taking place in religious education. |
| **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.**  Children talk enthusiastically about their participation in worship and acknowledge that they ‘do a lot!’ Worship questionnaires demonstrate very clearly that daily worship is not only enjoyed but is also at the centre of the school's spiritual life: ‘I like how it’s very casual and quiet. It’s a good time to reflect and pray and think about your troubles and achievements.’  Worship is very well planned by the clergy team working in conjunction with the headteacher. They ensure that worship covers a broad range of Christian themes with a strong emphasis on the Bible, on Christian values and on important Christian festivals. This enables children to have a very good understanding of the nature of worship, the Christian faith and Anglican traditions and practice. The same ‘thoughtfulness’ which is seen throughout the school is evident in its worship planning: sensitive, detailed planning of seating, of inclusion and support for all children, as well as the structure and content of the worship, all contribute towards setting a tone which is both respectful and expectant. Each act of worship provides children and adults with a challenge to their thinking as well as a time of reflection. Along with the prominent place of prayer across the school, this ensures that worship is a spiritual experience of real significance. Children’s responses, both in acts of worship and in the reflection areas in classes, show deep thinking which the school is skilled at encouraging. When explaining his understanding of the Trinity, one child described the Holy Spirit as ‘a version of Jesus, when he died.’ One said, when thinking about Gethsemane, ‘It must have been really hard for Jesus to trust God.’Another child explained that, when he first heard about the death and resurrection of Jesus, it was ‘like someone was keeping a secret from me.’ Monitoring and evaluation of worship is extremely good because it is detailed and specific and provides leaders with useful information for planning for further improvement. One particularly effective approach to evaluation is the feedback and reflection conversation which the curate holds with a group of pupils immediately after his weekly act of worship in school. This incidentally provides opportunities for still deeper thinking. |
| **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**Religious education is good because teaching is generally good or better. Teachers’ planning is creative and includes a wide range of learning experiences. Children employ higher-order thinking as a result of the ‘big questions’ approach used across the school. They speak enthusiastically about RE and refer to a number of topics within Christianity and other world faiths as being particularly memorable. Parents comment on ways in which the school has prompted children’s curiosity about other people and their beliefs. Children expect to be challenged and several of them agree that ‘RE is a bit harder than other lessons.’ There is some particularly skilful mixed-age and mixed-ability teaching. This was seen in a lesson where the teacher provided personalised support and challenge for individual children in the task of chairing a public meeting about a proposed closure of a church. Progress in this lesson was particularly good as a result of excellent subject-knowledge and strategic use of visitors from local churches. Religious education makes a significant contribution to the school’s Christian ethos. A holiday homework task on the parables resulted in some lively and original films and presentations, with pupils applying what they had learned to their everyday lives: ‘I learned that being different does not mean you don’t feel the same inside….I will try to treat people how I would like to be treated and will look at finding new friends in new situations.’ Standards are in line with national expectations although systems for recording this formally have only recently been put in place. A new RE scheme was introduced in September and the school has adapted its approach in the light of this. The headteacher has temporarily taken on the role of subject leader for RE and he is aware of the need to ensure that the new assessment processes are secure. Systems for monitoring teaching are effective, with teachers receiving feedback to enable them to build upon their good practice. |
| **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding**  The leadership of Parrett and Axe school is outstanding. It flourishes as a church school because of its strong Christian identity which has been established by school leaders over several years. Close monitoring by supportive and well-informed governors and very effective partnership with local churches make a significant contribution to its success. Recent changes in the staff team have not diminished its effectiveness. New staff describe the school as ‘a very loving environment’ where Christian values are ‘embedded in everything we do.’ They speak highly of support they receive, citing the school’s Christian character, ‘the surrounding message,’ as the reason. Leaders are quick to encourage new staff to use their gifts and skills for the benefit of the wider school community, and children comment enthusiastically on this. The headteacher is committed to developing future leaders, for example the previous RE leader, who joined the school as a newly-qualified teacher, in now headteacher of another church school. The school’s leaders are passionate about meeting the needs of each child and they have developed a number of effective self-evaluation systems in which the uniqueness of the child is central. These systems accurately identify areas for improvement by listening to all groups in the school community and, as one governor commented, ‘There’s always somebody moving things on.’ Governors’ active involvement with the school, including attending training alongside the teachers, ensures a deeper understanding and richer partnership: ‘staff know that we know what they’re trying to do.’ Issues relating to the school as a church school are identified in the school improvement plan which is monitored effectively by all governors. The areas for development from the last inspection have been addressed thoroughly. Parents feel welcome in the school and many attend worship. They speak very highly of the school, praising its inclusivity, the ‘space and time’ given to children and their families, and ‘fantastic communication.’ The curate plays a key role in making visible the school’s distinctive Christian vision, leading worship, supporting RE lessons and incidentally developing pupils’ understanding of Christian vocation. Strong partnership with other churches, the diocese, and local schools in the Beaminster Pyramid brings further benefits for pupils. RE and collective worship both have a significant impact on children’s development because they are given a high profile in the school’s curriculum and training programme. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship. |

SIAMS report February 2016 Parrett and Axe VA Primary Mosterton DT8 3JQ