

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Thorner's Church of England School			
Address	Litton Cheney, Dorchester, Dorset, DT2 9AU		
Date of inspection	28 November 2019	Status of school	Voluntary aided primary
Diocese	Salisbury	URN	113804

Overall Judgement	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	Grade	Good
Additional Judgements	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good
	The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Good

School context

Thorner's is a primary school with 83 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. No pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national averages. A third of the school's pupils are from outside the catchment area. The school's vicar is new, having joined the community in July 2019. Thorner's manages its own pre-school.

The school's Christian vision

We strive to develop Christian values in our communal life by providing a happy, caring and inspirational learning environment.

We do the best we can, wherever we can, in all the ways we can.

'Whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.'

Mark 10:15

Key findings

- In keeping with its Christian vision, Thorner's is a nurturing and caring school. The vision is supported by deeply embedded values which successfully guide pupils' behaviour and relationships. However, the vision's biblical underpinning is less well understood by members of the community.
- Collective worship is engaging, invitational and integral to the life of the school. Worship themes are understood by the pupils and they can relate them to everyday life.
- A close partnership with the church has ensured the church's presence has remained strong during an interregnum period. The school looks forward to working with their newly appointed vicar.
- Religious Education (RE) is given appropriate status and pupils engage well in their learning. Through RE they are extending their knowledge and understanding of world faiths, including their similarities to, and differences from, Christianity.

Areas for development

- Ensure that the biblical underpinning of the Christian vision is fully understood so the whole school community is inspired to action by it.
- Ensure all the school's adults have a shared understanding of spirituality so planned and unplanned spiritual moments are recognised and celebrated.
- Strengthen pupils' age-appropriate understanding of worship themes, enabling more opportunities for personal prayer and reflection.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Inspection findings

Thorner's Christian vision and associated values have a positive impact on the school, creating a caring community where love and respect permeate all aspects of school life. The school's values are proudly displayed at the school's entrance, having been beautifully carved in stone by a local stonemason. However, the biblical reference for the vision is not fully understood leading to some misinterpretation of its meaning.

Core values of hope, forgiveness, love, endurance and truth underpin the school's vision and pupils can explain how these Christian values support them. The pupils decided that 'love' should be at the centre of the values list because they feel it impacts on everything. They know that Christian values apply to life outside of school as well as during the school day. Responsibilities held by the older children, such as the Ethos Councillors, help them to develop effective leadership skills. A commitment for school improvement is shown by staff's engagement in professional development, including the senior teacher's undertaking of a qualification for future church school headship.

Parents say they appreciate the approachability of school staff, explaining that issues are dealt with sensitively and promptly. One parent stated, 'Our children feel happy and safe at Thorner's.' The school recognises the importance of close parent partnerships in living out its Christian vision. Leaders are fully aware that many of its families live a significant distance from the school. Great efforts are made to ensure that everybody feels included. There is, for example, flexibility regarding the timings for school events, designed to give as many opportunities as possible for bringing the community together.

Governance includes regular monitoring, support and challenge. Staff and pupil interviews allow governors to gain a full perspective of the school's work, including pupil and staff well-being. School leaders actively engage with the diocese for professional advice and this guides them in church school development. The living out of the vision was demonstrated by leaders when they made the decision to take over the management of the local pre-school, thus securing high quality early years provision within its locality.

Pupils feel confident when sharing ideas because they know they will be respectfully listened to. They appreciate differing views when responding to questions and know each viewpoint is valid, even if they do not personally agree. In keeping with the school's Christian vision, this respectful learning atmosphere allows each child to be comfortable within their own unique individuality. Any barriers to learning are therefore minimised. Some of the school's actions have been transformational to the lives of pupils with complex needs.

Thorner's exciting curriculum, combined with good standards of teaching, has been instrumental in its pupils achieving academic results in line with, and often above, national averages. Specific learning needs are supported with finely-tuned interventions which means the majority of pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. Reluctant readers greatly enjoy their regular reading sessions with a school governor. Her accompanying dog provides extra encouragement. Teachers' commitment to inclusivity is demonstrated by them gaining sailing qualifications in order to support pupils with specific needs, so they can safely join their friends in sailing classes. At present there is no shared understanding of spirituality among all adults in the school. Therefore, pupils' many special learning moments are not fully captured in ways to progress their spiritual development.

Pupils clearly link Jesus' teaching and Christian values, and this has helped them to develop their own sense of social and moral responsibility. They support a wide range of charitable causes involving inequality and injustice. Pupil-initiated acts, such as wanting to involve themselves in causes personal to them, demonstrate their compassion and love for others.

The Christian vision and values form an integral part of collective worship, which is planned around the Christian year. Each value forms the worship focus for half a term so pupils have a deepened understanding of its meaning. The pupils sing enthusiastically and with great enjoyment. Worship is invitational and inclusive with time given for reflection and prayer. This gives pupils the space to think more deeply about worship themes and what their impact might be on daily life. They often make insightful contributions, as shown on the beautiful card made for

the late vicar's family on the event of his sad death. One pupil's message read, 'He made me look at things in a different way.' A variety of worship leaders give pupils a rich experience of worship styles. Pupils are asked to give their views regarding worship to the ethos councillors and their ideas, such as a new hymns' selection, are taken into consideration when planning future worship provision. There is a central reflective space within the school and a values tree in each classroom where pupils can celebrate pupils who have demonstrated the school's values in their behaviour. Pupils say they like writing their own prayers as it is a time to share their personal thoughts with God. They appreciate the time given in worship for sharing these personal prayers. They also value the fact that privacy for their private prayers is respected. Pupils say they enjoy their regular worship in the church and special services, such as the annual Remembrance service, with the local community. 'Open The Book' worships, organised by church members, are greatly enjoyed, successfully increasing pupils' knowledge of Bible stories and the lessons within them.

Effective teaching in RE supports pupils' understanding of cultural differences and diversity. They enjoy learning about a variety of world faiths and know that Christianity is followed across the world. RE is well planned by the new subject leader and teachers feel supported in their teaching. Pupils are encouraged to offer their own individual thoughts and questions, respectfully accepting that their ideas may be different to others in the class. During work on the story of Noah one child was able to empathise with Noah's situation, saying, 'He would have been proud to have been chosen and wouldn't want to let God down.'

The headteacher, supported by governors and staff, has created a school community where everybody matters.



The effectiveness of RE is Good

RE is well-planned using highly-regarded resources. Professional development supports teachers in developing their subject knowledge. Careful questioning leads pupils to come to their own conclusions, such as, 'It's ok to believe in different things to someone else.' Effective assessment leads to well-tailored learning activities. Pupils demonstrate depth in their RE writing and discussions. The RE leader's good level of subject knowledge and her regular monitoring effectively informs future RE development.

Headteacher	Jyotsna Chaffey
Inspector's name and number	Lorraine Pugh 819