



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

### Hawkchurch Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Hawkchurch, Axminster, Devon EX13 5XD

**Previous SIAMS grade: 2**

**Current SIAMS grade : 3**

**Diocese: Salisbury**

Local authority: Devon

Dates of inspection: 28 September 2015

Date of last inspection: 11 January 2011

School's unique reference number: 113356

Executive Headteacher: Paul Walker

Inspector's name and number: Carole McCormack (224)

#### School context

Hawkchurch is a very small rural school with two classes and, over the past two years, has been through a period of intense change. The last substantive Headteacher resigned in April 2013 and a partnership with Winsham Primary school was arranged for the academic year 2013/14. At the end of summer term 2013 the KS1 teacher left; followed by changes within the administration team. The KS2 teacher left at the end of summer term 2015 and, in order to secure the future of the school, governors consulted about federating with two schools in a neighbouring diocese: Musbury, another very small rural school, and Sidmouth VA Primary, and this started in September 2015. The federation is managed by an executive Headteacher; and a head of teaching and learning has been appointed to work in the two small rural schools.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Hawkchurch as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- The proven capacity of the new leadership team to robustly take the school forward as a rapidly improving distinctive and effective church school
- The effectiveness of the remaining members of the ethos committee and the previous chair of governors in maintaining continuity of church school provision for the learners during the period of recent turbulence

#### Areas to improve

- For the new leadership to continue to apply rigour, consistency and robust church school improvement measures in order to strengthen the achievement and progress of all learners
- To look again at the core values of the school with all stakeholders and to formulate a new Mission statement firmly rooted in the Christian foundation of the school
- To provide structured opportunities for learners to consider the 'big questions' which arise from Collective Worship and Religious Education, with specialist support
- To introduce strategies through which learners can develop a personal spirituality

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

The children find that the many core values of the school are 'difficult to remember easily'. Although the values are explored within their distinctively Christian context during collective worship, they could have an equally secular application. Similarly, the mission statement of the school, although morally sound, does not arise from the school's Christian foundation. The warm family feel of the school is, however, valued by parents who find that their children flourish 'socially and spiritually'; and this positive attitude towards learning is supported by the attendance figures, which are good and improving. The executive Headteacher described the 2013 Key Stage 2 SAT results as 'a concern' (there were no Year 6 children in 2014) and he has taken a baseline assessment of the children's levels and progress from the start of this academic year. Standards started to rise during 2013/14 under the leadership of the acting interim Headteacher and this is reflected in the fact that all KS2 children are now working at or above age-related expectations. Intensive support and monitoring are in place from the executive Headteacher and his staff. The school uses pupil premium funding to increase its inclusivity, opening school visits and learning experiences to all children irrespective of their financial background. The school follows the Devon agreed syllabus for Religious Education and the children can recount the main facts about the major world religions. They are not provided with opportunities, however, to probe their learning more deeply in terms of making comparisons between religions and asking searching questions of what they learn. Consequently the impact of RE upon the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children is limited. The children show natural respect within their relationships and this is extended to include diverse faiths and cultures within the learning opportunities that are given to the children. A central figure in the school in terms of its Christian distinctiveness is the deeply committed and long-serving higher level teaching assistant who is described as 'a rock' by parents during the period of recent turmoil. She regards her work as a vocation and has done her utmost to create reflective opportunities for the children within the school day and to open to them the opportunity of talking to her about their Christian faith. These opportunities do not, however, offer the structure to enable the children to develop their own personal spirituality. Relationships within the school are good; and the new leadership has worked sensitively and skilfully with staff, governors, parents and children to ensure a seamless transition to the new leadership structure.

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

The executive Headteacher plans collective worship themes for the federation and liaises closely with the HLTA and with the incumbent in order to ensure that worship is delivered in a way contextually appropriate to the school community in Hawkchurch. The children appreciate that they now have the opportunity to focus on a particular core school value for an extended period of time, as opposed to the fleeting visits previously paid to a particular value in worship. However there are no structured opportunities for learners to reflect upon the relevance of a particular value for their own lives and actions. Open the Book is delivered weekly and, because they are involved in enacting the stories at the heart of these sessions, the children recall their significance well. The church is used by the school to celebrate the main Christian festivals; and the Harvest festival took place on the day of the inspection. The HLTA leads most of the remaining acts of collective worship and she has created a highly appropriate environment for worship, which displays the current core value being explored. Pupils were not, however, always fully engaged in worship. Because all the values of the school are not distinctively Christian in character – for example the current value is 'kind heartedness' and is related to being generous at harvest time – an opportunity is missed for reflection which would give rise to a consideration of the 'big questions' which inevitably occur when a profound religious value is explored. The school has worked hard to weave prayer through provision and prayer books are corporately produced in each class. A selection of these prayers is used in worship. The KSI classteacher has developed this concept so that the prayer book includes a record of the children's spiritual responses, forming an effective spiritual

development diary. The Bible has a central place in worship but, because learners are not challenged in their thinking, their theological understanding is not searching. The second focus for development in the last denominational inspection was to develop planning, monitoring and evaluation of collective worship, including all stakeholders. This has been addressed insofar as this does now take place, but the acts of worship are evaluated in general terms, rather than an evaluation being made of the impact of worship upon learners' lives.

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

The new leadership team has swiftly and effectively built upon the strengths which continued in Hawkchurch, despite the period of extreme turbulence which the school had encountered over the past two years. These strengths were: the highly successful work of the acting interim Headteacher in resolving staffing issues and tackling standards during 2014/15; and the determination by the previous governing body and the HLTA to ensure continuity of provision for learners and their families. Because the school was calm and secure, the executive Headteacher has been able to put into place without delay the most effective school improvement strategies to tackle underperformance. His experienced senior leadership team have started systematically to evaluate the effectiveness of Hawkchurch as a church school and to put in place robust plans to ensure its continued improvement. The first focus for development in the last denominational inspection – to ensure a formal structure for the monitoring and evaluation of the school as a distinctive and effective church school – has been addressed and continues to be strengthened. The current leadership structure of an executive Headteacher, with a number of assistant heads who share in the responsibility for learning and teaching across the federation, builds capacity for highly effective future leadership of church schools. The school has very strong partnerships with parents, who have been kept informed of developments at every step during the recent period of turbulence; and with the church, which is relatively close by and is used twice termly for services. The Headteacher spoke in positive terms of the strategic support which the school has received from Salisbury diocese particularly over the past eighteen months. Arrangements for religious education and collective worship meet statutory requirements.

SIAMS report September 2015 Hawkchurch Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School,

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