



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

### St Thomas' Church of England Primary School

Appleford Rd  
North Kensington  
London  
W10 5EF

**Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: London**

Local authority: Kensington & Chelsea

Dates of inspection: 3 February 2015

Date of last inspection: January 2010

School's unique reference number: 100492

Headteacher: Sarah Bouette

Inspector's name and number: Allan McLean NS823

#### School context

St Thomas' has retained a stable senior leadership and governance team since the last inspection. It is an average-sized primary school that serves pupils from a wide variety of minority ethnic groups, the largest being Black African and Black Caribbean. Just under half of the pupils speak English as an additional language. Disadvantaged pupils make up almost two thirds of those on the school roll. The school offers full time nursery provision and a breakfast club. The school was inspected by Ofsted in November 2014 and received an overall effectiveness grade of 'Outstanding'.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Thomas' as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Relationships at all levels are informed by Christian values and guarantee a high level of pastoral support for all members of the school community
- Christian values shape, support and sustain the academic achievement, personal development and well-being of all pupils
- The vision and passion of all leaders ensure that the school is always on course to fulfil its mission – A Christian community committed to excellence
- The often creative and challenging Religious Education (RE) enables and encourages pupils to think deeply about issues of concern

#### Areas to improve

- Provide opportunities for collective worship to be led by a wide range of people from different Christian traditions and for links to be established with the global community so that pupils gain a rich experience of worship
- Ensure the rapid progress pupils make in RE is maintained so that the numbers attaining higher than national expectations continues to rise

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

The motto, 'learning together, playing together, praying together' shapes the thinking and determines the priorities and ethos of the school. Explicit Christian values permeate every aspect of school life and this creates an ethos that enables pupils to achieve academic standards and progress that are above national expectations. The school's Christian values are clearly and creatively displayed in every classroom. As one child expressed, 'Our values explain everything we do in school and guide us in how to behave to each other.' Christian values are the 'language of the school' because they inform all decisions about policy and practice and particularly the relationships. All those involved in the school communicate high expectations and aspirations for every child in a community where levels of deprivation are higher than the national norm. This is seen both in the academic achievement of pupils, and in their preparation as life long learners. Pupils' spiritual development is excellent. Pupils respond with sensitivity and maturity to collective worship. The links between RE and Philosophy have been extremely well developed in order to provide children with high quality opportunities to reflect on the 'big questions' that are now an integral part of so much of the curriculum. Pupils respond reflectively to challenging and practical questions such as 'How do you live your life as a light?' Themes such as this are followed through during Collective Worship. Each classroom has a well-developed area for religious education that creatively reflects the theme being studied. The relationships between all members of the school community are excellent. They are characterized by mutual respect and a genuine sense of community. At the heart of these relationships are the schools values of forgiveness, loyalty, hospitality, truth and peace. Pupils are able to make clear links between these values and the choices they make. The religious education curriculum, together with the daily act of worship, ensures that pupils understand the roots of the values within the Christian faith. The school would benefit further from developing a wider variety of worship leaders from different Christian traditions so the children have a broader range of experiences. Religious education plays an important role in its contribution to the Christian character of the school. Pupils have an excellent knowledge of the Christian faith that makes a significant contribution to their moral and social development. Parents and pupils of all faiths commented on how effective the school is at respecting the individual beliefs of this diverse school community.

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

Pupils recognise that distinctively Christian worship is at the heart of St. Thomas'. They readily describe how it 'sets the scene' for all that the school does and reinforces their knowledge and understanding of the place of Jesus within the Christian faith. They also describe how certain themes guide them in their own lives. One pupil commented on how a story told during collective worship had led them to evaluate how they spoke to their parents: 'It made me realize my attitude to my parents was often thoughtless and rude and helped me change this.' The worship is very well planned and responds to careful evaluation through consultation with the school community. This has resulted in the children taking an active leadership role during collective worship, particularly in the circle group forum. Recent pupil conferencing and discussions with the clergy gave rise to a request for more Bible stories and the planning now reflects this. Leaders ensure that worship covers a broad range of Christian themes with a strong emphasis on the school's Christian values and on important Christian festivals. This enables pupils to have a very good understanding of the nature of worship, the Christian faith and Anglican traditions and practice. Pupils speak very positively about the impact of special services such as the Eucharist and the 'ashing' on the first day of Lent. All members of staff attend collective worship thus reinforcing its importance to the whole community. Worship is frequently led by the local clergy, headteacher and pupils. The school's self evaluation document correctly identifies the need to widen the number of visitors leading worship in order for children to appreciate a wider variety of Christian traditions. Each act of worship provides pupils and staff with a challenge to their thinking, together with a time of reflection. This, together with the prominent place of prayer across the school, ensures that worship is a spiritual experience of real significance. The school makes links to many charities and would further benefit from establishing an ongoing partnership with a global community.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is Outstanding**

Religious education is given the status of a 'core subject'. The impact of changes to the RE policy and scheme of work has resulted in pupils making rapid progress. Standards are in line with national expectations and are improving due to the excellent progress being made. The school needs to maintain this progress so that a significant number attain higher than national expectations. Pupils are able to apply their strong subject knowledge to a wide range of circumstances. The pupils often make reference to their 'deep learning' and 'deep conversations' which accurately describe the way in which they are stimulated to grapple with some of the big questions within Christianity and other world faiths. Techniques gained through a 'philosophy for children' approach, provides pupils with the skills to address the 'big questions' that they explore. Teachers are not afraid to take risks in presenting challenges to the pupils. In one lesson the children were exploring 'If God is real, will he always be obvious?' The impact of teaching over time was evident in the pupils having been well equipped with appropriate and sensitive language to explore such questions. Pupils make excellent progress within lessons. The quality of teaching is consistently good and often outstanding. Conversations with pupils illustrate the impact of this teaching and the 'deep learning' that is taking place. Pupils appreciate the time taken by teachers to write reflective comments after some pieces of work. This enables them to know how to improve their work. These are in addition to the more formal national levels that are also assessed. The governors have adopted the diocesan syllabus and the RE subject leader has worked hard to adapt this to good effect. Each class has a 'wonder book' which captures much of the learning through photographs and captions. This is a new development, which over time, will be important to share with parents and governors as evidence of the rich variety of work undertaken in RE. The newly appointed subject leader has shown imagination and enthusiasm in the way that she has approached her role. Following on from the excellent work of her predecessor, she has continued to establish the foundations of an effective assessment system and supported the enhanced syllabus with appropriate resources. The leadership team has implemented a thorough approach for reporting and working with governors through an established RE curriculum committee. Pupils' work is closely monitored in order to ensure that appropriate standards are being met. Teachers are given feedback from this monitoring 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 leaders and governors have shown determination in ensuring that a drive for high standards is achieved through a focus on the personal development and well-being of pupils. They can describe the way in which the school's Christian character and values are at the heart of its success. The school's vision and values are articulated and understood by all members of the school community. It sums up the school's priorities and shapes its thinking. The pupils are consulted on the agreed values which are reviewed every six months. Leaders and governors, supported by church members, show a very high degree of pastoral concern for all members of the school community. This is illustrated well by the comments made by parents and pupils who feel the vicar is always present and available at the school. Parents commented that the school leadership team is 'incredible and amazing' and that they always take the time to listen to parents' concerns. The vicar is frequently available at the beginning and end of the school day in a pastoral role for staff, parents and pupils. Leaders and governors ensure that both worship and RE meet statutory requirements. Governors receive detailed information on developments in RE through an RE committee. This could be further developed by the RE committee reporting to the full governing body on its work. The London Diocesan Board for Schools adviser works closely with governors and senior leaders to provide effective challenge and support. There is a very strong focus on professional development that contributes significantly to Christian leadership both within and beyond the school, with several members of the leadership team supporting other schools. The partnership with the local church is a great strength of the school. Mutual respect and support enable both institutions to flourish and to fulfil their mission to the school and the local community.