



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Thriplow Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

School Lane
Thriplow, Royston
Herts
SG8 7RH

Diocese: Ely

Local authority: Cambridgeshire

Date of inspection: 15th May 2014

Date of last inspection: 16th March 2009

School's unique reference number: 110835

Headteacher: Mrs Victoria Penty

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Judith Ruff 528

School context

Thriplow Church of England School is a smaller than average primary school with 82 pupils currently on roll. 37% of these pupils travel to the school from outside of the designated catchment area. 16% of pupils have special educational needs. Pupils are mostly from White British heritage. The school is set in beautiful rural surroundings. The church of St George is a short walking distance away. There is currently an interregnum, but the school is well supported by a curate and a part time school chaplain. Since the previous inspection there has been a change of headteacher.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Thriplow as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The outstanding community ethos of 'Love your neighbour as yourself' shines through in the excellent pastoral care based on trust and mutual respect, which permeates out into the parental body and beyond
- The close, effective partnership between foundation governors and school leaders ensures that the school develops and expands its vision as a distinctive church school
- The promotion and value placed upon pupils' spiritual development, enables them to refine and practise skills of reflection, prayer and a sense of awe and wonder at God's creation

Areas to improve

- To provide opportunities for pupils to organise and lead acts of collective worship, building confidence and awareness of the structure and purposes of worship
- RE Subject Leader to present to governors annually on standards and progress in RE thus raising opportunities to celebrate, challenge and discuss differences in outcomes
- Governors to formally monitor teaching of RE and feedback to other governors so building understanding of strengths and challenges in RE teaching across the school

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

The school's tag line of 'We are a school filled with love' comes across very strongly in the daily life of the school community. There is a genuine and practical concern for all. Pupils are well known as individuals and their achievements celebrated in all aspects of their development, not just academic outcomes. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and staff. They see their children growing into well rounded, caring, curious and enthusiastic learners, whose development is securely underpinned by distinctive Christian values. These values are deeply embedded within the life and work of the school. Pupils understand through individual blessings at the half termly communion service and everyday words and actions from their teachers and support staff that they are special and precious to God. This places on them the responsibility to use their talents and skills in the very best ways that they can. It is demonstrated through activities such as the school choir and orchestra and through the many extra-curricular activities which are on offer. Pupils' levels of achievement and attendance are high. Concern for others was demonstrated during the inspection, taking place in SATs week, with the other children wanting to pray for those Year 6 pupils involved. Opportunities for reflection and developing personal understanding of spirituality are excellent. Examples such as a 'prayer walk' within the church and grounds have given powerful opportunities for praise, reflection and being still in the presence of a creator God. Behaviour is of the highest standard, expectations are made clear. Older pupils are very good role models to their younger peers. Around the school there are many signs and symbols celebrating the church school foundation. These clearly lift up spirits and pupils take a pride in producing banners and art work around Christian themes.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is seen as central to the life and sustenance of the school as a church school. Through exceptionally high quality music and singing, pupils are enabled to understand that worship can be inspirational and inclusive. It clearly binds the school into a joyful, prayerful community, enabling pupils to confidently and spontaneously pray for matters of current concern and to give thanks for all God's gifts and blessings. This was overwhelmingly apparent during the afternoon's collective worship. Pupils are familiar and knowledgeable about the Bible, having their own copies from Year 3 onwards and learning 'memory verses' which support and underpin the school's values and ethos. The half termly Holy Communion service has become a very special part of the school's worshipping calendar. Parents appreciate the opportunity for children to take up preparation by the local church clergy for admission to communion. Anglican liturgy, albeit in a child friendly version, becomes entirely familiar to pupils. Some individual children take the role of servers during the communion service and have also fulfilled this role in St George's Church. The weekly 'Cracker Club' also builds pupils' understanding of Bible stories, gives opportunities for asking questions, being creative with artwork linked to key themes and is an important way of building firm and lasting relationships between the church members and the participants. During collective worship pupils are familiar with prayers referring to the Trinity and this builds effectively on the Year 2 RE unit of work on this theme. Collective worship is well planned, delivered to a very high standard, enabling pupils to confidently articulate the purposes and benefits of this shared time. Evaluations of worship have been discussed at the 'Collective Worship Group' made up of both governors and staff. It was from these discussions that the in-school communion services developed. Pupils are very much engaged with worship and participate well through music, drama, prayer and art work. As yet they have not had opportunities to plan and lead worship. Pupils' responses to prayer often leads them to organise charitable social actions, such as supporting the Bishop's Lenten Challenge and one of the current year's charities 'Walking with the Wounded'. The church is well used for key festivals and several families now attend the Sunday Family Service as a result of joining in with these special services overtime.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards of attainment for the large majority of learners are in line with national expectations and sometimes higher. In particular, pupils' oral responses show real interest in enquiry approach learning and an ability to evaluate and reflect on what has been taught. For example, the upper key stage 2 Hinduism unit had obviously fascinated the pupils and they were keen to learn more about how people's faith impacted on their daily lives. Learning opportunities such as the 'Heaven' topic enable pupils to confidently and enthusiastically express their ideas through a range of media, showing good progression of skills and ideas across the year groups. Pupils listen well, share their thoughts and experiences with others and are not afraid to challenge. Teaching quality is good and at times it is outstanding. Strengths are teachers' enjoyment and enthusiasm for the subject, quality of questioning and reflection opportunities offered and the reinforcement of key vocabulary. Together with cross curricular links, such as the use of religious art works followed through by opportunities for pupils to create their own responses to the themes, pupils are enabled to use their creative skills to depict their ideas and feelings. Local church clergy and members also support RE teaching very well. For example, a pupil had depicted the impact of the Holy Spirit on believers after a conversation with the vicar. Teachers' marking is positive and encouraging, but does not often identify next steps in learning. Pupils' work is assessed and moderated by sharing examples at staff meetings. Progress can be seen clearly by reference to work in books and looking at teachers' records of assessment. As yet, standards and progress in RE are not reported to governors. RE has been carefully monitored by both the subject leader and the headteacher. Key strengths and areas for further discussion have been drawn out of these observations. The RE Subject Leader has kept governors well informed about the new LA Agreed Syllabus. Although several governors have been involved with the delivery of some RE units of work, as yet no formal monitoring has taken place and discussed at full governors' meetings.

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

The quality of the partnership formed between governors and school leaders is excellent. There is a tangible sense of trust, openness and appreciation between members of the 'Collective Worship Group' in particular. The Christian foundation of the school is deeply valued and the modelling of the vision for all to live and work within a community based on Christian values is an ongoing process, which is constantly refined and evaluated through regular meetings with foundation governors, providing opportunities for reflection and discussion. Links with the church of St George are excellent. Despite the interregnum, the curate and part time chaplain are making a real positive contribution to the life of the school as a church school. They are well known and liked by all within the community. Self- evaluation processes are shared, with all community members offered the opportunity to 'have their say'. In particular, pupils said how much they had appreciated being asked their views on RE topics. They were quick to take up this opportunity to say how much they enjoyed first hand learning experiences through visits and visitors. This is a strong and developing area of the RE work. The recent parental survey was overwhelmingly positive and other community members have also added their reflections. After the recent 150 year celebrations of the school one wrote, 'Such love and happiness shows on the faces of the children and staff at this commemorative service'. Links with the Diocese are very strong and productive. The Bishop's Visitor was a great friend and supporter to the school. The new 'Patch Adviser' is a new and developing role. Training opportunities have been well used and advice has been sought when required. The leadership of worship and RE is given a very high priority and these areas are led by an outstanding practitioner who has worked exceptionally hard to bring about such very effective practice in both areas. She has networked, liaised and arranged for external expertise to be brought into the school to raise levels of confidence and awareness amongst staff members. She is an excellent role model and support for her colleagues within school. High aspirations based on the Christian value of service to others and love of your neighbour has resulted in pupils rising to the challenge of always giving of your best. Outcomes are high, both in

academic achievement, but also in other areas, such as sport, music and art work. Attendance is good. Pupils enjoy and want to be in school, where they feel part of a 'family' where all members are loved and valued.

SIAMS report May 2014 Thriplow (VA) Church of England School SG8 7RH