

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Thomas' Church of England Infant School			
Address	Woolton Hill, Hampshire RG20 9XF		
Date of inspection	7 November 2019	Status of school	Voluntary controlled infant
Diocese	Portsmouth and Winchester	URN	116328

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	Excellent
Additional Judgement	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Excellent

School context

St Thomas' is an infant school with 101 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few 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 below national averages. During the past year the school has implemented a new class structure due to a low birth rate, resulting in a variance in cohort numbers. Over the last three years, through The Great Change of St Thomas', the school's buildings and grounds have been enhanced to help to achieve the school's vision.

The school's Christian vision

Through our core Christian values, we journey together in faith and love. Through this we prepare our children with the knowledge, skills and understanding, and the personal commitment to make a difference to the ever changing, diverse world in which we live.

Journeying Together in Faith and Love

'Let us love one another as love comes from God.' 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.'

Key findings

- The young pupils at this school are empowered to personally make a difference and use their values in action to support others in need.
- Worship is profoundly at the core of St Thomas'. Prayer and reflection are deeply embedded and integral to the children's and adults' spiritual development.
- Religious education (RE) is exceptionally well led and develops these young pupils' understanding of the Christian faith and the teachings of Jesus. This is underpinned by the school's core values, enabling pupils to take small steps towards making a change in society. St Thomas' is good at moderating RE and offers to share their good practice with others. This is ongoing.
- The exemplary Christian ethos of inclusion and the incredibly supportive collaboration at all levels is remarkable. It is transforming the individual lives of pupils, families and staff so all flourish.
- The strong partnership between church and school is extremely beneficial, making a real difference to lives of pupils, staff and the wider community of Woolton Hill.

Areas for development

- Deepen the whole community's understanding of the theological underpinning of the school's vision so everyone can tell the story of journeying together in faith and love, rooted in the Bible.
- Enable pupils to encounter diverse people of faith more frequently to nurture their spiritual and cultural development. In addition, extend pupils' knowledge of St Thomas, to whom their church and school is dedicated, to enrich their spiritual lives.

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

'The Christian ethos is fully embedded in everything we do, which is important in preparing all at St Thomas' for their journey through life.' This comment from a senior leader captures the essence of this infant school, whose young pupils speak of 'travelling together and looking after each other'. Parents affirm that it is very much a family journey where everyone respects and helps each other. This is because Jesus' Golden Rule to treat others as yourself sits at the heart of this school. The values of friendship, respect and compassion are hallmarks of the curriculum and undergird St Thomas' way of life, so everyone can grow and flourish. Amazing love and faith shine through and are at the forefront of everything St Thomas' does. The whole community were involved in reviewing the school's vision in April, which clearly infuses all areas of school life. Pupils eagerly and confidently explain their school vision as a journey, depicted in their large mural of a road. They confirm, 'Every single one of our values is on the road'. Deepening the whole community's understanding of the biblical roots which underpin their vision is integral to this school's ongoing journey. Exemplary relationships exist with the church and the diocese, with all demonstrating a high level of care in upholding core Christian values. Effective monitoring by governors is enabling all to flourish within a supportive and empowering Christian family environment.

In this special place, there is a shared understanding of spiritual development and the importance of listening, showing kindness and forgiveness to one another. The school's vision underpins all decisions made to support pupils and adults. All are completely in tune with one another, with the child at the centre. Pupils were very much part of The Great Change of St Thomas', deciding the name for this project to enhance the buildings and grounds. For example, they designed the much loved and well-used spiritual garden. Pupils thrive through learning challenges and employ perseverance to try, try and try again. One to one curriculum provision where needed, with robust tracking systems, is in place. This is designed to keep everything the school holds dear, including the values found in Bible stories, alive for children. For example, the school shows compassion and works closely with outside agencies to help any pupils or families affected by attachment trauma, to develop trust. No child misses out, resulting in all groups of pupils growing in confidence and successfully achieving above expected outcomes.

Spurred on by their vision and values, pupils are empowered to personally make a difference, using their values in action to support others in need. Emotional excellence is very strong here. Involvement helps them to see how to use their values in the world, the earth and everything in it. For example, pupils grow plants to enhance their spiritual garden, pick up litter and, as one pupil contributed, 'organise coffee mornings for the senior citizens'. The excellent relationship with Bulera School in Uganda is enabling these young pupils, as they put it, to 'learn so much from them'. Through visits and letters, as well as daily prayer, this is an active partnership. For example, pupils value the true importance of water and deepen their understanding about Christians in other countries.

Meaningful experiences offered to pupils at St Thomas' are life-changing. For example, even the youngest pupils excel at singing solos in church services, such as Harvest celebrations and Remembrance-tide events. Pupils are growing in confidence all the time, and get involved in Rota Kids, a young person's experience of supporting community events. Parents have nothing but praise as these young pupils discover themselves. Pupils know the road they travel, and the importance of 'being kind to people', living out the values they find in the Bible. They use the community tree of kindness to remind others to pray for those in need. Undoubtedly, St Thomas' pupils are proud of who they are. They are learning to love and be kind to the world near and far, as they continually love to sing. They often come up with their own solutions in the moment. One parent spoke highly of how their child loves to write prayers at home, providing a 'toolbox for the whole family'.

Interactive prayer and reflection is integral to collective worship at St Thomas', helping everyone to live the vision every day in friendship and thankfulness. Pupils find time spent in their reflection areas helps them to remain calm and class worship in their spiritual garden peaceful. The school now use their parish church for half-termly worship in addition to celebrating festivals. Pupils have been helped by their rector to understand the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Stories in the Bible, such as Zacchaeus, remind them of the importance of forgiving over and over again. They speak of forgiveness as 'feeling sorry deep down in your heart' and of being forgiven which helps them to turn over a new leaf. Prayer helps pupils to become independent learners, with pupils knowing they can always pray. The pupil worship team lead prayers, with their focus on the school's vision and values, which are then lived out. For example, pupils remind each other to be a Good Samaritan and not 'walk on by'.

High expectations in RE are helping pupils to grow deeply and spiritually. Often the best work in literacy has an RE focus. RE is exceptionally well led by a passionate and dedicated RE subject leader, who has devised very successful pupil self-assessment grids. Pupil books reflect complete confidence in their depth of understanding. For example, pupils write about Jesus being the best friend in the world and the good news that Jesus welcomes everybody. All groups of pupils are flourishing in RE. For example, pupils know RE helps them to learn about God as creator and how he helps people change who they are. Several pupils asked, 'World-maker, how did you make the world with your voice?' RE is creative and innovative and sometimes includes music and dance, so pupils are spiritually and emotionally engaged. St Thomas' is good at moderating RE work, in which young pupils excel. They enjoy sharing their good practice with others. However, meeting people of diverse faiths and beliefs is currently limited. So too is pupils' knowledge about St Thomas, to whom their parish church and school is dedicated.

A member of staff at St Thomas' credited that 'children, staff and the wider community are on a journey of learning and embedding life and spiritual values'. This takes place within a safe environment where everyone is treated equally in a Christian manner, so pupils and adults grow and flourish together. The final word rests with one of its young pupils, who cited the importance of this school's vision. He remarked, it was, 'a journey together through your life with all your friends who you love'.

Headteacher	Claire Pearce-King
Inspector's name and number	Lizzie McWhirter 244

