

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Otterton Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

Church Hill, Otterton, Budleigh Salterton, Devon EX9 7HU

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Exeter
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Devon
Name of federation	Raleigh Federation
Date of inspection	22 June 2018
Date of last inspection	25 June 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided Primary 113435
Executive Headteacher	Carron Saunders
Inspector's name and number	Jo Osborne 917

School context

Smaller than the average primary school with 63 pupils, Otterton is situated in the centre of a small, rural village next to the church. It is part of the Raleigh Federation with another voluntary aided school of similar size and context. The majority of pupils come from the catchment but an increasing number travel from further away. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is in line with national and has been increasing over the last three years. The proportion of pupils with education and healthcare plans is higher than national.

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

- Otterton, true to its vision, has instilled in pupils the desire to act as 'the hands and feet of God' through living out the values of friendship, forgiveness, hope, trust and koinonia.
- Relationships in the school and with the wider community embody Christian fellowship resulting in all stakeholders feeling valued and empowered to help, support, care for and love each other.
- The rigour and detail of planning for spiritual development is exceptional and leads to highly effective personal development for every pupil including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- A rich and exciting curriculum has resulted from a strong belief that personal development needs to underpin academic progress if pupils are to develop according to their God-given potential.
- Pupils describe themselves as spiritual learners and show a mature ability to reflect on the personal impact of awe and wonder experiences.
- Worship is inspirational in that it challenges and guides pupils to develop very positive relationships at home as well as at school.

Areas to improve

- For leaders and governors to evaluate the impact of the school's Christian vision and its associated values in each area of the school development plan. Ensure that they can clearly identify where the vision and values lead directly to improvement and where further development is required.
- Give pupils independent opportunities to plan and lead whole acts of collective worship in order to further develop their individual spirituality.

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

As Otterton's deeply Christian vision and values are integral to daily life for the whole school community they make a very significant impact on pupils' lives. The headteacher, parents, staff, governors and pupils all speak with passionate conviction about the difference living the values makes to them all. The values of friendship, forgiveness and hope are shared with the partner school. Trust and koinonia have been chosen by the Otterton community to challenge and inspire their work. Older pupils define the difficult concept of koinonia as, 'all the values put together'. The way in which pupils spontaneously talk about the needs of others more than their own is a powerful indication of the impact of the value of Christian fellowship. Staff believe that every child is a child of God which increases their determination to enable each individual to develop according to their strengths and talents. Consequently the school has worked since the last inspection to develop the way they plan and evaluate the impact of the rich curriculum on pupils developing spiritually. This has enabled each pupil to make impressive social, moral, spiritual and cultural growth. Cohorts are generally below the number making statistical comparisons relevant as here an ability group can consist of one child. This and the mobility of a few pupils leaving or joining the school is shown in a mixed pattern of progress and attainment in core subjects over time at both keystages. The majority of pupils, including the most able are now making good progress from their relative starting points. Part-time timetables for certain pupils have resulted in lower than national attendance figures but are a testament to the school's work with external agencies to enable children with significant needs to remain in the school. Pupils readily offer examples of Bible stories that have helped them understand the school's values as well as giving powerful examples of where these are evident. Pupils cite the story of the paralysed man as showing trust and the feeding of the five thousand as hopeful. They say you can see the values in action in team work in sport and music, with older pupils looking after younger ones and in peers working together in lessons. Recently the school's tag rugby team showed koinonia in action when they were given an award for respectful sportsmanship at a local tournament. They showed good manners whilst competing and insisted on staying to congratulate the winners. They took pleasure in other teams' success. Positive behaviour and supportive relationships in worship are characteristic of the rest of school life. Despite its small size and limited space, the school offers a broad and rich curriculum, fully utilising the local environment. Pupils are challenged to use the skills they learn within the classroom beyond it; both for their own personal growth but also to support and engage with the community. Pupils have a little understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world-wide faith based on knowledge of charitable work in Africa. When asked about world faiths they describe similarities between them rather than the differences. They are tolerant and respectful of different opinions, beliefs and cultures.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The school's Christian value of koinonia is lived out in daily worship. All who participate are engaged through inspiring songs, music, drama, personal reflection and interactive responses. Staff comment that these responses often make them reflect on their own beliefs and feelings. Biblical material is used to very good effect to help pupils understand difficult concepts, situations and emotions. This is reflected in the striking emotional maturity of older pupils when discussing their different beliefs. Whether pupils have a Christian faith, another belief or none they feel included by worship sessions and say they are inspired to be, 'a better person'. Regular exploration of the school's specific Christian values gives pupils the opportunity to relate them to their own lives. A carefully planned rolling programme of worship themes leaves space to respond to local and national events whilst at the same time enabling a thorough understanding of key Christian festivals and the church calendar. Pupils understand the importance of Jesus in worship and as a model for life. 'We forgive because Jesus does', they explain. Pupils have had in-depth opportunities to explore and find their own images of the Christian concept of the trinity. They explain it in a variety of ways from roots, tree and branches to seed, fruit and skin of an apple. Pupil worship leaders have begun to develop an understanding of common forms of Christian worship which they explain as, 'gathering, engaging, responding and sending'. They use the term 'liturgy' to describe the special words they usually say when lighting the candle. The youth and families minister and representatives of other local churches in the Open the Book team take a regular and active role in the school's programme of worship. Currently, although pupils have the opportunity to explore the sacraments of baptism and marriage as part of their studies in RE, they have not experienced the Eucharist in worship. Pupils are confident worship leaders as a result of regular opportunities to deliver elements of daily worship and occasional special services. These opportunities are mostly planned and overseen by adults and pupils are now keen to participate more fully and plan for themselves. Recognising that its evaluation of worship focused on content rather than impact, the school have introduced the idea of different sacred pathways to God. This is a significant development since the last inspection. At an early stage of development it is none the less further evidence of the school's very specific focus on the individual and different needs of each child. Pupils have regular opportunities to pray throughout the day and understand that prayer can have different purposes. 'You can get rid

of your guilt by offering it to God', explained one pupil. Older pupils sensitively guide younger ones in spontaneous prayer following their teachers' example.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Standards in RE are at least in line with national and are high in terms of expectations of pupils' thought and understanding, regardless of their ability to record this. Sensitive adult support enables pupils with special educational needs to show their often powerful ideas and creativity. Monitoring shows teaching is at least good with increasing elements of exceptional practice. Moderation of standards in RE with other local church schools confirms this. Teaching and learning in RE is given a very high profile by the effective, shared leadership of the headteacher and lead teacher and is closely linked to pupils' spiritual development. Evidence of outcomes is collected informally as well as formally in books. A scrapbook about cross-curricular work that includes RE states, 'We are learning and growing as spiritual learners.' Pupils' responses to RE are very positive. One pupil evaluation states, 'I like RE because it's sort of a time to let go of the troubles in your mind.' The RE curriculum is varied and engaging by giving pupils different activities and ways to respond. In order to make learning enthralling, good use is made of trips to 'places of wonder' like Exeter Cathedral and also the allotment and fire pit closer to home. Teaching is particularly effective in making links between religious beliefs and real life such as asking pupils why they should care about the environment. One pupil responded: 'They are part of creation with us. We should be treating them like we want to be treated.' Learning about the major world faiths enables pupils to make comparisons with knowledge and insight. Challenging concepts like symbolism are made accessible to all pupils by relating them to easily understandable ideas like colour. As a result, pupils display impressive emotional literacy using adjectives such as, 'devastated, lonely, confused, vulnerable, puzzled, alone and sorrowful' to describe how the disciples felt at Pentecost after Jesus had left them. The school has successfully developed teaching and learning from the last inspection by introducing Understanding Christianity. This is part of a carefully planned spiral curriculum, revisiting topics in increasing depth across the age range. Staff have also reviewed and changed assessment. Now, very detailed assessment of progress in understanding and development of subject specific skills in RE enables teachers to plan for individual needs. Pupils assess how well they have met the learning objective. Then they have an interactive written dialogue with their teacher, responding to aspects of their work in which they have excelled or which need improving. The support of the youth minister in tackling some more challenging or sensitive subjects, such as bereavement, enables pupils to make even greater progress. This fully addresses the point for development from the last inspection.

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

Otterton's Christian vision is inspired by Teresa de Avila's poem 'Christ has no body but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours.' The idea of being the 'body of Christ' on earth is credited by staff and governors as being central to everything the school does. This results in the determination to meet the needs of every child and to reach out to the local community to make a measurable difference. This was expressed by a governor as the desire to 'turn the school inside out' in order to make the impact it has on pupils' holistic development more visible. The continued commitment to small class sizes is now enabling the majority of pupils to make good progress. The strength of the school's relationships is also evidenced in how effectively staff work with external agencies to support and enable children with significant educational needs to make progress. An established cycle of monitoring and evaluation gathers information from all stake-holders which the skilled and well-informed governing board use to significantly improve the effectiveness of the federation as a whole and each school individually. Whilst the practice of self-evaluation is strong, monitoring documents and action plans do not always describe the impact of the school's Christian vision on all areas for development. The curriculum is deliberately planned to enrich and broaden children's learning and life experiences with the intention that this will lead to their spiritual and personal development. Governors are active in planning for the long-term future of the school by working closely with the diocese to develop wider partnerships with local church schools. They have also ensured that training relevant to leading a church school has been accessed leading to the improvements in RE since the last inspection. Both RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements. After some unavoidable staffing changes, governors and leaders have worked hard to make communication with parents effective and have built a mutually trusting relationship. Parents are clear about choosing the school for its Christian ethos and ability to enable each pupil to develop as an individual. They credit improved relationships between siblings at home and their children's curiosity and motivation to learn to the school's deeply held values. The physical proximity to the church building is echoed by the closeness of the mutually beneficial relationship with the clergy and congregation. Parents comment on how being made to feel very welcome at school services in church has led them to attend other family services. The benefice has invested in a youth and families minister to support several schools with the result that he makes a significant contribution to worship, RE and pastoral support at Otterton.