

# Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

## Totnes St John's Church of England VC Primary School

**Address** Pathfields, Bridgetown, Totnes, United Kingdom, TQ9 5TZ

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

**Overall grade** **Good**

**The impact of collective worship** **Good**

### School's vision

'Spurring each other with the courage to make a positive difference to ourselves and others.' 'And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.' Hebrews 10:24-25

### Key findings

- The vision has inspired leaders to adopt an ambitious curriculum which is transforming learning. The curriculum significantly enriches character development and pupils' progress, so they have the skills to become flourishing lifelong learners. At present, pupils' knowledge of global communities, deprivation and exploitation of the natural world is less well developed.
- Leaders at all levels, including governors, are completely dedicated to meeting the needs of all pupils. The school has made rapid progress in recent years, rejuvenating its Christian distinctiveness so that pupils' behaviour is of a very high standard.
- The vision informs partnerships, with Academies for Character and Excellence (trust), the Church and Diocese which enhances the school's provision. The relationship with the community is impressive, where it raises hope and nurtures all.
- Collective worship is central in the daily life of the school, it is invitational and inclusive. It deepens pupils' understanding of what the vision looks like in daily life and its relevance for them. Pupils though do not have opportunities to plan and lead worship independently.
- The importance of religious education (RE) is rising, driven by enthusiastic leaders introducing new initiatives which stimulates pupils' interest. Pupils find it difficult to articulate their thinking and use religious vocabulary in order to share their opinions.

### Areas for development

- Enable pupils to engage in the planning, leading and evaluation of collective worship so they feel that they have greater responsibility and ownership in ways which lead to improving practice.
- Extend pupils' understanding of religious language and vocabulary so they are more confident to articulate their thinking when responding to questions in RE.

- Extend pupils' knowledge of global communities, deprivation and exploitation of the natural world. This will enable them to raise awareness of these for others and have opportunities to become agents for change.

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

Totnes Saint John has made impressive progress in enhancing its Christian distinctiveness and quality of education. Fundamental to this was establishing a Christian vision, shaped by staff, families and pupils. Pupils have real ownership of the vision and understand its significance. Leaders show a growing understanding of the theological principles underpinning the vision. They talk about all being special to God, made in his image. Leaders see it as their responsibility to grow the talents that each pupil has. Pupils talk knowledgeably about the vision and how it inspires them to do their best. Through associated Christian values pupils understand what the vision looks like in daily life, explaining its significance for them.

There are examples of excellent practice. One of these is the high quality of dedicated leadership that uses the vision to inform bold decisions which lead to improvements. Leaders have transformed the culture within the school and pupils' beliefs in their own ability, giving them hope for the future. The distinct Christian vision shapes the school's developments and the importance of being a Church school. Local governors make a significant difference to the school's work. The high quality of their insights and evaluations are very valuable, shaping the school's strategic direction and subsequent training. This systematic monitoring of the impact the vision has on school life consistently leads to improvements. A strong staff team see their role as living out the vision through their care, being the 'chief cheerleader' for every pupil.

The vision of enabling pupils to make a positive difference for themselves and to flourish drives leaders to establish an impressive, ambitious curriculum, which inspires learning. An essential element is the highly effective way pupils' character is developed. This is creatively woven throughout learning. Pupils are immersed in a culture where there are consistently high aspirations leading them to have a 'can do' approach. They work collaboratively and see this as a natural part of learning. Pupils' self-belief in their potential is enhanced by developing their talents in various areas. They talk about being the best person they can be, the best work and take pride and responsibility for their learning. Pupils use the language of resilience and how this helps them when they find learning challenging. They develop skills which help them to learn and are transferring these to new experiences, becoming lifelong learners. The curriculum has rejuvenated pupils' enjoyment of learning. Pupils' attitudes to healthy eating are revolutionized through the Food for Life project, which won a prestigious national award. This leads to sharing these ideas with local families and changing attitudes.

Spurring one another on to achieve their potential is reflected in the provision for vulnerable pupils. Staff ensure that pupils' precise needs are identified and actions put in place to enable them to flourish. Extensive pastoral provision throughout the day ensures pupils are ready for learning, feeling valued. This provision is of high quality. Spirituality now has greater importance. In each year group planned experiences are built upon, deepening pupils' understanding. Pupils value times to reflect, they say it helps them to think about learning and their actions. They are expressing their ideas through art and poetry showing deeper insights.

The vision of encouraging others and making a difference for them informs the school's relationships. Influential partnerships accelerate the school's progress. An example of this was adopting the trust's exciting curriculum. Skilled advisers support new initiatives and enhance evaluations. The church school leader for the trust plays a major role in raising the importance of RE. Subject leaders work with others in trust schools, sharing good practice. The trust enables staff to take further leadership roles, growing their potential. Relationships with the Church are strong, where they support governance and lead worship through the popular 'Open the Book' team. The Diocese supports through focused training. For instance, in implementing 'Understanding Christianity', an RE resource, which deepens staff and pupils' knowledge of Christianity.

The school's work in the community is paramount as a way of making a difference for others. The school supports families in a variety of ways, where the pastoral team's care makes a real difference. Pupils are active in the community, raising awareness of environmental issues, leading to greater recycling. After learning about pollination they gave away plants, seeds of hope, as a way of showing how all can care for God's world.

Spurring one another on and being courageous agents for change, stems from the vision. This understanding has transformed pupils' behaviour. They make good relationships, treating one another with dignity and respect, recognising differences and celebrating diversity. Pupils confidently challenge stereo-types and speak out to put injustices right. Pupils thrive as a result of the opportunities to develop leadership skills. The community understands forgiveness and demonstrates this daily. Some pupils become independent courageous advocates for change, raising awareness of the food bank and local homeless, enriching their understanding of disadvantage.

During the pandemic the school's work is a shining example of making a difference for others. Collective worship and learning continued online with regular contact with families, so all feel valued. The school provided food parcels with online cookery lessons supporting families. Mental health was prioritised, enabling pupils to smoothly return to classrooms.

The RE subject leader is enthusiastic, nurturing staff well, sharing good practice, raising knowledge and confidence. New initiatives include a more detailed assessment system which tracks pupils' progress and identifies who needs further support. RE leaders within the trust have agreed what progression looks like in key religious concepts across each year group. This enables pupils to deepen their understanding of their significance. Pupils are challenged by big questions of meaning and purpose which extends their understanding. RE is seen as a safe space to refine ideas. However, pupils sometimes find it difficult to articulate their thinking and use subject specific language accurately. They are keen to explore other world faiths and view-points to see how belief influences actions. As a result a majority of pupils feel that RE has a relevance for their daily thinking.

Collective worship plays a central role in the life of the school, it is invitational and inclusive. Planning is secure and enhances pupils' understanding of Christian values and how they support character development. Collective worship helps pupils to gain a better understanding of the vision and its relevance for them. Some pupils contribute to reading prayers in worship, although they do not contribute to planning and leading worship. Pupils celebrate the main Christian festivals in church and their awareness of others is slowly growing. They demonstrate an age appropriate understanding of the Christian belief of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Some pupils value prayer as a way of sharing ideas with God. Evaluations by pupils and governors continue to raise the impact of worship. Changes have led to a greater emphasis on visual elements and more contemporary worship songs. The collective worship leader has undertaken further training and this is beginning to be shared with other staff. Most pupils find worship helpful as a time to be still.

### Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	16 June 2022	URN	146534
Date of previous inspection	23 March 2015		
School status	VC	NOR	146
Name of Multi Academy Trust or Federation	ACE MAT		
Diocese or Methodist Circuit	Exeter		
Headteacher	William Jaworski		
Proportion of pupils deemed to be disadvantaged	Above National Average		
Proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Above National Average		
Additional significant information (if needed)			

Inspector's name	David Hatrey	No.	0844
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