

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Thomas' Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Meadow View Road
Kilnhurst
Rotherham
South Yorkshire
S64 5UA

Diocese: Sheffield

Local authority: Rotherham

Dates of inspection: 5th October 2010

Date of last inspection: 9th April 2008

School's unique reference number: 106928

Head teacher: Mrs Gillian Ramsay

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Louise Patterson (310)

School context

St. Thomas' Kilnhurst is a slightly smaller than average primary school where almost all pupils are from a white British background. Both the number of pupils eligible for free school meals and the number with special educational needs are considerably above average. The school has the advantage of good outdoor space and a large hall with separate dining facilities. Eco-schools status, Healthy Schools status and the Active Gold award have all been achieved by the school recently.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. Thomas' Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school is good.

Christian values underpin all aspects and dimensions of the life and work of this very good Anglican church school. This is evidenced in the importance placed on each individual child and their spiritual and moral development. The school is very effective at meeting the social and emotional needs of everyone involved in the school. The vast majority of pupils demonstrate considerable empathy and care for those around them. Children are generally confident, happy and enjoy the wide range of curricular opportunities available to them.

Established strengths

- An outstandingly caring Christian environment for all those involved in the everyday life of the school, which is having a significant impact on learners.
- Relationships between staff and learners, among learners, between staff and the wider community and church are excellent.
- Good quality collective worship which impacts positively on the Christian distinctiveness of the school.

Focus for development

- Develop a secure system for staff, governors and pupils to evaluate and monitor the Christian distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school as a church school.
- Include in the prospectus a celebration of the nature of St. Thomas' as a very good church school, including the high quality collective worship.
- Develop strategies for more formal assessment of the impact of collective worship, involving all stakeholders.

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

Christian values have a very positive impact on all members of this close community. Adults consistently encourage and nourish the spiritual and moral development of learners to very good effect. They are providing pupils with very positive role models. This very positive input is resulting in pupils who understand their responsibilities towards the needs of others within the school, locally and globally. Relationships in the wider community and with parents are excellent. Parents commented 'school is there when you need help inside', 'it's lovely – there is joy here' and 'they are happy to go the extra mile'. There is a very positive relationship with Uganda with the school sponsoring two children and visits from a choir. The vast majority of learners say that they enjoy being at school and said that they are always listened to and that their views and opinions are valued and acted upon. Staff and pupils demonstrate a very high degree of care for and consideration towards each other. Pupils enthusiastically take opportunities offered to them to talk through and reflect on a range of issues both religious and secular. Pupils know what CE means and can articulate what it means in terms of prayer, worship and 'us being a family'. They have a range of opportunities to develop their leadership and citizenship skills through an effective School Council, a range of clubs, duties in collective worship in school and church.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.

Worship occupies an important place in the life of the school, providing some effective opportunities for pupils to further their spiritual development through listening, song, prayer and reflection. Pupils mostly speak positively about worship and when asked if the school would be a better or worse place without it, there was some considerable shock and they said 'it is far too good to lose'. They also said they like 'special moments to think' within worship. Children react very well to liturgical responses and join with confidence. There is a degree of respect and reverence demonstrated during times of prayer and reflection, which are both regular and effective elements of worship. Prayer is a strong feature of the school, with pupils clearly enjoying joining in with the Lords' Prayer and writing their own prayers for the regular successful events undertaken in church. Though it is very early in the year, even the youngest pupils have a positive view of worship and what it means. Visitors are appreciated and make positive contributions to the enjoyment and messages in the worship. Planning of themes is undertaken in conjunction with local clergy. Though older pupils are involved in the delivery of worship on a rota, they could be more involved in the planning stages. Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship is currently informal.

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

The leadership provided by the head teacher and governors contributes significantly to the success of this very good church controlled school. Staff feel valued and appreciated and there is an excellent supportive team spirit. The school is providing a very warm, welcoming and caring environment inspired by Christian values. Parents are generally very positive about the school but speak particularly highly of the ethos and the quality of relationships. They appreciate the 'open door' policy and say that they are generally kept well informed. Several parents commented about the commitment of the head teacher and staff to the needs of their children. There are very strong and productive links with the local parish with effective contacts both formal and informal. This includes regular visits to the church for both services and curricular input and the local vicar is a familiar figure in school. Governors are regular visitors to the school and are very supportive of the school. They provide the head teacher with appropriate guidance. There needs to be a more formal evaluation of the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the church school dimension.