

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Thomas Cantilupe Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School	
Coningsby Street Hereford HR1 2DY	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Hereford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Date of academy conversion	1 January 2014
Name of multi-academy trust	Bishop Anthony Educational Trust
Date/s of inspection	12 October 2017
Date of last inspection	14 November 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy (former VA) 8842002
Headteacher	Pippa Lloyd
Inspector's name and number	Karen Surrall 842

School context

St Thomas Cantilupe lies in the centre of the city of Hereford; one of 11 Academies which are part of the Bishop Anthony Educational Trust. It has 245 pupils on roll ranging from 2 – 11 years of age. The school has a diverse population with an above average number of children who have English as an additional language (EAL). Many of the children come from challenging social backgrounds with above the national average of pupils coming from a disadvantaged background and who are in receipt of free school meals. The number of pupils who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is above the national average. In September 2017 there were 6 new members of teaching staff, including two assistant headteachers.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Thomas Cantilupe CE Academy as a Church of England school are good.

- This is an effective church school that has, despite some very challenging circumstances, made much progress over the last three years. It has a clear vision for the path ahead and is uncompromising in its determination to give the children who attend the school the very best education possible.
- All leaders in the school readily articulate and promote a vision rooted in Christian values.
- This is a school that knows its children well. It cherishes them and provides a safe learning environment because it sees its role to nurture the whole child as a child of God.
- The vision and determination of the headteacher, who has high aspirations for all pupils whatever their starting points, is a strength of the school.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that teaching in religious education (RE) allows all pupils, particularly the more able children, to work at greater depth. This is so that they can apply a wide range of skills to enable them to demonstrate their understanding of the impact of religion on people's beliefs.
- Embed the school's understanding of spirituality so that staff plan high quality learning experiences that enable all pupils to articulate their own spiritual journey.
- Make the planning for worship more detailed so that the themes inspire a high level of spiritual and moral reflection.

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

'A Christian Education – Life Lasting and Life Enhancing' underpins all aspects of the work at St Thomas Cantilupe. The headteacher is relentless in raising expectations for all children and speaks eloquently about 'breaking through a glass ceiling of underperformance and expectation'. As a result, teaching and learning are improving and standards of attainment are rising rapidly. This vision is understood by governors and staff to be directly linked to the school's distinctive Christian character.

The school has recently developed six core Christian values which are explicitly linked, on the school website and around the school, to relevant Bible verses. Children, leaders and staff readily acknowledge the Christian foundation of these values and how they are relevant to life in school and at home. However, parents show less understanding of the values, regarding them as having a strong moral purpose rather than linked to the school's Christian character. Leaders and staff are united in their determination to 'instil the values' in all the children so that they are prepared for their future lives. This results in a school where the Christian values are woven into many aspects of school life so that children are able to 'dream big and aspire'. The school has yet to consistently identify how values can be linked to learning across the curriculum, including in RE.

The school recognises the level of support that many children and families require and sees the pastoral work of the wellbeing coordinator as a direct result of its distinctive Christian character. They provide particularly well for children and families who have additional needs. This is particularly true for those pupils in receipt of the pupil premium monies and for those who have SEND. The use of a worry box, riding for the disabled, music therapy and talk for writing are just a few examples of how staff meticulously support different groups of pupils including those with EAL.

Attendance at the school is good because the school is relentless in making its expectations clear. Exclusions at the school are rare because the school cares deeply about the whole child and not just their behaviour or academic achievement. Learners behave well because they feel safe and cherished, knowing that their teachers really care for them. This is exemplified in the school's approach to behaviour management through restorative justice so that all pupils know that they are listened to and cared for. 'We know that it is important to put things right', explained a child in Year 4. This is recognised by most stakeholders to be a practical outworking of the school's Christian character. All stakeholders attribute the caring atmosphere to the church school ethos.

The contribution of the school's Christian values and distinctive Christian character contributes well to the spiritual, moral, social and moral (SMSC) development of learners. Staff at the school have recently explored the concept of spirituality. They have developed a clear definition of spirituality but the impact of this on learners is limited because well thought out experiences are not yet routinely identified in planning across the curriculum. This results in a piecemeal approach and doesn't enable learners to develop their own spiritual journey.

RE contributes well to the Christian character of the school and to the SMSC development of all learners. Pupils have a growing understanding of diversity and difference and the children understand the need to show respect for everybody.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is at the centre of the school's work and is greatly valued by all stakeholders. Learners contribute confidently and sensitively to prayers in worship and use prayer regularly at home. Pupils of all ages can readily articulate how worship time helps them to reflect on the school's values and how these make a significant difference to their learning and at home. 'The values are really important at home, because they help me play with my brother better', explained a child in Y5. Pupils enjoy worship times because it is fully inclusive, engages all learners and inspires them to take action in their own lives. For example, in the worship seen on the day of the inspection, children shared how they used the current value of responsibility at home, including looking after pets and tidying bedrooms.

The school has strong links with two local churches and there are mutual benefits for both. The children have prepared thought provoking displays and workshops for both Easter and Pentecost which were used by the churches in their worship. Worship times are rooted in the school's Christian values and exemplified using the life of Jesus and Bible stories. Older children are very appreciative of the reflective time spent together each morning, frequently planning and leading worship times. They are very able to describe the expected elements of a worship times, including giving and receiving the Peace and using Bible stories, particularly those about Jesus. The recently formed worship committee is comprised of children of all ages and has had an immediate impact. For example, children now write deeply moving prayers which are used in worship time. The weekly songs of praise centres around songs and hymns chosen by pupils.

A recent workshop for children to learn about the Trinity has left the children with powerful images to describe this Christian mystery, which they do with impressive understanding. There are many aspects of Anglican worship

woven through the collective worship time, although learners are unsure about the different coloured cloths used to represent the liturgical year.

The school takes part in fund raising through a local charity 'United Purpose'. This is developing the children's awareness as to how they can help and understand other communities around the world. The older children have recently raised funds through a variety of events to create a climbing wall in memory of Alfie, a former pupil of the school.

Monitoring of the worship time by the governors, staff and children has led to many changes. Formal monitoring is at early stage because the impact of monitoring is not always followed up so it is difficult for the school to see changes as part of a strengthening of practice over time.

Prayer and reflection are at the heart of the daily life of the school. There are well used prayer spaces in each classroom and there are times of reflection at the beginning and end of every day. Children are expected to 'check in and check out' each day. This gives them time to reflect on their mood on entering the classroom and to reassess how their actions have changed attitudes to their behaviour and learning. The children value this greatly.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The majority of teaching in religious education (RE) is good and children generally say that they enjoy their lessons. Expectations for the quality and quantity of work produced in RE has been raised so that progress for learners is much improved. The recent introduction of a single writing book for all subjects, including RE, is encouraging children to write lengthier and more thoughtful pieces of work. These, together with the RE Big Books in each class, are beginning to show some higher order thinking skills. However, this is not yet established enough across the school to enable all learners, particularly the more able, to apply their knowledge with an appropriate level of skill. As a result, there is not enough evidence of learners understanding the links between their learning in RE and the school's Christian values.

There is an engaging curriculum for RE, which enables the children to use a range of activities such as art and drama to explore and learn about different faiths and religions. RE makes a good contribution to pupils' SMSC development. Standards of achievement for all pupils are in line with national expectations. Training for staff around the Understanding Christianity project has already taken place. This is enabling staff to encourage learners to think about the Christian faith and other aspects of RE in more depth. Teaching about other faiths is in line with the locally agreed syllabus. The new RE lead is looking for ways to make the customs and practices of these faiths more accessible to learners.

The assessment procedures put in place since the last inspection have enabled all teachers to track and monitor the teaching and learning and to show the progress of pupils. However, there has been no external moderation of RE to confirm the school's judgements. The new RE lead has had good support from the headteacher so that she is able to talk with confidence and enthusiasm about the next steps for RE at St Thomas Cantilupe.

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

This is a school that knows its children well and values them as all are loved by God. All leaders have a clear vision for the school that is effectively communicated to children and staff. Consequently, the school provides a safe learning environment because it sees its role to nurture the whole child. The six new members of staff have quickly absorbed this Christian ethos and are rising to the challenge so that aspirations and expectations for all groups of learners are rising. New staff appointed to senior leadership roles are being well-prepared to support the headteacher in her drive to raise standards and to provide a 'life enhancing and life lasting' education for all pupils.

Senior leaders and governors have a good understanding of the school's distinctive Christian character. However, self-evaluation is not sharply focused enough at present to allow the impact of monitoring to be clearly identified.

The local clergy are frequent visitors to the school and this has resulted in a close working partnership which has benefited both pupils and the wider community. St Thomas Cantilupe was chosen to feature in a diocesan video 'Reach Out' to promote the work of the diocese in church schools

The school is part of the Bishop Anthony Educational Trust (BAET) and St Thomas Cantilupe is increasingly supporting aspects of work in other academies in the trust. The academy takes part in joint curriculum activities such as sending a choir to sing with other academies at a BAET concert. These experiences are widening the children's horizons so that they are beginning to see themselves as part of a much bigger picture. The trust has provided practical and emotional support to the school throughout a long and difficult period so that the headteacher and staff can concentrate on fulfilling the Christian vision and raising standards for all groups of pupils.

Both RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements. This is good church school with an explicit Christian vision that makes a real difference to the community it serves.