



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### St Thomas' Church of England VC Primary

Meadow View Road, Kilnhurst  
Rotherham, South Yorkshire, S64 5UA

**Previous SIAMS grade:** Good

**Current inspection grade:** Good

#### Diocese: Sheffield

Local authority: Rotherham

Dates of inspection: 22 October 2015

Date of last inspection: 5 October 2010

School's unique reference number: 106928

Headteacher: Claire Garbutt

Executive Headteacher: Mark Wheeler

Inspector's name and number: David Shannon 617

#### School context

Since June 2014, St Thomas' has been in a collaboration of three church schools. The headteacher of Thrybergh Fullerton is the Executive headteacher; Claire Garbutt has been head of school at St Thomas' since September 2015. St Thomas' is smaller than average, with mainly white British pupils. Numbers attracting the pupil premium and requiring school support are above average. There is an adjoining pre-school facility, under separate control. There have been significant changes in staffing, roles and administrative systems since the establishing of the collaboration and the school is now full.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Thomas' as a Church of England school are good.

- The Christian ethos is apparent in displays and artefacts throughout the school, from the moment you enter. It also is apparent on the school's website.
- Strong relationships at all levels are based on the teaching of Jesus, and exemplified by all adults loving those in their care. Children respond by being open about their lives and honest in their discussion of matters of faith
- School leaders work well together, providing role models for staff and children to follow, establishing clear goals and routes to achieve them

#### Areas to improve

- Further improve the school's impact upon pupil learning, so that all year groups reach their full potential as children of God
- Increase the scope and variety of collective worship, building on the strong pupil support it enjoys
- Develop the roles of school governors to evaluate formally collective worship, so that they are fully involved in taking forward the worship programme.

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

The Christian distinctiveness of St Thomas' is ably portrayed by its positive and productive relationships between all members of the school. Pupils, staff, parents and carers work together to bring about real change, starting with each child, one at a time. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all learners is underpinned by the teaching of Jesus, so that all practise key Christian concepts such as forgiveness, compassion, fairness and reconciliation. Pupils are beginning to understand the diverse nature of communities, so that they show tolerance to those whose culture and beliefs are different from their own, accepting diversity as a gift from God. Pupils start school with prior learning levels below, and sometimes significantly below, national averages. The nurture they receive, backed up by good teaching, moves them up to, or beyond, national averages by the end of year six. Pupils make good progress at the Foundation Stage, by readily accepting the school's emphasis upon high attendance, Christ-like behaviour and perseverance. Learners are beginning to understand the world wide church, its contrasts and shared values, so that they show great interest in different approaches to Christian worship. Religious Education contributes strongly to their knowledge base, helping them to reflect on "big questions" through a stimulating curriculum. Thus older pupils talk confidently about healthy bodies, climate change and the use of fossil fuels, and put their learning into action by choosing to walk to school. The school council, complete with the school's first head boy and head girl, are active in improving the site through gardening club and ecology group, seeing themselves as stewards in God's creation. They can make contrasts between their community and the experiences of children in Uganda, where they sponsor two pupils, as part of God's global family. This school is an improving school, seeking to raise standards of attainment and comprehension, so that outstanding will become the norm in all aspects of school.

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

Learners readily engage with collective worship and can give examples of where it has influenced their thoughts and actions. The collective worship is distinctively Christian, using a variety of leaders including members of the local church, the pupils themselves and special speakers. Worship incorporates responsorial greetings, so that Anglican liturgy is understood, and visits to St Thomas's church for festivals establish a further link between church and the school community. The incumbent is appreciated as a sure source of anecdotes, often prompting discussion in RE lessons. Pupils readily talk about their own faith journeys, sharing both beliefs and doubts with a developing grasp of how the Bible can help in guiding that journey. They understand the centrality of prayer, and use prayer corners and the prayer box to contribute their own prayers, or prayer requests for the worship leaders to express, including both major and mundane concerns. Through collective worship they are learning of Bible characters, such as Joseph, Moses, the good Samaritan and Zacchaeus, and can place people in the correct Testament with some certainty. Older pupils can talk through the concept of the Trinity. A mural in the hall, made up of children's hands, promotes a strong sense of community, as well as the truth that "We are all God's masterpiece". Another display explains Christian values through photos of pupils acting out these values, for example by helping serve a lunch to senior citizens. The views of the whole school were sought in a questionnaire about collective worship, leading to a clear plan to develop a wider range of worship leaders, and to expand the number of prayers with which children are familiar. There are plans to involve governors more formally in evaluating the impact of these changes, ensuring collective worship remains a central part of the life of the school.

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

The leadership team is very committed to the rapid improvement of the school, through

renewing its vibrancy as a church school. Hence the vision articulated by the school leaders is a distinctively Christian one, based on love, patience and “standing fast”. The priorities are clearly identified in the school’s literature and featured on an impressive website which testifies to St Thomas’ as a dynamic church school. All staff articulate the same priorities, such as the need to promote holistic learning, embracing both spiritual and scholarly improvement. All staff value growing as a Christian community together, evaluating the impact of developments, planning together and demonstrating a determination to leave no child behind. Staff training builds on strengths the school possesses, allowing no one’s talents to be unused, for example recruiting a RE specialist to lead the delivery of the subject across the whole curriculum. Hence staff are being well trained in the distinctive leadership required in a church school, so as to prepare them for greater responsibilities in the future. All staff show a determination to improve, and to use the Christian ethos as a way to promote perseverance and strategies for overcoming challenges, so that exciting progress is apparent in the middle years. The collaboration with the other church schools is proving most effective in making St Thomas’ both a supplier and recipient of good practice, particularly in the specialist areas of challenging behaviour and meeting specific educational need. Governors are increasingly actively involved through the collaboration, with a joint governors’ committee, evaluating what works well for each school. Governors have had some involvement in developing new ways of assessing pupils’ progress and are anxious to evaluate this, particularly in RE, as changes are rolled out. Foundation governors hold key roles and carry them out to build improvement throughout the school, with a clear vision of the steps needed for further success. The incumbent of St Thomas is chairman of governors, and a potent link between the school and its church community. The action points from the last SIAS inspection have been included in school planning, so that structures exist to ensure on-going improvement as a church school. Parents are highly supportive of the school, being represented on the staff, on a Parents Committee for the Christmas and summer fairs, through sharing collective worship and assisting with the gardening and eco clubs. All statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are fully met. St Thomas’ is a safe, hard-working and improving place for learners and adults, exemplifying how faith in action can have a transforming power in a community.

SIAMS report October 2015 St Thomas’ CE V Controlled Primary School Kilnhurst S64 5UA