

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

### Tolleshunt D’Arcy St Nicholas Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary

Tollesbury Road  
Tolleshunt D’Arcy  
Maldon  
Essex CM9 8UB

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Chelmsford</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Essex
Date of inspection	8 November 2016
Date of last inspection	December 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 115187
Interim Headteacher	Janet Tringham
Inspector’s name and number	Gillian Holmes 849

#### School context

Tolleshunt D’Arcy St Nicholas primary school serves four rural villages and has close links with the parish church of St Nicholas. The school has experienced a year of significant changes with difficulties recruiting staff. The school is now being led by an interim headteacher. The school is currently functioning at a little under a third of its capacity with pupils taught in three mixed-age classes. An independent pre-school operates on the premises.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Tolleshunt D’Arcy St Nicholas as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- The interim headteacher has competently implemented a range of initiatives and changes. These are beginning to benefit all pupils.
- Staff and governors are supporting the interim head teacher well and together are working effectively to ensure improvement.

#### Areas to improve

- Ensure all staff have a comprehensive induction programme that includes expectations for supporting the development of the Christian distinctiveness
- Take every opportunity to use the Bible to illustrate and underpin the school values.
- Increase pupils’ participation in worship by giving them opportunities to plan, lead and evaluate collective worship.
- Systematically plan opportunities to develop pupils’ social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) understanding throughout the curriculum.
- Use assessment effectively to raise standards in RE.

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

The interim headteacher has ensured that the school's values are made explicit through all aspects of school life. The values, however, do not have firm foundations in biblical teaching and Christian practice. This means that their contribution to developing the school's Christian distinctiveness is limited. The values do support the development of moral, social and cultural understanding, though opportunities for spiritual development are not always clearly explained. Behaviour across the school is generally good but a few pupils have challenging behaviour. Planned strategies and individual programmes have been put in place to support these pupils based on the school values. Exclusions have been used appropriately to ensure health and safety within the school community. Pastoral care for pupils is a high priority and pupils' individual needs are now being met and the relationships between staff and pupils are good. Attendance for the majority of pupils is good and they enjoy coming to school. Bullying incidents are rare and are dealt with effectively. The instability caused by staffing issues and a high percentage of pupils with specific educational needs contributed to attainment for pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2 last year being below national expectations. There are clear strategies in place to tackle any underachievement and assessment indicates that pupils this academic year are clearly making expected or better progress. RE and worship are used to develop pupils' understanding of diversity and respect for those of other faiths. The school has retained good links with a school in Kenya. Pupils understand the importance of RE and worship in helping them explore areas of spiritual, moral, social and cultural significance. However, opportunities are not always taken to promote SMSC in all areas of the curriculum. The school values are integral to the worship and RE within the school and are referenced by the staff when focusing on behaviour and attitudes to learning.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory**

Worship takes place daily. Themes are linked appropriately with schools values. These support pupils' moral development well. Pupils behave attentively and enjoy answering questions or being asked to hold up words at the front. However, the impact of worship on the school day or the lives of members of the school community is limited. At present pupils do not have the opportunity to take many responsibilities for aspects of worship. Elements of Anglican worship are well established. A candle is lit to represent Jesus as the light of the world, an opening sentence is used with a response and prayers, including the Lord's Prayer are said. The saying of prayers before lunch and at the end of the school day, along with the prayer tree in at the front of the hall indicates the importance placed on private and corporate prayer. Collective worship sometimes includes Bible stories but pupils do not readily link these with their school values or with their own beliefs and values. Pupils make reference to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit but their understanding is limited. They are able to recall some events from the life of Jesus. Worship is planned by the headteacher and all teachers take the responsibility to lead. The focus this term is the value of 'hope'. Pupils talked of giving hope to less fortunate people through their harvest gifts to the local food bank. The local church of St Nicholas is being used for monthly school services and parents are encouraged to attend. These services have enabled the school to appropriately celebrate harvest and remembrance with the wider community. Currently there is no vicar in the parish but there are firm plans in place for the curate to begin to take worship regularly in school. The curate and another governor have recently begun regular monitoring of worship but no impact is yet evident.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory**

The interim headteacher is now leading RE. Teachers planning has recently improved and teachers are now looking for greater opportunities to make RE exciting and engaging. The aims for the lesson are not consistently made clear to pupils. Lessons also lack challenge. Teachers are beginning to develop pupils' skills of enquiry and reflection and some opportunities are given for pupils to ask 'Big' questions. Teachers plan for opportunities to enhance pupils' SMSC development through their RE lessons. Music and art are well used in RE for pupils to express spiritual understanding. Teaching in RE is now mainly satisfactory with some good lessons. However, standards in RE are mainly below national expectations. Assessment in RE has faltered during the period of staffing instability but is now being reintroduced. The assessment undertaken this term has as yet not made an impact upon standards and is rightly recognised as an area for development. Teaching within RE has the appropriate balance between Christianity and other faiths. In some lessons pupils are excited and engaged but this is not consistent across the school. RE does not use the opportunities provided through the study of Christianity to explain the biblical foundation for the school's values.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is satisfactory**

The school had accurately graded itself as satisfactory. The interim headteacher, who has been in post since September 2016, has worked tirelessly to implement changes to policy and practice. The positive impact of these actions is beginning to be felt throughout the school. She is leading strongly from the front but including governors and staff in discussion and implementation of changes. It is evident that staff and governors are being supported and encouraged to take greater responsibilities in leading the school towards improvement based on its Christian foundation. Induction for new staff now includes a clear focus on the school's developing Christian ethos. The headteacher, acknowledging the importance of RE and worship, has selected to lead these areas. RE now meet statutory requirements. She has accessed support from the Diocese, both for herself and staff and governors. Adults in the school have more awareness of how to develop their school to become more distinctively Christian. It is evident that although the school values are made implicit and explicit in the daily life of the school these values are rarely underpinned with the Christian message. The school has recently extended the links with St Nicholas church and several members of the church are now regular visitors to the school to hear readers. The leadership has improved communication with parents, who are now welcomed into school each Friday to attend celebration worship. Parents are also kept better informed on their child's progress. Parents are encouraged to be fully involved in their child's education through the weekly forum for parents and a parent council. The parents association is active and is working with the school to extend links between the school and the community. The leadership are actively in discussions to secure the school's future sustainability as a church school. The leadership and management of the school are being well supported by both the Diocese and the local authority.

Some work was carried out to address the focus for development from the previous denominational inspection but there has been little sustained improvement in these areas. Both the development of SMSC and the development of assessment for learning in RE are areas for action in the schools post-Ofsted plan and the church school action plan.

SIAMS report (November 2016) Tolleshunt D'Arcy St Nicholas CE (VA) Primary School CM9 8UB.