



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Veryan Church of England Primary School

Veryan, Truro

Cornwall TR2 5QA

Previous SIAMS grade: not previously inspected as an academy

Current SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: Truro

Local authority: N/A

Dates of inspection: 8 July 2016

Date of last inspection: N/A

School's unique reference number: 140469

Executive principal: Mark Lees

Acting head of school: Lisa Michell

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

School context

Veryan is smaller than the average size primary school with 60 children arranged into three class groups. This includes a nursery with 8 children. They come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds from the local community. Nearly all children are from a white British heritage. The number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above the national average as is the number entitled to receive the pupil premium. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. The school converted to academy status in December 2013 when it became a member of a Church of England multi academy trust (MAT) with four other church schools. The MAT is led by an executive principal who joined in September 2015. An acting head of school was in post at the time of the inspection.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Veryan as a Church of England school are good

- With strong support from the MAT, religious education (RE) has a higher profile in the curriculum and children have more positive attitudes towards the subject.
- Children are developing their understanding of the core Christian values as they become more embedded in the life of the school.
- The acting head of school has ensured that the development of the school's Christian ethos has greater emphasis in the life of the school and is rapidly improving.

Areas to improve

- Raise standards in RE by developing opportunities for children to explore religious concepts in greater depth through the use of more challenging questioning.
- Develop a wider range of strategies to assess children's progress in RE and develop systems to record and evaluate evidence of their learning.

- Develop the role of children in leading how opportunities to develop a personal spirituality are explored in collective worship and the wider curriculum, including RE.

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

Following some confusion regarding which values lay at the heart of the vision, the acting headteacher has ensured that from April 2016 the school has adopted the six Christian values that are shared by schools across the MAT. Prior to this the school had a set of well-established values based on biblical teaching and some of these form part of the MAT core values. As the MAT values become familiar to children and adults, so they are becoming more integral to the language of the school community. For example, each class now uses a 'forgiveness pebble' to help them resolve friendship problems and teachers are more frequently using them to talk to children about behaviour issues. They are beginning to be part of the language of the classroom to support children's learning. The rapid improvements in attainment and progress are underpinned by the school's caring pastoral approach to nurturing children. This is reflected in the high quality of relationships that exist between children and adults in the school and the extent to which they look after each other. The school has recently explored its understanding of spirituality and members of staff are beginning to develop their appreciation that this is an aspect of learning that should underpin all areas of the curriculum. Classroom reflective areas give children space to reflect on their attitudes and behaviour and to write prayers that help them deal with issues in the school day. Religious education makes a good contribution to the children's moral and cultural development. They enjoy the opportunities to learn about other faiths saying that it is important to 'respect everyone for who they are' and 'value them for themselves'. Older children in particular appreciate that right and wrong can sometimes be clouded by moral dilemmas that do not have simple answers. They openly articulate how everyone should be treated equally because 'that is how God created us' and that 'He loves us all regardless of who we are'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The school has worked hard since Easter 2016 to make acts of worship more engaging and relevant to children. Collective worship is planned and delivered in a more cohesive way. It is now regularly planned around the core Christian values and its structure places greater emphasis on providing opportunities for children to develop their spirituality through reflection and prayer. A change in the time of worship, from the end of the day to after lunch, has improved the way that children engage in it and view it as a more integral part of the life of the school. Attitudes towards worship have therefore improved and both children and adults feel more positive towards it. For example, children say that time to reflect helps them to think about the Bible stories they hear and how they can try and 'follow their example' in their own lives. Following an evaluation of worship, the school identified the need to involve children more in its planning and delivery. It established a worship team comprised of Year 6 children who take pride in their contribution to worship. This is quite a recent introduction and is still developing. Children in the team say that they particularly value the time to reflect on worship and write their comments in the Golden Book which encourages them to think about how worship messages affect them. The writing of an 'order of service' for the Friday worship in the church by the worship team is an excellent example of their work. It includes a school creed and prayers that follow an Anglican pattern. Children have some understanding of the Trinity but this is an aspect of worship that has not been explored in depth. Children do not yet readily refer to aspects of the Trinity when talking about God. Children have a good understanding of different types of prayer and when they can be used. They are developing their appreciation of the meaning of prayer and its purpose. For example, younger children say that prayer is talking to God to say thank you and to help us be 'good and wise'. Older children explain that prayers 'help to make them feel better' but find it harder to explain how they do that. The school has recently introduced a regular evaluation of collective worship which is completed by members of staff. This is still in its early stages of being used.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

Improvements in RE have put the subject on a much more secure footing. There is a different approach to teaching in RE with greater emphasis on creative ways for children to learn. This involves more challenging opportunities for children to apply what they have learned with greater expectation that they will be engaged in their own learning. Children are responding with more positive attitudes towards the subject and engage in lessons with enthusiasm. Teaching is more dynamic with greater opportunities for children to discuss and explore questions. The quality of the questions that challenge the children's understanding of religious concepts is developing but has not yet fully realised its potential to make a greater impact on standards. Teachers deliver RE with confidence and encourage children to think about their responses. A recent review of the scheme of work for RE identified inconsistencies in its delivery particularly with regard to teaching children about religions other than Christianity. These have been addressed and coverage now meets the requirements of the syllabus and the entitlement to RE issued by the Education Office of the Church of England. They have yet to be implemented. With the very effective support of the MAT 'RE Champion', the school is in the process of introducing a new assessment programme that reflects changes in the approach to assessment in the national curriculum. This is still at an early stage and the use of high quality evidence from children's comments and responses has not yet been fully integrated into the assessment process. The school has very recently begun to experiment with the involvement of children as 'Spiritual Searchers' to capture moments in learning that reflect spirituality. Again, the potential for these has yet to be fully explored across the school, and the wider curriculum.

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

The impact of the acting head of school in developing the school's Christian ethos is testament to one of the strengths of the MAT. Her secondment from another school in the MAT is a reflection of the way that the executive principal has brought greater cohesion by using strengths to support other schools. Since her appointment in Easter 2016, the acting head of school has put in place measures that are securing a rapid improvement in the impact of the Christian ethos on the children's learning and personal development. With the support of the diocese working closely with the school, areas for concern were quickly identified and actions put in place to raise the quality of academic achievement and place explicit values more firmly at the centre of the school's vision. The work of the MAT's 'RE Champion' in this process has been invaluable. It is through this collective responsibility, using strengths across the MAT, that the school has been enabled to make such good progress in a short space of time. Governors fully support the work of the school and have been committed to the recent actions to bring about improvements. Members of staff likewise have embraced the opportunities brought by the acting head of school to develop their effectiveness in teaching and this has made an impact on the quality and approach to RE. Together, leaders and managers have a very clear grasp of the school's strengths and areas to improve as a church school with self-evaluation being realistic and thorough. Links with the nearby church are very close and children, and their parents, regard the church as an integral part of the life of the school. The weekly celebration of collective worship in the church, led monthly by the 'Open the Book' team, is a good example of the support from church members to the school community. The role of the Christian ethos committee in driving the agenda for improvement as a church school is highly effective and continually developing. Parents say that the school encourages their children to explore faith and belief and what it means to them personally. They feel that the school is a nurturing environment in which their children learn to be kind and considerate towards others. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

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