

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### St Thomas a Becket Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

High Street  
Tilshead  
Salisbury  
Wiltshire SP3 4RZ

#### Diocese: Salisbury

Local authority: Wiltshire  
Date of inspection: 14<sup>th</sup> January 2008  
Date of last inspection: February 2004  
School's unique reference number: 315536  
Headteacher: Mrs Diana Bowley  
Inspector's name and number: Carole McCormack: 224

#### School context

St Thomas a Becket Church of England School is a very small school of 48 pupils, approximately 95% of whom are white British. The school is situated next to the church in the heart of the village and serves the immediate locality. The current headteacher was appointed two years ago and has made the good use of the extremely limited space and facilities within her school.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Thomas a Becket Primary School as a Church of England school are good

The warm, caring and inclusive family atmosphere stems from the strong Christian values which lie at the heart of the school's ethos. Pupils feel secure and valued, as a result they consistently show respect to each other and to adults. They engage enthusiastically and effectively with their learning. As well as doing their best academically the children show a deep respect for traditional moral values, such as kindness and friendship.

#### Established strengths

- The headteacher is steadily building good capacity for school improvement founded upon strong Christian values such as diligence and respect
- A distinctive cohesive family atmosphere means that all children, irrespective of ability or need, flourish academically and socially
- Collective Worship is a strength of the school. It is joyful, fresh and relevant; and the pupils respond reflectively and respectfully

#### Focus for development

- Headteacher, Governors and Incumbent to continue to work on robust ways to strengthen the partnership between the local church and the school.
- To apply the Ofsted recommendation to 'sharpen subject leadership' to the already good leadership of RE in order to make it outstanding through: time to monitor teaching and learning across both key stages; and developmental joint diocesan and headteacher observations
- To extend the existing good practice of topic-based RE work to give the pupils opportunity to engage in extended writing in line with literacy-based success criteria. In this way a distinctively Christian strength of the school will be used to augment the central issues identified in the School Development Plan.

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

The children are happy, well-mannered, open and friendly and know that they are valued and accepted for their own unique qualities. They are generous in their praise of their peers and acknowledgement of their abilities. Children of all abilities are given good support and respond well in lessons, during Worship and at play. Pupils take on responsibilities well; and examples of this are giving out hymn books and organising the music during Collective

Worship. Parents value the school highly and speak of the ways in which their children flourish, both academically and spiritually, within the distinctively Christian climate of care. One parent commented that the school was 'the only thing that kept her in the area'. The curriculum has been revised to reflect more closely the experiences of the children at St Thomas A Becket school and its context; and this personalisation has impacted positively upon the learning of all. A wide range of out of school clubs further enriches the overall provision and gives the children opportunity to excel in a range of practical, sporting and musical activities.

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

Collective Worship plays a central role in the life of the adults and children in the school. All, irrespective of age and status enjoy, participate and are refreshed by Worship which starts each day. Space is extremely limited at St Thomas a Becket and it is noteworthy that the head and her team have created an appropriately special area in one of the classrooms to reflect the importance and relevance of worship. Symbols, such as snowdrops to reflect new life, are appropriately used; and very good examples of written work are displayed. Children respond well in Collective Worship. They enter quietly, behave respectfully, and pray and sing well. A strong aspect of Collective Worship is that it is evaluated both formally, by staff through dedicated staff meetings and by the foundation governor; and informally through all staff participating in all whole school acts of worship. Most children respond well to the invitation to reflect upon the theme of the day. Collective Worship contributes strongly to the children's understanding of the Anglican faith. The children can talk about the Christian festivals; and the traditions within their local church, where services are held termly.

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

Religious Education is thoroughly planned and well taught in line with the Wiltshire Agreed Syllabus. Full opportunity has been taken to utilise local places of worship and spiritual reflection (such as Salisbury Cathedral and a monastery) to contextualise and extend the children's learning; and there are good written examples of the impact of these experiences upon the children's thinking and understanding. Outcomes are assessed against RE specific success criteria and standards achieved in RE are as high as in other core subjects. Most of the KS1 children observed during the inspection showed a high quality of response and knowledge and were enthusiastic and engaged in the effective lesson. The subject is well led and resourced by an experienced teacher who is keen to take forward her subject leadership even more effectively.

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

Since her appointment the head and her committed team have moved the school forward strongly after an unsettling period of change of headteacher, governance and incumbent. The sustainability and the pace of the improvement are centred in shared Christian values and the determination of all staff to do the very best for the children in their care. The head has started to involve staff, governors and parents in the development of a corporate vision for improvement. Similarly, school self evaluation has started to involve all stakeholders; and a clear and accurate picture of the strengths of the school as a church school is given in the written documentation. The school has a clear view about church school improvement; and rightly prioritises appropriate use of the premises to provide opportunities for areas which reflect spiritual themes and places designated for quiet reflection. These are real challenges for a school with such lack of space and the fact that these areas have been developed, albeit to a limited extent, at St Thomas a Becket is testimony to the dedication and determination of the head and her staff.