

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Thomas' Church of England School  
Kendal Green  
Kendal  
Cumbria  
LA9 5PP

**Diocese:** Carlisle  
Local authority: Cumbria  
Date of inspection: 12/03/08  
Date of last inspection: 1996  
URN: 112322  
Headteacher: Mr Paul Brown  
Inspector's name and number: Penny Hollander 526



**Diocese of  
Carlisle**

**Board of Education**

*"Every Child Matters To God."*

### School context

The school is situated at the edge of a large housing estate in Kendal which is part of the south lakes area of Cumbria. The catchment area has some social disadvantage. Pupils come from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. Almost all pupils are of white British ethnicity. The headteacher has been in post since September 2007

The Ofsted inspection of 6/7 March 2007 found that the school "requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement". The SIAS inspection was therefore deferred and this inspection coincided with the Ofsted re-inspection on the same day.

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

The school promotes a distinctively Christian vision. Pastoral care for all within this ethos is a particular strength. The Christian values of love, care, compassion and consideration are effectively demonstrated in the daily life of the school by all members of its community. The strong links with the church reinforce this.

### Established strengths

- The personal development and well-being of all pupils
- Very strong links with the church and local community
- Parental involvement with the school

### Focus for development

- Assessment of pupils' work in RE, including pupil self-assessment to ensure progression and continuity in learning
- Involve pupils in leading and planning and the evaluation of some collective worship
- The Christian vision statement to be embedded in school life and shared with all stakeholders

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

The school's friendly and welcoming environment ensures that children feel valued and special. The personal development and well being of all pupils is a particular strength. Consequently, they feel happy and safe. Children are proud of their achievements and these are regularly celebrated in school, particularly through the weekly VIP assemblies. There is mutual trust and respect between pupils, teachers and other adults who work in school. Children clearly know the difference between right and wrong. They respond well to the Christian values of love, consideration, compassion and forgiveness that adults demonstrate on a daily basis in school. Any difficulties are dealt with swiftly, within these values. Pupils say they enjoy all aspects of school life and appreciate the range of learning experiences they are given, including the after school clubs. They are confident in expressing their views and the school council takes its responsibilities seriously. Recently, they were successful in changing lunchtime arrangements to allow children to sit within friendship groups. The children care for one another in many different ways including through the buddy system in which older pupils look after younger ones. Their concern for others less fortunate than themselves is expressed through fundraising activities such as the recent Easter fun day for children and families in Ethiopian prisons. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The strong church links mean that many members of the church community are regularly involved in school activities and provide pastoral support as well as help with homework club and Quest club. This is appreciated by both the children and staff. Other church links, such as with the local Methodist church, provide the children with an awareness of the wider Christian church. Visits and visitors contribute well to pupils' social and cultural development and the children comment on how much they enjoy these occasions. They particularly mention a visit to the Jewish museum in Manchester where they were able to reflect upon and learn from the beliefs and practices of a different religion. The school environment is well used to encourage the spiritual development of everyone in the school community. The many displays, prayers and appropriate symbols in all areas of the school act as constant reminders of the Christian nature of the school.

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

. Pupils appreciate acts of worship which are led by a range of people, including clergy, workers in the church and other visitors. Times for reflection are a feature of these occasions and the children particularly like the times of quiet and say that the whole school comes and learns together. They participate in a number of different ways including playing music, individual pupils leading prayers and responding sensitively to questions raised. Prayers said at the beginning and end of the day, as well as at lunchtime, are further reminders of the integral role of worship in daily school life. Regularly involving pupils leading and planning and leading acts of collective worship in school is an area for development. Children gain a good understanding of Anglican faith and practice through the church's weekly contribution to worship and visits from the bishop of Carlisle. Significant occasions in the church year are celebrated through school services in the church at Christmas, Easter and Harvest. The impact of collective worship on the whole school community is reflected in the active role played by the children on these occasions and also in the number of parents, friends and members of the local community who regularly attend such events. Collective worship is central to school life. Everyone in the school community participates on a daily basis. The new headteacher's developing plans and evaluations for collective worship further support this

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

Children are positive about their religious education lessons and achieve well. They show good knowledge of the Christian faith and the church year. They are confident in expressing what

they know about different aspects of religion and also their own views. Lessons are well planned and varied, and take into account different learning styles. Children's spiritual and moral awareness is developed through the reflective activities they are given during these times. They can express clearly what they have learnt from as well as learnt about religion. One example is in their learning about how different Easter symbols relate to their own experiences. Pupils clearly enjoy the different teaching strategies and approaches which incorporate a range of learning styles and are interactive. They also say they like learning about religions other than Christianity too. This is indicated in a key stage display about Buddhism and year two pupils enthusiasm for their visit to a synagogue. The new RE co-ordinator is now monitoring the effectiveness of this subject and has correctly identified that the assessment of children's learning, including their own self-assessment, is the next area for development. This will ensure continuity and progression in learning. A portfolio of some assessed work has already begun this process.

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

The headteacher, staff and governors have a clear Christian vision for the school. Although there has been a recent period of significant turbulence, there has been a determination by all levels of leadership in school to maintain the distinctive Christian nature of the school. The new headteacher is very effective in ensuring this takes place. Governors have had training in their church school responsibilities and this is now being put into practice. They take seriously their role in helping the headteacher to promote and realise the Christian vision for the school. This now needs to be embedded and shared effectively with all stakeholders. All staff are fully committed to this vision and the Christian values which underpin the school. They provide good role models for the children. Working as a team is a key feature of all that they do and every adult feels that they have an important role to play in decision making. They know that their ideas and viewpoints are welcomed and taken seriously. Parents speak very supportively of the school, particularly of the care shown towards their children. They are actively involved in school life through fundraising, helping in school and by supporting social and church events. The children clearly enjoy being a part of the school and are enthusiastic about all its activities, including those linked to the church and local community. They recognise their individual importance in school life and respond well to the responsibilities they are given in decision making. They actively promote Christian values of care, compassion and consideration towards others.

SIAS report March 2008 St Thomas' CE Primary School, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 5PP