



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

<b>High Bickington Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School</b>	High Bickington, Umberleigh, Devon EX37 9AY
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	Exeter
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Good
Local authority	Devon
Name of federation	The Taw Valley Federation
Date of inspection	28 September 2016
Date of last inspection	20 October 2011
School's unique reference number	113378
Acting executive headteacher	Paul Mulligan
Inspector's name and number	Andrew Rickett 201

### School context

High Bickington is smaller than the average size primary school with 69 children on roll. They are taught in four class groups. It is in a rural setting with families from mixed socio economic backgrounds. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with the national average while the number entitled to receive the pupil premium is below. The majority of children are from a white British heritage. Attendance is broadly in line with national averages. The school has been part of The Taw Valley Federation together with another Church of England primary school since April 2015. At the time of the inspection, the Federation was led by an acting executive headteacher with a head of school responsible for the day to day running of the school. The Federation has a single governing body.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of High Bickington as a Church of England school are good

- Children speak with confidence about the school's Christian ethos and how values make an impact on their lives and learning.
- Collective worship makes a valuable contribution to the children's growing spiritual development and understanding of prayer.
- The head of school, fully supported by other leaders and governors, has ensured that the distinctive Christian character of the school is more firmly established since the previous inspection.

### Areas to improve

- Involve the school council in leading the whole school community in placing spiritual development more fully at the centre of all aspects of the school's Christian vision.
- Provide innovative opportunities for children to explore a personal spirituality at a deeper level throughout the curriculum by enhancing the quality of reflection.
- Develop the skills of leaders and managers to more effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of the Christian ethos on the children's growing spirituality through collective worship and the wider curriculum.

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

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection in developing an ethos that more directly promotes values that explicitly reflect the Christian character. Following consultation which involved children in 2015, a set of six values were identified that are firmly placed at the heart of the school's approach to behaviour and relationships and which are becoming more embedded in the children's learning. Children clearly appreciate that of these values, love is at the centre. For example, older children explain with conviction that love is connected to the other five core values and that 'when Jesus was on Earth, He did all of them at the same time because He loves us'. They have a good understanding of the links between the core values. They explain that friendship involves respect and forgiveness as well as truthfulness and can connect these to their everyday lives both within school and outside of it. They appreciate how these values help them to make friends and treat them with care and kindness. This is reflected in the high quality of relationships throughout the school community where children know that they will be listened to because their views are valued by adults in school. There is a growing understanding of how these values make a contribution to the children's academic work and supports them in their learning. In particular, children understand how perseverance is an important part of making progress. The majority of children do well in school and achieve standards that are at least in line, and often above, national expectations. The school is developing its understanding of spirituality. There are good opportunities for children to experience the wonder of the world they live in and adults are becoming more aware of times in the children's learning when an emphasis on developing spirituality can enhance the children's learning. As yet, the potential to place children at the heart of exploring what spirituality means to them, and how they want to develop it, has not been fully developed across all areas of the curriculum. Religious education (RE) makes a good contribution to the children's moral understanding and growing sense of social justice. They engage with enthusiasm when sharing their thoughts and ideas on matters of faith and belief and listen to each other with respect. Religious education is very effective in giving children an appreciation of a range of world religions and a growing understanding of the diversity of life in modern Britain. Children are adamant in their belief that everyone should be treated equally and their traditions and cultures respected.

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

Acts of worship make a good contribution to the children's developing understanding of a personal spirituality and how prayer can support them. A particular strength of worship is its contribution to the language through which children express their views and opinions in greater depth. For example, themes that explore concepts such as generosity support children in their understanding of the six core values. They explain, for example, how 'you need to be generous in friendships' and that love includes giving of yourself. Younger children explained how 'you can't do love without the other values'. Acts of worship are therefore contributing to children's understanding of themselves and their relationships with others and supporting their wellbeing. Children know that stories from the Bible help to explain these values and can relate them specifically to the teaching of Jesus. They know that not everyone in the school is a Christian, 'or has any faith', but say that the lessons they hear in worship are valuable to everyone. Children have a good understanding of the purpose of prayer as a way to talk to God to say thank you, to ask for help or say sorry. They explain with maturity that prayers are not always answered in the way that we may want but say that 'God never gives up on us whatever we do'. Children are enthusiastic when challenged to say what they think the Trinity means to them. They talk with confidence about God as Father and know that Jesus is the Son. They are growing in their appreciation of the Holy Spirit saying that 'He guides us' but 'leaves it up to us to make the right choices'. Acts of worship are well planned around a broad range of themes which include values as well as reflecting the church year. Children have a good understanding of Anglican tradition and are familiar with major Christian festival such as Easter and Christmas which they celebrate in the local church. Children make an important contribution to acts of worship through the worship teams who help lead worship every week including working with a team from the local church. Some informal monitoring has taken place but robust systems have not yet been established to regularly evaluate the impact of worship to more rigorously

identify its strengths and areas for further improvement.

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

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection in developing a more overtly Christian vision based on explicit values delivered through acts of worship that are more central to the life of the school. The head of school, who is fully supported by the acting executive headteacher and governing body, has worked with adults and children in the school community to develop a vision that meets the needs of children and which has a good potential to develop further. The head of school is committed to the Christian ethos of the school and has a clear grasp of what needs to be done to continue to develop as a church school. He is supported by the chair of governors and other members of the governing body including the vicar. Together they have a very clear understanding of how the Christian ethos can support the children's emotional development and their wellbeing. The school is a very happy place and children say that they are looked after and feel valued by adults and their peers. Leaders have an accurate view of the school's performance as a church school through secure self-evaluation and articulate clearly what needs to be done to continue to develop. The re-establishment of an ethos group, to monitor and evaluate the impact of the ethos, has been identified as an action. Currently, leaders are not fully clear about how to monitor and evaluate all aspects of the church school ethos. Links with the parish church and local clergy are strong. Children say that the church is an integral part of the life of the school. The vicar is well known to children and parents and supports the school through his membership on the governing body. The leader for RE and collective worship has very recently been appointed. She is rapidly becoming familiar with the RE syllabus and developing her understanding of its delivery and assessment. She is keen to see both develop further and be relevant to the children's lives. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship and has addressed the areas for development from the previous report.

SIAMS report September 2016 High Bickington CE VC Primary School UMBERLEIGH EX37 9AY