



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### Upton St James Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

St James Road, Torquay TQ1 4AZ

**Diocese:** Exeter

Local authority: Torbay

Dates of inspection: 25<sup>th</sup> September 2014

Date of last inspection: 5<sup>th</sup> February 2010

School's unique reference number: 113402

Headteacher: Mrs Claire Prynn

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Linda Rudge, 791

#### School context

Upton St James is a smaller than average primary school with 105 pupils aged 4-11 in four classes. Almost all of the places are allocated to families in the immediate catchment area, or to children who are placed in the school by the local authority. The majority of pupils are identified in school data as white British, with a small number of pupils from other backgrounds and very few with English as an additional language. Admissions data also shows that most of the pupils' families identify themselves with no religion.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Upton St James school are good

- The school's highly effective leadership and the commitment of all staff to all pupils' well-being and academic development help to promote the school's foundation and ethos.
- The school's distinctive Christian values are demonstrated in the inclusive and caring relationships across the school community.
- The school has redeveloped its long-standing links with the local church creating positive and mutually beneficial partnerships.

#### Areas to improve

- The structure of the self-evaluation process to include all groups in the school community, especially parents.
- The explicit links between the school's Christian values and other agreed programmes for personal development.
- The involvement of pupils in leading and reviewing collective worship.

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

Upton St James School shares four key values: forgiveness, love, redemption and inclusion. These values are encapsulated in its published mission statement 'Every Child an Able Child', and they are deeply embedded in the life of the school. The school's Christian character has a high profile, in a way that is appropriate for the local community, and issues of attendance and exclusion are shaped by the strong values of inclusion and redemption. The proportion of pupils who enter or leave the school at other than normal transition times is well-above average, but the school ensures that these pupils and their families are welcomed and sustained. Pupils who might experience difficulties in attending school are supported by additional resources such as arranged transport, a Breakfast Club and a Family Key Worker. The school's values are also supported by the school's emphasis on the UN Convention for the Rights of the Child, and the 'Rights Respecting Schools' programme. For example, pupils know that by applying the explicitly Christian value of 'forgiveness' in the spirit of co-operation and responsibility they can improve rapidly in terms of their own achievements, and help others to do the same. Daily conversations and displays around the school, as well as direct teaching, show that the language of rights, responsibility and inclusion is well-known to all. Pupils are also familiar with the Biblical roots of many Christian teachings and can quote some of Jesus' sayings, explaining their importance today and how they link to their own lives. The school's Christian ethos makes a significant contribution to the academic and personal development of all pupils. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is well above average. Pupils' attainment has exceeded government floor standards in recent years.

All pupils, of any faith or none, feel cared for and supported by the school's emphasis on inclusivity and love. They say they feel 'safe, happy and strong' in the school family. All staff members also feel supported and their well-being is promoted through continuing professional development, the ethos of the school and through shared leadership. Pupils' behaviour in the specific context of the school is of the highest standard, all relationships across the school are positive and strong, and this ethos is seen by all as a direct result of the distinctiveness of the school's character. For example, a team points system promotes excellent behaviour through its promotion of love and shared efforts. A robust and highly appropriate spirit of co-operation and inclusivity is a strong feature of the school's ethos and relationships. National charities such as the Shoebox Appeal are supported wholeheartedly by pupils and staff, and the local Harvest festival brings parents, pupils, the staff, the local church and wider community together in acts of love and caring for others. The SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) programme enables teachers to build spiritual development into their planning and teaching, and pupils to create work showing considerable depth of thought across the curriculum. Many pupils can also talk about a personal relationship with God as part of their experience of learning and growing in this community, and how the school environment provides them with quiet places for prayer and reflection. Religious Education (RE) also makes a significant and rapidly improving contribution to the distinctiveness of the school, and pupils of all ages recognise the importance of RE in their lives. Some also understand how they can link the topics covered in RE to the school's values and to its mission statement, especially in relation to diversity and inclusion.

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

Collective worship is a central part of school life. It takes place in various settings and often more than once in a school day. Worship in school is often inspirational and always inclusive. Each setting has a symbolic focus for worship such as a cross or candle. Pupils understand the purpose and meaning of these symbols. Members of the community are able to talk about what worship means to the life of the school and to its wider community. Pupils understand the power of prayer and of quiet reflection, speaking of prayer corners where 'we can focus on God and Jesus'. Pupils can, and do, write their own prayers and these are displayed around the school. A majority of acts of worship have a strong Christian focus, especially on the Bible

and the person of Jesus Christ. Regular events at the local church enable parents and other community members to become involved in the activity of school worship beyond the usual school setting, and this has a beneficial effect for both school and church. Parents comment on the positive links with the parish church, and on the work of the Lay Reader who often leads school worship. The school is the principal link between the local community and the church as most families do not attend any church on a regular basis. Worship plans, evaluations by the foundation governors, and the worship observed during the inspection, show that pupils of all faiths and none all feel able to participate and to respond in different ways. Some leaders from different Christian traditions help to offer the pupils a diverse experience of worship. This is an area the school is reviewing. The regular presence of the parish Reader as a worship leader enables continuity, progression and a positive impact on the pupils' learning about Anglican practice and the Church's year. Pupil leadership and monitoring is not a regular part of worship, and this is an area the school is developing. Pupils participate willingly and they take lead roles by invitation of the staff, often contributing to lively and engaging role play and storytelling.

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

Staffing in the school, and in the local parish church, has been through a period of significant change since the last Church of England inspection in 2010. The school's leaders demonstrate and describe their shared understanding of the school's Christian ethos through highly effective role modelling, through their knowledge of the impact of Christian values on the life of the school, and through their care for the personal and academic progress of every pupil. The arrangements for RE and collective worship meet and sometimes exceed statutory requirements. All the staff members, through the leading example of the headteacher, ensure that the whole curriculum is informed by the school's Christian vision and by the school's emphasis on the UN Convention for the Rights of the Child. This shared responsibility and commitment promotes appropriate spiritual development, excellent behaviour and attitudes of forgiveness, redemption, reconciliation, love and trust. The staff and governors have a good understanding of the school's performance and distinctiveness, but not all groups in the school are appropriately involved in the continuing evaluation of the impact of the school's Christian character. For example, the school is actively engaged in discussions with parents about their key roles in governance and self-evaluation, but this has yet to be formalised. Parents are fully involved in some aspects of school life that demonstrate the distinctive character of the school. Some parents have sent all of their children to the school and some have connections with the school through several generations of attendance. Other parents take a lead in charitable activities and events such as the distribution of harvest to the local community. The school's self-evaluation of Christian distinctiveness has led to some effective strategies for improvement, such as in the well-established prayer corners and the pupils growing awareness of diversity within and across faiths. The school has also forged effective links with the church and the wider community. The school takes a pro-active and increasing role in contributing to future leadership of church schools through attendance at relevant courses, through shared aspects of leadership in school, and through an improving and beneficial partnership with the Diocese.

SIAMS report September 2014 - Upton St James Torquay TQ1 4AZ