

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

Holywell Church of England School, Tawstock			
Address	Tawstock, Barnstaple, Devon, EX31 3HZ		
Date of inspection	12 November 2019	Status of school	Primary academy inspected as VC Ventrus Multi Academy Trust
Diocese	Exeter	URN	145767

<b>Overall Judgement</b>	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Additional Judgement</b>	The impact of collective worship	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Excellent</b>

### School context

Holywell is a primary school with 104 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is above national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national averages. Since the last inspection the school has joined the Ventrus MAT. The 2017 Ofsted report rated the school as Good.

### The school's Christian vision

The Holywell community lets its light shine by:

Loving learning

Loving life

Loving all others

Loving our world

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

"Let your light shine in front of others. Then they will see the good things you do." Matthew 5:v16

### Key findings

- Outstanding Christian leadership from the headteacher, supported wholeheartedly by all staff, governors and parents, ensures that the vision is lived out at this school.
- Pupils and adults alike are made welcome and are nurtured and cared for in an exemplary Christian way. Relationships are loving and Christ-like, and behaviour is excellent.
- Academic attainment is variable, but the incredible support given to all, especially to the most vulnerable, ensures that all round progress for each individual is outstanding.
- Religious education (RE) makes a strong impact on pupils' spiritual and moral development, enabling them to ask and fearlessly attempt to answer many 'big questions'.
- Wonderfully flexible and inclusive collective worship inspires and unites the whole school family, enabling all to enjoy and reflect upon God and the deeper aspects of life.

### Areas for development

- Build on the already strong and healthy relationships with the church community and the Ventrus Trust, so as to share more widely the school's exceptional skills in utilising Christian love and care that enable pupils and adults to flourish.
- Work sensitively to extend pupils' knowledge about the Christian belief in the Trinity, with particular reference to the Holy Spirit, so as to deepen their spiritual understanding.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

### Inspection findings

Holywell school shines brightly; a beacon of excellence in loving and caring for its pupils. The headteacher's Christian faith is evident in every aspect of her work. Staff and governors respond with eager service for the sake of the pupils and in line with the school's vision. Diligent and inclusive work by all sections of the school community, including supportive and experienced members of the church, diocese and Ventrus Trust, led to the updating and improvement of the vision and motto. Pupils know, understand and do their utmost to live up to this vision. This is a loving and nurturing community, motivated by God's love and the words and example of Christ. Parents are captivated by the way in which their children are enabled to learn and grow, regardless of the disadvantages suffered by many. One couple wrote, 'We do not believe there is a more caring, inclusive, adaptable, empathetic school culture existing in any other school in North Devon.'

Approximately 18% of pupils have individual plans for their education here. Some have severe issues. Many are extremely vulnerable, yet the school always accepts and cherishes each child and will do everything it takes to enable each pupil to flourish, including stretching the most able. Jesus' words, 'Let the children come to me' are being realised here. Data shows that attainment overall is less than good, but in fact the real progress made by all pupils is good to outstanding. The work of the special education needs/disabilities co-ordinator (SENDCO), together with the teaching assistants who give individual and small group support as needed and appropriate, is exceptional. One parent commented that his autistic child had 'exceeded all expectations' because of the 'amazing provision'.

The governors' support, evaluation, and constructive criticism when needed, are diligent and positive. They are proud of the achievements of recent years, including thorough responses to the areas for development from the previous report. The chair of governors praised the headteacher's vision as 'loving and giving', adding that the refreshed motto encapsulates the 'shared vision' perfectly. She says that the link with the Ventrus Trust is exciting and positive, giving links to 5 other church schools. The headteacher has been invited to chair meetings of these schools to share good practice and develop new initiatives. The RE leader is also being encouraged to share her expertise more widely. Staff are quick to praise the support and help that is always available. One said that the headteacher gives excellent support and that she and the other staff are 'very approachable'. Another added, 'We are a family, we all nurture each other.' Worship at Holywell is a vital part of this mutual support, giving space for reflection, spiritual and mental refreshment and prayer.

The curriculum is bold, flexible and tailored with great care so as to give maximum support to those who need it most. The aim here is equity, not simply equality. Individuals with greater needs receive greater help, enabling them to go beyond even the highest hopes of their parents. One described the provision as 'amazing', with a headteacher who 'believes in the children, supporting the kids who need it'. The determination of leaders and staff to give so freely at a time when resources are stretched to the limit is remarkable and deserving of the highest praise.

Pupils are encouraged and given the space and security to explore spiritually demanding questions right across the curriculum. Staff are keen to take every opportunity to 'go deeper' so that pupils grow in understanding and develop into adventurous learners. They take the lead in many aspects of school life, the ethos committee making sure that all their fellow pupils are constantly reminded of their responsibilities to each other and the environment. Charities are supported enthusiastically, with the school council as chief organisers and decision makers. Awareness of global issues and national concerns lead to brave and determined actions, for example several older pupils wrote to their MP about the 'scandal' of unequal funding for schools. On a trip to London, with no child excluded, the visit to the Houses of Parliament allowed a personal follow-up to pupils' letters. The impact on pupils was obvious, and they hope there will be a similar effect on the government. Global links include financial support for Nathaniel, a pupil in Uganda, with regular contact giving pupils a real sense of achievement and fellowship across the world.

Collective worship has a dramatic and deep impact on the whole school family. It is warm and inclusive, with excellent singing, Bible verses and stories, with pupils taking part in drama and reflective and spontaneous prayer. The truth that 'we are wonderfully different and amazingly the same' was demonstrated using various sizes and colours of eggs in which 6 of the pupils played the main roles. The moment when all those present realised the significance of all the eggs being the same inside demonstrated the impact made by worship extremely well. The addition of the Bible story of Samuel anointing David as a future king brought out the point that 'God looks on the heart'. Prayer trees in each classroom and a readiness to pray whenever appropriate demonstrate the importance to everyone of this aspect of worship. Lives are enriched and changed by prayer, especially when deep needs or worries are the focus.

RE is led with passion and expertise, and includes the 'Understanding Christianity' resources as well as the new Devon syllabus. Lively and flexible lessons take the pupils on adventurous exploration of all the major world faiths. Depth and challenge characterise the approach, and pupils speak excitedly of moments of realisation. A Year 6 pupil said 'I suddenly realised God created the world!' Others speak of wonderful experiences of the Hindu 'aarti' festival of light and the Jewish Passover. The depth of understanding is striking, although there are gaps in understanding of the Christian belief in the Holy Trinity.

Links with the church and diocese are strong and mutually supportive, in spite of the church being without a rector in recent months. Clergy from other local churches regularly lead worship in school and in church. Parents 'love going up to the church' on the special occasions such as harvest, Christmas and Easter. A new rector has been appointed recently and has already made a very favourable impression. There is clearly great potential for further strengthening of the bonds, which all are eager to seize. The strength of Christian witness at Holywell is undeniable. The open and joyful living demonstration of Christian values is blended with sensitivity and a focus on loving care for all, in line with the vision. Parents are adamant, regardless of their faith position, that they welcome the religious ethos. One stated emphatically, 'The balance is perfect.'

Executive Head of school	Susan Denham
Inspector's name and number	Mike Graham 286