



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Ilington Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School

Ilington, Devon, TQ13 9RE

Diocese: Exeter

Local authority: Devon

Date of inspection: 13th June 2013

Date of last inspection: 23rd June 2008

School's unique reference number: 113396

Executive headteacher: Rachel Shaw

Head of school: Tammy Docking

Inspector's name and number: Margaret James 698

School context

Ilington VC Primary School is a small village school set within Dartmoor National Park in rural Devon. In July 2011, the school became an academy, along with 3 other local primary schools and a large local secondary school. In July 2012, it entered into a federation with one of the other primary schools in the academy whose headteacher became the executive headteacher of both academies. Ilington VC is the only church school within the academy cluster group. Most of the children at the school come from either the village or the immediate locality. However, a significant minority of children travel up to 10 miles to attend Ilington VC Primary School.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ilington VC Primary School as a Church of England school are good

Due to effective and highly competent leadership by the headteachers and governors who have an excellent understanding of the impact of Christian distinctiveness, Ilington VC Primary School is a flourishing community where Christian values have a positive impact on all areas of school life, including learning, relationships and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is recognised and appreciated by all members of the school community.

Established strengths

- Leadership of the executive headteacher and head of school as independent leaders within a supportive academy structure
- Governors' knowledge and understanding of the school as an effective and distinctive church school and their role in self evaluation and strategic planning
- Response of pupils to and their involvement in the renewed focus on Christian values, which has had a transformative effect on the school as a church school

Focus for development

- Fine tune existing systems of monitoring and evaluation in order to enable all governors to gather evidence on the impact of Christian values on all areas of school life
- As a whole staff and governing body, explore the meaning of spirituality for Ilington Primary School so as to more effectively provide opportunities for spiritual development in the curriculum, the school environment and collective worship
- Ensure consistency in planning and in the quality of teaching and learning in religious education (RE) to enable effective moderation and tracking of standards across the whole school

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

Following the recent (September 2012) appointment of the executive headteacher and head of school, there has been a renewed focus both on Christian values and on the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school as a church school. As a direct result of this, there has been a noticeable improvement in behaviour which all stakeholders attribute to the school's core Christian values. Behaviour in the school is excellent. Pupils describe how they prefer behaving well and being accountable for how they treat others. They recognise the impact which this has already had on their learning and on their attitudes to themselves as individuals and to others. Standards in all subjects have improved over the course of the year as have pupils' learning behaviours. Standards in core subjects now exceed national expectations in both key stages. Pupils appreciate the discipline, fairness and respect which they say that they both give and receive. They describe the school as a 'place where people matter' and where 'people want to be', saying that the school's Christian values have 'universal benefits on our learning, happiness, freedom and independence'. Attendance at the school has also improved, again as a result of the focus on the importance of Christian values in this school community where all now work together for the good of the children. The focus on Christian values is also evident in daily staffing decisions. Deployment of staff, along with intervention and support decisions, is driven by these values which focus attention on the needs of each individual. As a result, standards have improved for all groups of children who have clearly developed and now apply skills of resilience, perseverance and independence. Spiritual development is considered to be important at Ilington and is already evident in some cross curricula planning. The success of the explicit approach to embedding effective learning behaviour for all pupils is now going to be used as a template for increasing understanding of spiritual development in teaching and learning as well as in the school environment. Moral and social development are strengths of the school through its application of Christian values and much work has been undertaken to improve pupils' cultural development through meaningful links with schools and communities in other contrasting settings both within the UK and globally. RE is generally well taught. The subject makes a good contribution to the school's Christian character and through their learning about and from a range of world faiths pupils are developing good knowledge and understanding of diverse cultures and religions. The next steps are to ensure consistency in practice and standards of achievement across the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The head of school has been highly influential in raising the profile of worship in the school and in ensuring that its impact on the school community is positive. Pupils enjoy worship; they are active participants and occasionally lead acts of worship. Their opinions on the impact of collective worship are gathered regularly by the head of school and this has led to many changes in practice. Pupils' appreciation of prayer is particularly striking. They watch 'Newsround' every week and their response to many of the news items is one of prayer leading to action. As a result of this practice, pupils have developed the 'Prayer Tree' in the worship room on which they hang the prayers they write for the people and nations they learn about. There is a well planned programme for collective worship which is based on Christian values and Bible teaching. At their own request, all teachers are fully involved in the planning and leadership of collective worship. Their skills are well used and this cohesive approach makes a significant contribution to the positive impact which worship has on pupils. All members of the school community are developing a good understanding of the church year and the major Christian festivals through the acts of worship and church services led by pupils. The vicar and members of the parish church lead worship regularly and other visitors make an excellent contribution to the worship life of the school. The recent involvement of 'Cre8ed' in writing songs and exploring the meaning of Christian values with groups of pupils has enhanced pupils' understanding and application of the values. This good understanding extends to Bible stories. Pupils are not only familiar with many stories but also demonstrate an understanding of the meaning behind them which they relate to their own lives. The school is considering how it might explore the meaning of the Trinity with pupils and have plans to introduce elements of Anglican practice and liturgy to acts of worship.

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

The understanding of the executive headteacher and head of school of the importance of Christian distinctiveness and their determination to place this at the heart of school improvement has already led to significant positive change at Ilsington VC Primary. They share a clear strategic direction for continued improvement in the school. Their action planning is logical and effective, founded on both realistic and aspirational goals, and is rooted in the distinctiveness of the school as a church school. This is reflected in the aims of the academy as well as in the School Development Plan and ensuing action plans. The way in which the academy cluster group has been established, with a focus on the individuality of each school within it, allows the distinctiveness of Ilsington VC Primary to flourish. This independence coupled with the background support of the academy group and the federated school provide a balanced and outward looking structure which enables a small school such as Ilsington to have access to a number of opportunities which it would otherwise not have. An example of this is Ilsington's involvement with South Dartmoor Community College's links with a school in Thailand. In turn, Ilsington VC Primary is sharing its Christian values with other schools in the academy and has plans to share good practice in RE and lead staff development in this area. Staff and governors from Ilsington are very well represented on the academy's Directors' Board and are fully involved in academy-wide decisions. Foundation governors have an excellent understanding of Christian distinctiveness and the impact which this can have on the life of the school. They understand the link between Christian values and the vision for the school and know how these impact positively on learning, relationships, recruitment and training. They have thorough knowledge of the school and the performance of pupils due to the frequency of their visits and their systems of monitoring and evaluation. Christian distinctiveness is discussed at every full local governing body meeting and foundation governors and diocesan officers are fully involved in the self evaluation of the school as a church school, which is robust and accurate. Their practice of decision making according to the needs of pupils and the principles of the school's church foundation ensures that Christian distinctiveness remains at the heart of the school as a driving force. School leaders and governors are currently exploring curriculum models which reflect the school's distinctive character and are confident that they can enhance pupils' spiritual development through their everyday learning. RE is well led. The subject leader has established good practice and has clear action plans to ensure consistency and continued improvement across the school. Links with the church are very strong and are viewed as intrinsic to the school's distinctive Christian character. The new vicar is viewed as an integral part of the school community and his involvement provides support, leadership and expertise which are appreciated by all. Parents have a good understanding of how the distinctiveness of Ilsington VC Primary School benefits their children. They describe the way in which Christian values are 'woven into' the life of the school rather than being an add-on. They are supportive of the Christian ethos and commend the executive headteacher and head of school for the skilful way in which they have renewed the vision and values of the school as a distinctive and effective church school.

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