Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

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| **Black Torrington Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School** | |
| Beaworthy Devon EX21 5PU | |
| **Current SIAMS inspection grade** | **Good** |
| **Diocese** | **Exeter** |
| Previous SIAMS inspection grade | Good |
| Local authority | Devon |
| Name of federation | Holsworthy |
| Date of inspection | 8 November 2016 |
| Date of last inspection | 11 November 20111 |
| Type of school and unique reference number | 113372 |
| Head of School | Caroline Boother |
| Inspector’s name and number | David Hatrey 844 |

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| **School context**  Black Torrington Church of England Voluntary Controlled primary is a smaller than average rural school with 25 children on roll. Most children are of white British background. The number of children who have special educational needs or are entitled to pupil premium support or have English as an additional language is below national averages. The school became part of the Holsworthy federation in September 2014. |
| **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Black Torrington Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are good**   * Christian distinctiveness is seen in the caring Christian community and the quality of relationships created. * The church makes a good contribution to the life of the school particularly through worship. * Children are confident to verbalise their ideas and explain why they hold their opinions. * Children have a good understanding of the purpose of prayer and are confident to write their own. |
| **Areas to improve**   * Embed distinctive Christian values across the school ensuring these are regularly deepened so that children recognise and articulate the difference they make to their lives and attainment. * Ensure that spirituality has a higher profile across the school so a broad range of quality experiences are planned to support the development of a personal spirituality. * Establish a systematic approach for evaluating the impact of the school’s Christian vision and all aspects of being a church school, involving consultation with children which leads to ongoing improvements. |

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| **The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is satisfactory**  **at meeting the needs of all learners**  Four core Christian values have been identified by the school as underpinning its work and daily life. These are: co-operation, achievement, trust and respect. However, not all of the children could identify these. This is because they do not have a high profile and are not made explicit. A number of Christian values are considered, both through worship and religious education teaching. However, these values are not explored in sufficient depth. Some children could identify the values and recognise these in others. Their understanding of these values reflects a more general interpretation rather than having a specific Christian meaning. Only a few stories could be linked to the Christian values which reflect their meaning. All staff at the school model Christian principles in the deep and meaningful relationships they create with children. The school operates as a Christian community. Their care and concern for each child stands out and is a real strength of the school. Staff know each child’s individual strengths as well as their families, who as a result feel very welcome in school as part of the family. Children respond to this well, knowing they are special to God, demonstrating the same care for others, which they show in a variety of ways around the school. Older children play a significant role in welcoming new children to the school. This care for others is also seen in the way the school council decides on a charity to support, with all members of the school committed to meeting the needs of others. The ‘School in a bag’ project is only one good example of this, providing learning bags for children of the same age. There are opportunities to develop children’s spirituality, displays show children reflecting on who or what God is. Children consider, if God was a colour or animal, what would He be like. Their responses show the beginning and their capacity of deeper thought. However, this is not regularly offered, nor are opportunities identified in planning where this is developed. At present there are not enough quality experiences covering a broad range of curriculum areas to allow children to respond in a variety of ways and extend their thinking. Another strength of the school is the way they have nurtured children’s self esteem and confidence. Children readily verbalise and share their ideas, knowing these will be valued. They are prepared to learn from others as well as reasoning why they hold such views. One of the targets from the previous inspection was to, “develop world wide links”. Progress has been achieved through effective curriculum links, for example, farming in different countries to which children can relate. Visits to a mosque help children understand how the beliefs of others are shown in different actions. Children have a growing knowledge of other major faiths, they show tolerance and respect for those who hold different views to their own. Religious education (RE) makes a positive contribution to the Christian character of the school. Time is given to explore the Christian faith, so they understand how Christians respond to different issues as well as influencing their own thoughts and actions. Some contribution is made to developing children’s understanding of Christian values, but at present this is not undertaken in sufficient depth to make a greater impact. |
| **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**  Collective worship is seen as a special time for the school family to come together and share time with God. It holds a prominent position in the life of the school. Some children talk enthusiastically about particular worship times, notably when the vicar or her team lead. Children enjoy the use of puppets and the dramas where they are eager to participate. This allows children to interact and talk with characters from the story so thoughts and feelings are made clear, which children are beginning to relate to their own lives. However, worship is not always good. Worship times which are devoted to singing have little impact on children’s understanding. The Wonder of a Thursday group encourages younger children to explore Bible stories at a greater depth through role play and actions, which they relish. These children lead worship showing what they have learnt. Older children continue this, preparing part of the celebrations for the main Christian festivals. They are confident to agree a theme and organise one another to prepare aspects which they then lead. These are significant occasions in the life of the school and church where these are held. Children are confident to explain the meaning of Christian festivals, other seasons in the church’s year and their meaning. Children made preparations for a wedding in church, following this with a baptism, understanding the Christian significance of these. Each year children explore Jesus’ last supper and Holy Communion before taking part in this celebration. This helps them to appreciate its significance for Christians. There is a growing understanding of the Trinity. Planning for worship follows a 4-year plan. A number of Christian values are considered, but not in sufficient depth, nor are the school’s key values given particular attention. Planning draws on Biblical material and children are able to talk about Jesus and His teaching in detail. Only a few children thought that worship and teaching might influence their thinking and actions. Children are not sure how to make these explicit links as they have not thought about this before. “Sharing thoughts with God” is how children understand prayer. From an early age children create their own thank you and sorry prayers. Children can write these at different times of the day, hanging these on the prayer tree. There is a growing maturity in their thoughts, as they are used for different reasons and occasions. The new reflection / prayer areas in class and outdoors are not fully established and are yet to make an impact. A few children thought that prayer could be helpful in their own lives. The ethos committee regularly reviews worship. Children make some evaluations of worship through a yearly survey, with suggestions for improvement. Whilst minor changes have resulted, such as the introduction of a focus table and seating arrangements, more could be actioned. |
| **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is good.**  Creating a warm, caring Christian community is at the heart of the school’s vision. Staff and governors aim to enable children to experience being part of this family and recognise the difference this makes to their relationships and daily lives. Children understand that they are valued and special to God. This is clearly seen in the school’s Christian distinctiveness where children show this care and concern in action and recognise the family ethos this creates. Progress and attainment are broadly in line with national expectations. On going comparisons are difficult due to the small size of cohorts. The majority of children make good progress from their starting points, with effective interventions put in place when required. Good attitudes towards life long learning are nurtured. Children feel confident about themselves, supported to recognise and celebrate talents they have from what they do either in school or in their own time. Equally important is the children’s welfare and well being, with a range of support systems in place. The school is well supported by other schools in the federation and share their own expertise. Together they have established a robust monitoring system, accurately tracking individual progress. They draw upon expertise in other schools. A good example of this is the leadership of RE. New initiatives are introduced, such as Understanding Christianity, the latest project to be trialled. This ensures that RE has a high profile across the school and enriches the school’s provision. The current interim headteacher has brought stability following a time of change. Her leadership along with the governors has enabled the Christian ethos to be maintained. There is evidence to indicate that the school’s Christian distinctiveness is developing and having a greater impact on the children. Governors are enthusiastic and dedicated, they contribute to the strategic direction of the school and monitor progress diligently. However, whilst they monitor the quality of teaching in RE and collective worship, this does not extend to considering the impact of the school’s Christian distinctiveness or the impact of spirituality. Whilst there have been some developments in these areas this has not been informed by discussions with the children so their understanding here is limited. The church makes a very good contribution to the life of the school, especially in worship and previously in governance. Children know they are part of the church family which extends beyond the school. They see it as natural to share in worship at the church with the community. Parents feel part of this family and are actively involved in a number of areas. They value the contribution the school makes to the lives of their children. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship. |

SIAMS report November 2016 Black Torrington CE VC Primary School Beaworthy Devon EX21 5PU