

St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School

Sawyers Hall Lane
Brentwood
Essex
CM15 9BX

Diocese: Chelmsford

Local authority: Essex

Date of inspection: 27 November 2012

Date of last inspection 17 March 2008

School's unique reference number: 311867

Headteacher: Mr Dean Moran

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Lizzie McWhirter MA 244

School context

St Thomas of Canterbury junior lies in the parish of St Thomas of Canterbury and serves the communities in the parishes of St Thomas of Canterbury and St George the Martyr; in Brentwood. Currently there are 309 pupils who are mainly from a White British background. The school enjoys close links with the parish church of St Thomas of Canterbury. The headteacher has been in post since September 2012 and is building up a strong team around him..

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Thomas of Canterbury Junior as a Church of England school are outstanding

This school has a very strong sense of being a worshipping and welcoming Christian community, with prayer an important part of school life. Everyone feels they belong and are encouraged to achieve highly.

Established strengths

- The strong sense of Christian community, embraced by everyone.
- The opportunities and experiences given to pupils in collective worship and religious education [RE], supporting their spiritual development.
- The close links with the church.

Focus for development

- Enhance the evaluation of collective worship, involving pupils and governors.
- Embed the assessment of RE.
- Provide a forum for clergy and pupils to dialogue together on the deep questions of faith.

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

St Thomas of Canterbury Junior sustains an excellent learning environment where pupils are proud to belong. This inclusive, cohesive community demonstrates Christian love and service and is much loved by its pupils and much appreciated by its parent body. Pupils say they value their teachers and their friends. Parents acknowledge their children are well supported and their needs and abilities are well met. Parents also value that 'here is a caring Christian environment where faith is affirmed every day'. The school is seen to value the widest range of achievement and pupils feel able to make a positive contribution, showing great care for younger children. Relationships and behaviour are exemplary, based on the school's Character Education policy. Pupils hold dear the values of respect, responsibility, caring, forgiveness, honesty and trustworthiness. Some pupils aspire to be teachers because of the excellent role models they see her. They enjoy giving to charitable projects, through which they experience the Christian values of service and gratitude. Bright, prominent displays and

interactive prayer corners nurture pupils' spiritual development. The school grounds greatly contribute to pupils' engagement with the natural world. Pupils especially value the woodland area.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

High quality prayerful and meaningful worship is at the heart of this worshipping community, inspiring the school day and permeating all school life and practice. Pupils especially value Eucharistic worship when they 'go up for a blessing'. The Eucharist is very much part of the regular pattern of worship, with pupils explaining the Christian symbolism of bread and wine. They speak highly of The Leavers' Service when Year 6 pupils are given a Bible. They appreciate the rich variety in the pattern of worship, especially worship led by the clergy and headteacher. They very much enjoy worshipping together in a setting which enables them to encounter Jesus Christ. Key festivals in the church year, such as Easter, take place in church. Pupils say The Lord's Prayer regularly, acknowledging 'if we go wrong and trespass, we are always forgiven by God and he wouldn't remember that moment and forgive us'. Currently, pupils enjoy researching for, and leading school worship. Pupils welcome the opportunity to record their reflections regularly on worship for governors to read. In all these ways, worship is continually improving in integrity and quality.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Pupils clearly enjoy their RE lessons in this school where RE has a high profile and is well led and managed. As a result, excellence and enjoyment is seen in RE which greatly supports pupils' spiritual development. Teaching and learning is good and standards are often higher than in other core subjects. In lessons pupils are given opportunities to ask puzzling questions about God and life. They enjoy learning about other faiths and are clear about what mosque life means for Muslims and church life for Christians. There is a systematic method of assessment and tracking which informs planning and demonstrates achievement. Marking is purposeful, with pupils recognising what they need to do in order to improve their work. Next steps include using child speak levels in assessment in RE. Many pupils show a good level of theological literacy and a number of pupils demonstrate very high levels of achievement. To this end, the school welcomes establishing a forum for clergy to engage with pupils on the deep questions of faith. Very good examples across the school include using enquiry approaches to religion when learning about the Christmas narrative or reflecting on experiences of The Eucharist.

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

St Thomas of Canterbury Junior's distinctive Christian vision is clearly evident and very effectively promoted by the headteacher, clergy, governors and staff so that the school's Church of England foundation is articulated and celebrated by all. Everyone models the school vision. Pupils' work has been displayed in church and the school features in the parish magazine, 'The Spire'. An excellent relationship exists with the diocese and St Thomas of Canterbury Infant School, as well as the nearby church secondary school. Parents speak highly of the headteacher and his staff and their approachability. They say they feel valued and welcomed as parents. Foundation governors are active in their support for the school. They ensure areas from the previous inspection have been addressed. As a result, there are many Christian symbols, such as crosses and crucifixes displayed in classrooms. They have identified clear areas for future development, especially in their monitoring and evaluative role. They appoint effective teachers and give them opportunities for leadership experience. In all these ways, St Thomas' maintains excellence in everything.