



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Sir Robert Geffery's Church of England Voluntary Aided Academy**

School Road  
Landrake  
Saltash, Plymouth  
PL12 5EA

#### **Diocese: Truro**

Local authority: Cornwall  
Date of inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> September 2012  
Date of last inspection: 19<sup>th</sup> March 2009  
School's unique reference number: 112025  
Headteacher: Mrs Julie Curtis  
Inspector's name and number: Mr Andrew Rickett 201

#### **School context**

Sir Robert Geffery's is an average size primary school with 216 children. The school converted to academy status in August 2011. The school serves the local village and surrounding area. The majority of children are from a white British heritage with some from mainly eastern European backgrounds. The number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. The school was founded by the Worshipful Company of Ironmongers in 1704 and they are responsible for providing foundation governors.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sir Robert Geffery's as a Church of England school are outstanding**

Sir Robert Geffery's was founded in 1704 to teach the catechism to children. Three hundred years later the academy has successfully interpreted this in a way that brings Christian teaching alive to the children in the twenty-first century. The academy constantly seeks to respond to the world it lives in. This has an impact on the relevance of the Christian ethos to the daily lives of the children and in the creation of an environment in which children are encouraged to flourish both personally and in their learning.

#### **Established strengths**

- The explicitness with which the ethos is underpinned by Bible teaching.
- The quality of the opportunities, within and outside of the formal curriculum, for the children's lives to be enriched.
- An environment in which children can openly talk about and share their views on issues of faith and belief.

#### **Focus for development**

- Evaluate the impact of the focus on developing thinking skills on achievement in religious education.
- Review the school's values in relationship with the Bible stories that underpin the vision.
- Develop relationships with the new teams of local clergy in Anglican and other denominations.

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

An outstanding aspect of the academy's Christian character is the extent to which specific Bible stories underpin the vision and how closely they relate to a set of values through which the vision is lived out on a daily basis. Children have an excellent knowledge of these Bible stories and children of all ages know that seven core values accompany them and that they are based on Christian teaching. These values really do permeate the life of the school through the way that children and adults relate to each other and in the approach to learning. This is particularly evident in subjects that have an emphasis on discussion and the use of concepts to explore understanding. It is also evident through the outstanding opportunities that children have to enrich their experiences outside of the formal curriculum. An excellent example of this is the school farm where children get to experience working alongside sheep and pigs, a donkey and chickens. It is a magical moment to see very young children learning how to groom a donkey. Because of this close contact with the animals, children have a remarkably sanguine attitude. For example, they are quite realistic about the eventual fate of the school's pigs! Children talk openly and with confidence about their views and opinions on matters of faith and belief. They listen to each other with respect but get genuinely excited about sharing their own views whether they have a personal faith or not. Children say that the school is a happy place where they make good friends and that adults are there to help them. Parents echo this opinion and say that the school cares for their children and for their families and will do whatever they can to support them at difficult times.

**The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Collective worship is outstanding because the messages that are delivered are based on the ten Bible stories that underpin the school's Christian vision. Children have an excellent understanding of these stories and explain clearly how each of them link to specific values. For example, when talking about forgiveness children explain how God forgave Noah and that the Easter story is about Jesus dying so that our sins are forgiven. Children understand that these stories teach them how to live their lives and that these lessons can be applied to their everyday life in school and at home. For example, in the act of worship seen during the inspection, children explained how they can serve others by helping in the classroom, by showing friendship or as one child said, 'putting the needs of others first'. Acts of worship are explicitly Christian in their nature and celebrate the Anglican tradition. The use of a special worship chest to bring out a cloth, candle, cross and Bible helps to mark this as a distinct time in the school day when the school comes together to think about God. Simple words of liturgy affirm that this is a time to worship God. Children have very positive attitudes towards acts of worship. They enjoy the lively singing and use of humour and have the confidence to volunteer for spontaneous prayers as a regular part of the worship. Prayer is an important part of worship. Children say that there are lots of other opportunities to pray in the school day and recognise that this is an essential part of being a church school. They have an excellent understanding of prayer and the different types of prayer that can be said. For example, they understand that praying for someone who is ill might not make them better but it will give them hope and 'God's love in their heart'. The opportunities for children and adults to monitor and evaluate the impact of collective worship are outstanding. Governors, for example, have an excellent knowledge of worship and attend them regularly.

**The effective of the religious education is outstanding**

The latest assessment from the school's own accurate data confirms that children make excellent progress in Religious Education (RE) across the school. Achievement at the end of Key Stage 1 exceeds national expectations and compares very favourably with other core subjects. Children continue this progress throughout Key Stage 2 so that by the time they leave school in Year 6 attainment is consistently above national averages with a significant number of children achieving higher levels. Once again, this compares favourably with other

core subjects. Progress overall is excellent from the children's starting points. The main reasons for outstanding academic achievement in RE are the quality of planning, imaginative teaching and learning which focus on developing a deep level of understanding from the children. All of these factors were present in lessons observed during the inspection where the quality of teaching and learning was outstanding overall. The RE subject leader has successfully taken the learning objective for each unit of work and through a series of challenging questions, has unpicked a far deeper meaning to their content. This makes a significant impact on the style of teaching and on expectations for the children. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, children made very good progress in their understanding of where God is found in the story of David and Goliath. Through the use of metaphors, the teacher guided children to relate the story to abstract images. This was a considerable challenge to their understanding but the children were fully engaged. Using the concept of David as a sailing boat, one child explained how God is the water which keeps the boat afloat: without water the boat would sink. Further than this, one child related the images to a value by explaining how God is the wind pushing the boat and therefore giving it hope. A similar approach in a Year 5 lesson used the children's excellent knowledge of the Bible to explore meanings behind the Burning Bush and what that would have meant to the Jews. The school has already identified the need to explore how it can more closely evaluate the impact of its emphasis on developing thinking skills on progress in RE. Children respond with great enthusiasm and relish the challenges put before them. There are many opportunities for them to assess their own learning through a variety of approaches.

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

The headteacher has ensured that the school's Christian character is central to the life of the academy and that its vision and ethos continually grows so that it meets the changing needs of all members of the school community. She is passionate about the difference that a church school education makes to the lives of children and has an excellent understanding of how this is achieved at Sir Robert Geffery's. She is aware that this may be the time to review the school's key Bible stories and the seven values that relate to them in order to refresh the way that the school community perceives them. The headteacher is very ably supported by her governors who share her commitment and passion. They also have a very good grasp of what it means to be a church school and this enables them to monitor and evaluate successfully its impact on learning and personal development. The whole school community has gained particularly from the excellent work of the recently retired vicar who has been an integral part of the school community for many years. His presence and support for the school has made a profound difference to the way that the Christian church is perceived among all members of the school community. The headteacher and governors are aware that as both local Anglican and other denominational ministry teams change, so the school needs to look at how it develops relationships with them. The RE subject leader is outstanding. He has grown in confidence with the subject and this is reflected in his conviction that RE can make an impact on the lives of children. He has successfully adapted the local RE syllabus so that it has deeper meaning for the children and has an excellent grasp of how to draw this understanding out of the children. The academy has very good links with a school in Uganda which helps to give children a good understanding of culture and faith in other countries. Parents are very enthusiastic about the way that the school's ethos teaches their children about respect and empathy for others. They say that the school encourages their children to ask questions about faith and belief and to not be afraid to do so. In particular, parents agree that the way the academy promotes its Christian ethos is done in such a way that it is appropriate to the age of their child, and that this makes it inclusive and an accepted aspect of life in the school.