



Townlands Faith Newsletter

Dear Parents and Carers,

This is our first faith-based newsletter, where we will specifically focus upon our distinctiveness as a church school. In our recent parent survey, we asked you to comment on the question 'There is a strong Christian ethos in school', 11 (19%) respondents didn't know whether our school had a strong Christian ethos. Therefore, we believe it is very important for us to communicate this aspect of school life with you.

Our Christian vision 'A journey of learning in the light of God's love', underpins everything we do. Our vision is based upon The Parable of the Mustard seed - Mark 4:30-32

"What shall we say the Kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade."

Our vision is supported by our 7 Christian values - faith, honesty, love, friendship, forgiveness, hope, respect. Through our nurturing ethos, we are committed to promoting the development of the whole child, as we all journey together.

Whilst we promote our school as distinctively Christian, we remain inclusive to everyone as the values we have identified are appreciated by other faiths and those of no faith. The values are reflected in our daily life and explored in our collective worship and in our lessons. We have displays in the school hall, incorporating our vision, values whilst also celebrating other religious festivals. Around our school, there are areas for reflection which contain school prayers and prayers that the children have created themselves. Additionally, we have strong links with the local parish church – St Simon and St Jude. However, none of the above should be taken as indicators that Christian beliefs are being enforced.

What is a Church of England Primary School?

"A community school with a distinctive Christian character." Long before the government became involved in providing education for everyone in our country, the Church of England had a vision that it wanted every parish to have a school for the education of poor children. By 1900, there were 5,700 state-funded schools and 14,000 schools funded by the Church of England. Today, approximately a quarter of all primary schools have a Church of England foundation, through which they strive to provide the highest standard of education possible, in partnership with the state.

From the earliest days, the purpose of Church schools was to enable children to flourish by providing a basic education and by developing their moral character. It was always intended that Church schools should be open to all of the children of the parish. The schools are not 'faith schools' in the sense of presuming that children are practising Christians or attempting to make converts of them. However, the ethos of the schools is based on distinctively Christian values and they will offer children an experience of faith through collective worship and links with the parish church. Religious Education in Church schools will always include teaching about other faiths.

What is added by being a Church of England school?

Church schools have Christian beliefs and values at their heart. This means that every child and adult associated with the school is not just important because they are members of the school but also because they are seen as unique individuals within God's creation. The spiritual aspects of life will be recognised, and nurtured alongside the academic and emotional needs of all. Church of England schools are places where questioning of belief and non-belief is encouraged as we all try to make sense of the world in which we live.

What else?

As a church school we:

- engage meaningfully in an act of daily Christian worship
- ensure that religious education (RE) is given at least 5% of the school timetable
- encourage children to think about big questions and engage with a spiritual journey
- observe the major Christian festivals whilst also recognising the contribution of other world faiths
- undergo a SIAMS inspection (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools)

With additional newsletters, we will place a greater focus upon aspects of school life for example, themes delivered during collective worship, teaching and learning in RE lessons, contributions from our faith ambassadors etc.

We hope that this overview of Townlands as a church school has clarified our position. If you wish to discuss anything further please do not hesitate to contact us.

With kind regards

Mrs Anne Hawksley and Mrs Louise Martinson

A message from Reverend Castle - St Simon and St Jude's Church

As a church school, St Simon and St Jude's Church is our church – it is your church!

As well as attending the church for our Harvest, Christmas, Easter and Leavers services, our vicar, Martin Castle, visits the school to lead collective worship.

Martin says 'I value our links with the school and really enjoy meeting with the children, parents and staff. I like to see the church as a community, where we support each other and discover the love of God shown to us in Jesus Christ.'

Everyone, young and old, is welcome to our church services which are held every Sunday at 10.45am. On the first Sunday of the month, we have an 'all-age' worship service which children and families particularly enjoy. The children get involved in leading the service, so you are very welcome to join us. We also have a Sunday Club for primary school aged children in the Parish Hall on the fourth Sunday of the month at 10.30am.'

If you would like to get in touch with Martin to find out more, or if you want to have a chat about a particular issue you are facing in life, then feel free to contact him on 07759 002660.

You can also find out more on the church website: www.achurchnearyou.com/St-Simon-St-Jude-Earl-Shilton