

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

| Swaffham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Infant School | | | |
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| Address | White Cross Road, Swaffham PE37 7RF | | |
| Date of inspection | 28 January 2020 | Status of school | Voluntary controlled infant school |
| Diocese | Norwich | URN | 121059 |

| Overall Judgement | How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish? | Grade | Requires Improvement |
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| Additional Judgement | The impact of collective worship | Grade | Good |

School context

Swaffham is a first school with 217 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is above national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national averages. The school includes a nursery. It is currently in transition to becoming a primary school in summer 2020. The school is currently being run by an acting headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher due to the long-term absence of the headteacher.

The school's Christian vision

To provide a safe, nurturing environment and a rich variety of experiences enabling pupils to flourish and discover their uniqueness. For children to enjoy a life filled with meaning, underpinned by Christian values; a love of learning and an eagerness to make the world a better place.

Key findings

- The school's vision and values are distinctively Christian. They are recognised and valued by staff and parents and underpin the whole curriculum.
- The school has a broad and balanced curriculum shaped by its Christian vision. The many vulnerable pupils are given considerable support and most pupils make good progress. However, their levels of attainment are usually significantly below national expectations.
- Pupils' behaviour is not consistently good, and this affects learning and the quality of relationships. School leaders are prioritising improving this, and the measures they have put in place are effective.
- The school has a very strong inclusive philosophy. All members of the community are welcomed equally and all pupils feel valued.
- Collective worship (CW) is good. Themes are appropriate and good use is made of technology and adult support to capture and retain pupils' interest. Pupils have the chance to express their views, but do not, as yet, have opportunities to help lead worship. Parents join the school for worship at Church termly and to join a weekly values celebration in school.

Areas for development

- To strengthen the relationship with the local church so that it is mutually beneficial and gives pupils a better knowledge of Anglican traditions and worship.
- To ensure that the plans for an ethos committee to review distinctiveness are quickly realised.
- To introduce robust monitoring by subject leaders and governors in order to better inform self-evaluation and future planning.
- To continue to prioritise improving pupils' attitudes and behaviour, in order to improve the quality of their relationships and learning.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Inspection findings

The strong Christian vision is widely publicised, understood and supported by parents and pupils. The vision was rewritten last year following wide consultation with the school community. The impact of this new vision can be seen in the school's provision of a safe, nurturing environment with a rich variety of experiences for pupils. A good example is the weekly learning experience run by Forest Schools in an area of woodland on the school site. Corridors and classrooms are mostly well presented, with many inspirational and interesting displays reflecting and enlarging upon the school's Christian ethos. Christian values, for example friendship, compassion and respect, are at the heart of the newly-revised curriculum. Parents provide examples of occasions when they have been able to recognise the impact of the school's values working in their children, for example showing compassion for a homeless person on a family visit to Norwich. The Church states that 'Christian love and kindness is evident (in the school).'

The senior leadership team has had to be changed due to the long-term absence of the headteacher. The school's deputy, who returned from maternity leave at the start of this term, has become the acting headteacher. An acting deputy headteacher was seconded from another Church school from September 2019. This arrangement has the wide support of parents, governors and the diocese. The diocese has confidence in the effectiveness of the current leadership team and considers pupil progress to be good. However, establishing a permanent and effective management structure remains a major priority for the governing body. Self-evaluation has been accurate and has led to effective school improvement. However, although governors reviewed and discussed the plan, there has been limited monitoring of the school's Christian distinctiveness by the wider school community, which was a development point in the last inspection (2014). An ethos committee is currently being established to fulfil this, but has not yet met.

The last inspection asked the school to develop a closer relationship with the local Church, but this has not yet happened. The school uses the Church for worship once a term, and occasionally in support of its religious education (RE). The vicar is on the governing body and leads CW half-termly. Pupils do not have a strong understanding of the Anglican church, with none of those spoken to being able to name common parts of the church or say what they were used for, for example the altar or font. The diocese provides training, and this has been taken up and valued by governors and the RE leader. However, foundation governors have a limited role in self-evaluation and planning

Inclusion is extremely important for school leaders, and all are welcomed, treated with dignity and respect as children created in the image of God. The school has many vulnerable pupils and has effectively prioritised addressing their needs. Parents praise the support they get from the school, with one saying that 'the teachers are so understanding here; they really support you.' A nurture group is based in the Rainbow Room, and a 'Thrive' practitioner is employed to provide support for social and emotional development. All pupils have access to additional care and support whenever they need it during the school day. There are staffed support groups available at the start and end of the school day and during lunch breaks to help vulnerable children who are in need of additional care and support. Although behaviour is not yet consistently good and parents speak of this as an issue, the measures being developed by school leaders are beginning to have a noticeable effect. School staff can be seen living out the school vision in the close relationships they try to develop with the pupils in their care. All pupils are individually welcomed every day, and teachers try hard to cultivate individual relationships with them. Although relationships between pupils are generally good, the work to improve pupils' attitudes and behaviour needs time to become more embedded and to have a full impact.

Pupils' spiritual development has a high profile. There is an inspirational prayer space indoors, with Christian reading material, symbols of the Christian faith, and artefacts to support children when they are being reflective. The school's vision and values are clearly displayed. An additional prayer space has been made outside in a peace garden. Pupils have opportunities to pray and be reflective in RE and CW, and reflection and deeper thinking are increasingly part of the wider curriculum. Exploration of values promotes pupils' social and spiritual development. Pupils have shown a desire to support those less fortunate than themselves and, with

the help of the parent 'Friends' group, have been involved in fund raising for a number of causes including Children in Need and the shoebox appeal.

The school sees CW as an important part of the day. CW provides an opportunity to explore the school's vision and values, making them real for pupils. Most pupils respond well, are attentive and gain much from their worship experiences. Parents are invited to the termly worship in the Church to mark major Christian festivals, as well as to a weekly celebration of the school's values in classes. As well as providing the opportunity for the whole community to worship together, this reinforces the school's values and contributes to parents' understanding of them and the impact they are having upon their children. Leaders strongly believe that all children should be involved, and staff work hard to support individual children and prevent inappropriate behaviour disturbing others. Information technology is used effectively to capture and maintain pupils' interest. Planning demonstrates a strong basis upon the Bible and the life of Jesus Christ. Governors sometimes join the school for worship, but do not yet have a regular role in monitoring. Consequently, the worship leader has limited evidence at her disposal when reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of the programme and delivery of CW. The role of the Church in the school's process of self-evaluation and development planning is limited and pupils have few opportunities to support worship leaders.

RE is used to explore the school's values, the major world faiths and belief systems, and to begin to address big questions and higher-order thinking. In this way RE makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual development and learning skills. Planning for RE is effective and teaching is considered by the school to be good. The school follows the Norfolk syllabus and uses Understanding Christianity as its main resource. The diocese has provided appropriate and effective training for both the co-ordinator and governors. Pupils are beginning to look at faiths other than Christianity, but have had few opportunities to visit different places of worship or listen to leaders of non-Anglican denominations. Systematic monitoring of teaching and learning is not yet integrated into the school's planning, so there is limited evidence available to show how effective teaching and learning is. Assessment procedures in RE follow the Norfolk scheme but are at an early stage and there has been little moderation.

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| Headteacher | Marion Dark |
| Inspector's name and number | Stephen Green 809 |