

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Edmundsbury Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School			
Address	Grove Road Bury St Edmunds IP33 3BJ		
Date of inspection	02 May 2019	Status of school	VA Primary
Diocese	St Edmundsbury and Ipswich	URN	124762

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
Additional Judgements	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good
	The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Good

School context

St Edmundsbury is a primary school with 281 pupils on roll. The majority are of White British heritage. Few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national averages. The school extended its age range to include years 5 and 6 in 2016. There has been a growth in pupil numbers and increase in the diversity of the school community. There have been significant staff changes since the previous inspection including both the headteacher and deputy.

The school's Christian vision

Happiness, inspiration and achievement through Christian values.
Colossians 3:23 'Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart...'

Key findings

- The school's vision and associated values are established and promoted by school leaders. However, their Christian foundation is not shared across all of the school community. This means that their impact on shaping all areas of policy and improvement planning is limited.
- Leaders, including governors, have had a relentless focus on raising standards which has resulted in improvements in teaching and learning. Overall the downward trend in pupil outcomes has been reversed and areas which remain relatively weak are being addressed. However, the influence of the school's Christian vision and associated values on improved outcomes for pupils is not sufficiently recognised.
- A wide range of strategies have been introduced to support the most vulnerable pupils, which expresses the school's vision well. There is some evidence of the impact on pupil behaviour and attendance as well as a narrowing of the gap in achievement between these pupils and their peers.
- Collective worship and religious education (RE) are important to school life. High expectations for RE have been established. The introduction of a wider range of visits and visitors as well as training from the diocese have resulted in improvements in teacher confidence and pupil engagement in the subject.
- The areas to improve identified in the previous inspection have not been fully addressed.

Areas for development

- Ensure all stakeholders, especially pupils and parents, appreciate the Christian foundation and centrality of the school's vision so that it enables adults and pupils to flourish in all aspects of school life.
- Provide greater opportunities for a wide range of stakeholders to contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of the distinctiveness of St Edmundsbury as a Church of England school.
- Establish a shared understanding of spirituality, linked to the school's vision, embedding a wide range of opportunities which encourage and support pupils' spiritual development.

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

Although the school's vision is recognised by all members of its community, understanding of its Christian foundation and theological underpinning is variable. There is insufficient focus on the role of the distinctive Christian vision and its associated values in bringing about improvements. It is not clearly expressed in relevant policies and curriculum planning. It does not, therefore, consistently impact explicitly and positively on school life. Some areas of the website reflect the school's Christian distinctiveness, but this is not consistently the case.

A period of considerable turbulence resulted in a significant decline in pupil achievement over the past two years. In a relatively short period of time the headteacher has formed an enthusiastic and cohesive staff team which is committed to enabling all pupils to flourish. Consequently, evidence in pupil workbooks indicates that the ambitious targets set are achievable. Leaders have accurately identified areas for further improvements, including attendance and fixed term exclusions. Strategies are beginning to have an impact positively on these. Pupils benefit from a broad and balanced creative curriculum and a range of extra-curricular activities. These create opportunities for them to flourish in all areas of school life. However, a direct correlation is not made between these experiences and the school's Christian vision. Pupils in Year 4 have established a Bible club. This is planned and led by them and attracts a goodly number of pupils each week.

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and the RE and collective worship leader work well together and are mutually supportive. They exemplify the vision, modelling Christian values in their leadership. This culture of valuing every individual has a significant impact on both pupils and adults, developing self-confidence, encouraging aspiration and enabling everyone to flourish. Governors know their school well. The RE designated governor has carried out regular evaluation of both RE and worship and provides detailed constructive feedback which leaders act upon. The self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness as a Church school is not rigorous enough. Although it is detailed and well-evidenced it is not sufficiently aligned to strands within the evaluation schedule. The views of parents are gleaned on an informal basis. Links with local church communities are strong. Clergy visit not only as governors and to lead worship but also to discuss some of the 'difficult questions' that pupils raise during their RE lessons, thereby contributing to pupils' spiritual development.

Understanding of spirituality is limited. This has impeded progress in this area, which was a focus for improvement at the last inspection. Prayer is an intrinsic part of worship and pupils are beginning to utilise the recently introduced reflective journals. Some additional provision has been made, for example class displays on worship themes, but lack of guidance on their use results in limited engagement. There is a reflection garden in the school grounds which classes visit but nowhere set aside inside school for pupils to reflect or pray.

Relationships across the school are strong and are founded on the Christian 'Values for Life'. Pupils are polite, work well together in groups and show respect for each other's viewpoints. Teachers draw on a range of strategies to ensure all pupils are focussed on their learning in class and feel safe and happy during breaktimes. The positive approach to inclusion, within a Christian ethos of love and respect, reflects the school's associated values ensuring the needs of all, including the most vulnerable, are met. The school has responded well to the increasing number of pupils with additional learning and social needs by investing in a range of additional support for them and their families. Although there remains a significant gap between the achievement of these pupils and their peers there are indications that this is beginning to close. As the result of a 'mental health week' staff and pupils gained confidence in identifying and sharing their feelings and were given strategies to control their emotions.

Pupils are effectively supported to develop a sense of social and moral responsibility which they readily link to their core Christian values. The school supports a range of local and national charities. The death of the school caretaker prompted them to fund raise for a cancer charity. A recent visit by missionaries inspired pupils to consider their response to world problems and to needs closer to home. In a subsequent RE lesson one class was set the challenge of thinking what mission they could do to make the world a better place. Their response ranged from arranging a bake sale to raise funds for the school's 'toilet twinning' project to helping an elderly neighbour with shopping.

Pupils recognise the importance of the whole school coming together for collective worship. By systematically focussing on the school's core values in rotation leaders ensure worship has an impact on pupils' lives in school and beyond. Worship concludes with a member of staff posing a challenging question linked to the core value for pupils to consider as they leave the hall. Personal reflection journals have recently been introduced allowing pupils a further opportunity to consider and record their response. Leadership of worship is shared between a variety of staff, visitors, clergy and an Open the Book team. This enables pupils to develop an appreciation of a variety of styles and approaches to worship. Anglican traditions of welcome are used at the start with pupils lighting a candle which pupils recognise as symbolising Jesus as the light of the world. Pupils gain a knowledge of stories from the Bible and other sources which they link to their core values. Pupils particularly enjoy singing worship songs, not

only as they enter and leave the hall, but in the playground and at home. The varied programme of worship is enhanced by visits to the parish church, particularly for major Christian festivals, supporting pupils' appreciation of the Christian calendar. Pupils have the opportunity to become collective worship leaders, contributing both practically and in leading aspects of worship including prayers and drama. The intention to extend their role to shaping and planning some worship sessions is set out in the action plan and the pupils are enthusiastic about this opportunity. Although governors attend worship and have interviewed groups of pupils the breadth and depth of evaluation of worship is limited.

RE is accorded high status. It meets statutory requirements, reflecting positively the Church of England Statement of Entitlement for RE. Pupils enjoy the subject and collaborate well, exchanging ideas whilst respecting each other's views. They are developing a clear understanding of Christianity and other world religions and understand the importance of doing so for their future lives. Initiatives to widen the range of visits and visitors to the school have had a considerable impact on pupils as they gain appreciation of diversity and the relevance of faith to life choices.

The effectiveness of RE is Good



Teaching and learning in RE is consistently good. Teachers employ a wide range of strategies with some lessons being full of lively discussion and activity whilst others allow space for reflection. The RE leader has excellent subject knowledge and contagious enthusiasm for RE. Success in securing developments are tracked through a well thought out improvement plan with planned impact measures. Training and professional development from the diocese has been effective. Termly assessment data confirms pupils' attainment in RE is broadly in line with other subjects, reflecting the upward trend in English and mathematics. Assessment is increasingly drawn upon by teachers to ensure learning experiences are challenging and creative for all abilities.

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