

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Capel St Mary Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The Street, Capel St Mary, Suffolk. IP9 2EG

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	St Edmundsbury and Ipswich
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Suffolk
Date of inspection	10 January 2017
Date of last inspection	1 November 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	VC Primary 124749
Headteacher	Wendy Kelway
Inspector's name and number	Graham Lancaster 713

School context

This is an average sized primary school, with mixed age classes for the 290 pupils. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average, as is the proportion of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. The headteacher was not in post for the previous denominational inspection but was at the time of the Section 5 OFSTED inspection (July 2015) when the judgement for overall effectiveness improved from requires improvement to good.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Capel St Mary Primary as a Church of England school are good

- The Christian ethos of the school is deeply embedded and has provided the secure foundation on which improvements in the cohesion and effectiveness of the staff team have been built.
- The school is a caring, inclusive community in which every person is valued and where the achievements of each pupil matter, regardless of their starting point.
- Worship and religious education (RE) are given high profiles and contribute significantly to the school's Christian ethos.

Areas to improve

- Develop outward expressions of the Christian distinctiveness of the school on the school's website and within the school building.
- Deepen pupils' experience of spirituality by developing their understanding of the impact of religious beliefs and enhancing stimuli within areas set aside for reflection and prayer.
- Extend the impact of collective worship by increasing the scope for pupils to contribute to planning, leadership and evaluation and creating opportunities for pupils to explore themes in greater depth.

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

The distinctive Christian character of Capel St Mary is evident in the impact it has on the whole community. Staff, pupils and parents testify that Christian values are central to strong, supportive relationships, excellent pupil behaviour and the school's clear commitment to every pupil achieving success. One clear manifestation of this is the school's inclusive ethos, welcoming new pupils with particular needs or from varied cultural backgrounds. Parents whose children have recently joined the school testify to the positive change in their attitude to school and the effective support that is contributing to their success. The distinctive Christian character is less overt on the school's website and visual expressions of the school's Christian foundation around the school building are limited.

There is an explicit commitment to the development and progress of every pupil, particularly those that are vulnerable, which stems from the Christian values of the school. One parent described the way in which staff celebrate with her every milestone her son has achieved, no matter how small. In recent years pupils' attainment in Early Years, phonics and Key Stage 1 has been consistently above national averages. In 2016 the percentage of Year 6 pupils meeting age related expectations in combined reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average and significantly above for more able pupils. Leaders have carried out a forensic analysis of pupil outcomes to ensure that areas of comparative vulnerability are identified and addressed. Challenging targets have been set for all year groups and pupil progress against these is closely monitored by class teachers and school leaders. Evidence in pupils' workbooks reflects high expectations of all pupils and effective assessment and planning to ensure all make at least good progress. Whilst showing compassion and understanding, clear expectations of personal and shared responsibility are set, which have resulted in attendance improving so that it is now above the national average.

Pupils understand the importance of charitable giving and the School Council plays a significant role in both determining the choice of charities supported and the means of raising funds. Their understanding of the Christian values of compassion and generosity are demonstrated by instances of these being directly drawn from pupils' awareness of particular challenges facing members of their own school community. Prayer takes place both within collective worship and at other times in the school day and supports pupils' spiritual development well. Pupils describe occasions when they have spent time in either the quiet area outside or in the library. They value these spaces where they can 'think things through'. However, both contain little by way of stimulation for the development of pupils' spirituality.

Pupils confidently express their views and know that these are valued. They show great capacity for considering challenging questions. The school has links with a Christian school and orphanage in India which contributes to pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. Pupils' enthusiasm for RE stems from the imaginative planning of teachers within a well-structured curriculum. Pupils readily make comparisons between world faiths and draw parallels with their own experiences. They draw on current and previous teaching of Gospel values within collective worship in class discussions. One pupil said 'RE is really important so that we can know what other people believe and respect them'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The importance of collective worship to the life of the school is recognised by all. Worship is focussed on Gospel values and biblical teaching which contributes significantly to the Christian ethos of the school. Pupils of all ages appreciate the importance of putting these values into practice. One reception age pupil went home and talked to her mum about the importance of crossing over the road to help a stranger who needs help. Another put kindness into action by writing a letter and giving some chocolates to a neighbour whose husband had died. However, opportunities are not fully utilised for the value currently being considered to be reinforced in the classroom or by parents at home.

Worship starts and ends with songs which contribute well to worship being inspirational and uplifting. A focal point includes a candle which pupils recognise as representing the light of Christ. Staff and pupils are fully engaged throughout. Opportunities are regularly provided for pupils to volunteer to take an active part. There is some evidence of Anglican traditions such as welcoming and sending. Reference is made to the person of Jesus and Bible stories are frequently included. Prayer concludes each act of worship and is directly related to the theme and relevant to pupils' lives. Whenever appropriate, prayers written by classes or individual pupils are included. Pupils are provided with reflection diaries in which to capture their thoughts during class based worship. Although these include some evidence of the impact of worship their use is currently inconsistent. The headteacher provides highly effective leadership of collective worship and is has ensured that pupils enjoy a broad range of styles by involving representatives of local churches. This includes Open the Book sessions which feature highly amongst pupils' favourites. Pupils are also provided with opportunities to plan and lead worship, either as members of the school council or as part of their class worship sessions. The creation of a pupil group with particular responsibility for worship is imminent. Training and support for members of this group is planned

to enable them to contribute in depth to the evaluation and further development of worship. The parish church has made significant changes to the inside of the building in order to create a flexible space for the school to use for major Christian festivals. This facilitates greater pupil participation, for instance in drama, and ensures pupils can see and be seen. These occasions are very well supported by parents.

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

The headteacher has developed a highly effective leadership team who are relentless in striving for the best provision for every pupil, founded on the Christian values of the school. One senior leader stated, 'we wouldn't have achieved the good judgement from OFSTED if we hadn't developed the Christian ethos first'. One parent described 'the moral compass of the school's leadership, drawn from the Christian values of compassion, love and care and demonstrated by the teachers.' All staff work very well as a team and their relationships exemplify the Christian ethos of the school. Foundation governors, including the incumbent, share a vision for the school as a church school, working in together with local churches to serve the local community. Community engagement in the school has also been fostered through initiatives such as Thursday morning shared reading sessions. School leaders work in close partnership with governors who know their school well and provide well-informed challenge as well as support. However, they have identified the need to contribute to the future development of RE and collective worship from a more informed basis through a more systematic approach to monitoring and evaluation.

The headteacher involves all staff and governors in the evaluation process, sharing in the identification of development priorities. Although self-evaluation against the SIAMS framework is detailed, the evidence provided is not always sufficiently correlated with the relevant criteria. Leaders have capitalised on training provided by the diocese which leaders describe as 'instrumental in building the confidence of class teachers in teaching RE'. The diocesan annual conference is also highly valued and actively contributes to the school's commitment to develop future leaders of church schools. Effective action has been taken to address areas for development from the previous denominational inspection. In particular the school now makes effective use both of the parish church as a physical learning resource and also of the expertise of church leaders within RE and collective worship. Good links are in place with neighbouring schools and leaders have plans in place to work more closely with church schools in the local area to share expertise and ideas for future initiatives.

The RE leader has excellent subject knowledge. Her enthusiasm and ambition for RE is infectious and leads to high levels of enjoyment amongst both teachers and pupils. Teachers readily approach her for advice and she is provided with regular opportunities to monitor the effectiveness of teaching in RE. This results in her being able to capitalise on particular strengths within the staff and target support where it is most required. In addition to charitable giving and effective RE pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development has been strengthened through a range of strategies including a 'buddy' system, a range of leadership responsibilities for pupils and recognition of 'acts of kindness'. The emphasis placed on this by school leaders is recognised and much appreciated by parents.