

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

| Gislingham Church of England Primary School | | | |
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| Address | Broadfields Road, Gislingham, Eye, Suffolk IP23 8HX | | |
| Date of inspection | 28 January 2020 | Status of school | Primary academy inspected as voluntary controlled. Part of the Tilian Partnership MAT |
| Diocese | St Edmundsbury & Ipswich | URN | 143065 |

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| 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 | Good |
| Additional Judgement | The impact of collective worship | Grade | Good |

School context

Gislingham is a primary school with 132 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national averages. The school belongs to the Tilian Partnership of seven Church of England schools. Several teachers are new to the school. The long-standing incumbent has recently returned after a significant period of absence.

The school's Christian vision

At the heart of our vision is the belief that the spiritual, social, mental and physical development of every child is as important as academic achievement. We strive to nurture children to believe in themselves and honour our Christian values, ensuring they have the capacity to thrive and flourish throughout their lives.

Belong, Believe, Become

Jesus once told a story about a tree that grew from the smallest of seeds. As it grew larger and larger, the birds of the air came and rested in its branches. Matthew 13: 31-32

Key findings

- Long established and deeply embedded Christian values have an exceptional impact on relationships, wellbeing and confidence. The vision statement has been recently revised to better reflect practice and is clearly articulated by many, but not all, members of the school community.
- Worship in Church and in school is joyful. Pupil worship councillors are beginning to develop their role.
- The headteacher and the incumbent provide inspirational Christian leadership. Staffing changes have been handled well to minimise disruption for pupils. However, the headteacher is currently shouldering the majority of the Christian leadership roles.
- Rich, meaningful experiences promote pupils' spiritual growth. Religious education (RE) is a cornerstone of the exciting and creative curriculum, inspiring pupils as well as developing their thinking and debating skills.
- All staff are equipped well to fulfil their roles. However, time constraints mean that training opportunities from the diocese are under-utilised.

Areas for development

- Sharpen the Christian focus of the monitoring strategy by ensuring that both the impact of the vision and pupils' spiritual development are formally identified and assessed.
- Secure the distinctiveness of the school by giving all staff and governors access to high quality training focused on Church school leadership, so that responsibility for worship, religious education and the development of the Christian vision are shared.

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

Christian values are deeply embedded in the day-to-day life of the school. They engender strong, mutually supportive relationships which enable everyone to work with confidence and to aim high. A sense of security in the worth of each individual promotes a high level of wellbeing in pupils and staff. All pupils have a good understanding of how Christian values drive the character of their school. Even the younger children have a values rich vocabulary because there is constant reinforcement throughout the school day. The vision statement is new. It reflects the views of the school community and articulates long established practice. Most adults and pupils can talk about the vision statement in relation to the Christian values and can explain the meaning of the parable.

The headteacher and the incumbent have worked together for many years, resulting in a strong school/Church partnership and shared sense of purpose. This has enabled the school to maintain its strong Christian identity, which is valued by governors and the community. The school has recently emerged from a period where there have been many staffing changes at the same time as the long-term absence of the incumbent. This has been handled well to minimise disruption for pupils, but there has been an impact on the workload of the headteacher. She currently leads on both religious education and collective worship, whilst maintaining a part-time class teacher role as well as other subject leadership responsibilities. As a result, whilst standards have not fallen, the capacity to work with partners, for example the diocese or other Church schools, has been limited. Training priorities for staff and governors have included religious education but not anything related to whole school Christian distinctiveness. This means that Christian leadership is currently not sufficiently distributed to ensure sustainability. There is a foundation sub-committee within the Tilian Partnership, but it has not been able to provide any support.

Pupils and staff flourish because everyone is welcomed and there is a strong sense of belonging. All staff are supported to fulfil their roles, resulting in positive attitudes, respect for each other and a sense of wellbeing. Guidance on promoting good mental health has been acted upon and further training is in the pipeline. Everyone has a part to play and all voices are heard. Believing in themselves and one another, individuals have confidence to try new things. The exciting curriculum both nurtures individual talent and promotes effective teamwork. Time to think is built in across subjects so that pupils, and adults, become naturally reflective. The RE curriculum models good teaching and learning practice, and pupils thrive in the 'very fun' lessons which explore diversity, research inspirational people and focus strongly on core values. Academic outcomes for all groups are good across all subjects. Progress is carefully monitored and individual support is put in place. There are many opportunities for pupils to try new things and activities are carefully chosen to develop confidence, engender supportive relationships and broaden horizons. Pupils glow when they talk about performing Shakespeare in the theatre or making recordings for the local radio station.

Pupils' experiences of school are overwhelmingly positive. They are encouraged and enabled to grow and develop as individuals and as part of a cohesive and supportive team. They learn to be leaders and make real contributions to school improvement. The worship council, for example, is beginning to inform decisions around the development of collective worship. Pupils' understanding of everyone's right to belong has resulted in mature acceptance of those in their classes who are different from themselves. Pupils are beginning to consider their responsibilities in school, in the community and further afield. They discuss issues such as climate change, then take practical action. Older pupils listen regularly to Newsround, which sparks debates and teaches them to consider a range of views before coming to their own conclusions. They are developing critical thinking skills. Collective worship underpins the vision of belonging, believing and becoming. It brings a securely Christian perspective. A range of adult leaders provide opportunities to learn about the Christian faith and there is always time to reflect on the values at the heart of the school. Worship is inclusive and joyful, bringing the school family together. Pupils are supported to explore their own beliefs. RE provides a safe and respectful environment to talk about personal faith. Worship makes space for individuals to build a relationship with God. Quiet areas around the school are used for reflection and, sometimes, prayer.

Partnerships within the school community are effective. Staff demonstrate a shared purpose in 'keeping our precious identity'. They are supported by the headteacher and by each other as they strive to provide the best for every pupil. They are successful because, 'every adult is receptive to dialogue about change and development' and they are confident in their own capacity to improve. Parents are included too. There are many opportunities for them to voice their views both formally and informally. They are well informed because, they say, 'communication is very good' and they are given regular guidance on supporting their children's learning and development. Church members share worship with pupils in Church and at school, where they bring Bible stories to life in regular drama sessions. The incumbent is a familiar figure in school, providing pastoral support, spiritual guidance and practical advice to any who require it. The role of governors is changing; as the Tilian Partnership has grown, more responsibility has been devolved to them. They take their role seriously and know the school well through their monitoring visits. The majority of governors have been in post for a relatively short time. They are supportive of the school's Christian foundation and make sure that collective worship and religious education are prioritised. They have not, however, benefitted from training on leadership in Church schools. This means that the monitoring cycle is not focused on the impact of the vision and there is no shared understanding of how spiritual growth and development are embedded within the curriculum. Over the years, wider partnerships have supported the school's desire for continued improvement. The benefits of sharing good practice in RE and of developing pupils' global awareness through international school links are still visible. Recent staff changes and time pressures have made it difficult to maintain this level of connectivity, although there are tentative plans in place. The whole team is committed to 'making the vision the beating heart of the school.'

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| Headteacher | Julie Welham |
| Inspector's name and number | Gill Hipwell 480 |