

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Great Finborough Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	
High Road, Great Finborough, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 3AQ	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	St Edmundsbury and Ipswich
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Suffolk
Date of inspection	31 January 2017
Date of last inspection	12 January 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled Primary 124732
Headteacher	Stephen Dodd
Inspector's name and number	Judith Ruff 528

School context

Great Finborough Church Primary is a smaller than average primary school with 142 pupils on roll. It serves the villages of Great Finborough and Buxhall, as well as the wider local area. Since the previous inspection the school has moved from pupils leaving at the end of Year 4 to an all through primary range. Pupils are predominantly from a White British heritage. Percentages of pupils receiving special educational needs support and those in receipt of free school meals are below national averages. The church of St Andrew is within walking distance of the school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Great Finborough as a Church of England school are good

- The school's ethos is significantly enhanced by the embedding of Christian values. These serve as a framework of support and guidance for all members of the community, shaping the building of character and the striving to always be the best that you can be.
- High quality, creative and challenging curriculum experiences deepen pupils' spiritual development through enabling them to see the beauty and diversity of God's creation and reinforce the responsibility of all to steward this.
- Excellent behaviour and relationships of all within the school community emanate from a deep belief that all are made in the image of God, are precious in his sight and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.
- A strong, vibrant partnership established with the local group of churches enriches the pupils' understanding of diversity within the Christian church and significantly informs their understanding of Christianity as a living faith, worked out daily through words, deeds and actions.

Areas to improve

- Improve communication to both prospective and existing parents, including by raising the profile of values work on the school website, so that they can more clearly link the school's strapline and its Christian foundation.
- Develop the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship so that all stakeholders are part of the process and ensure that the outcomes from this in terms of raising the quality of provision are fully understood and communicated.
- Increase the capacity for the strategic development of the school as a church school by ensuring that discussions and analysis from foundation governor meetings are tabled as part of full governing body meetings.
- Deepen pupils' understanding of prayer by enabling more frequent writing of prayers and by the introduction of well-known Anglican prayers which have supported Christians through the ages.

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

'This is a truly special school where children are valued and encouraged to be the best that they can be, both academically and also by being shown how to make a valued contribution to the community', said a parent. Values undoubtedly shape the way pupils are building their own unique characters and abilities. 'They help me to be a better person, to understand people's feelings, that I have a duty to help other people and to learn to respect the beliefs of others', said a pupil earnestly. Their compassionate approach to those in need has led to pupils leading on raising funds to support a child undergoing treatment for cancer as well as donating to a local foodbank. Pupils enjoy using their talents in the service of others, such as singing for local residents at a care home. The school's high levels of care and nurture through its 'family' approach result in attendance being high and exclusion an exceptionally rare event. Disadvantaged pupils make good progress, at times slightly exceeding their peers. In this school each child is regarded as unique and special, made in God's image and precious in his sight and every effort is made to ensure success is experienced by pupils. Pupil achievement is well above national averages, with progress accelerating as pupils move across the school. Spiritual development is significantly enhanced by life changing experiences, such as the 'coast to coast' cycle ride and the residential trip to the Outer Hebrides. Parents, whose children have moved up to secondary, spoke of the impact in terms of a greater sense of maturity that emerged as an outcome of these experiences. Pupils are deeply affected by their abilities to meet challenges head on and succeed with the support and encouragement of the team. Cooking, exploring and just standing and soaking in the awe and wonder of the grandeur of the scenery, leaves lasting memories in pupils' minds.

Behaviour and relationships across the school are founded on a deep understanding of the need to support each person's self- image and their abilities to grow in hope, build their sense of dignity and respect for all, regardless of beliefs or religion. Pupils take examples enthusiastically from Bible stories they have heard. For example the healing of Naaman of leprosy and the parable of the unforgiving servant. They are learning about these stories with enjoyment and making direct links between the message of the story and lessons for their lives today. They know that forgiveness is essential for trust to be rebuilt. The value of service is lived out through pupils willingly taking on responsibilities as sports' leaders and monitors. Pupils, through their involvement in the local Remembrance Day service are developing an understanding of the sacrifice that others have given that we might live our lives in peace. The November service held at the church had a deep impact on the school community as they brought photographs of soldiers killed in war and thought about their sacrifice. Pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith is developing well through the diocesan Kagera link in Africa and visits to the St Edmundsbury Cathedral. Links with a local Salvation Army citadel, as well as visits to local Anglican churches support the development of pupils' understanding of Christianity as a diverse faith. RE makes a good contribution to pupils' knowledge of both the Christian and other world faiths, enabling them to compare and contrast beliefs and to understand the importance of faith and belief on people's daily lives, deeds and actions.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Staff members interviewed spoke of how they have seen collective worship developing over the years to become an important and central aspect of school life. 'It is fulfilling for the children, giving them opportunities to reflect, to be spiritual and to learn more about Christian worship and Bible stories'. Staff say that they find the times of reflection and stillness valuable, instilling an atmosphere of calm in an often frenetic day. Staff with children in the school talk about the supportive and collaborative importance of the whole community coming together to praise, pray and consider the scriptural meanings and messages. Pupils enjoy collective worship, particularly the fortnightly visits from the 'Open the Book' team, which provides opportunities for role play and different faces leading and supporting with the retelling of Biblical stories and texts. Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship by senior leaders and foundation governors has resulted in worship now having a clear structure and the inclusion of key Anglican liturgical phrases and responses. The collective worship section on the school website helpfully guides parents as to why worship is important in church schools, with examples of how this relates to the church calendar and festivals. The season of Epiphany recently celebrated with a procession, including the wise men to the church, supports pupils' and parents' understanding of how the church year is based on key events from the life of Christ. Pupils are given opportunities to write prayers for festivals such as harvest, but they say they would like increased opportunities to share their thoughts and ideas, both in a written and more spontaneous way. Pupils know the Lord's Prayer, but not other well-known and used Anglican prayers, which have sustained Christians across the ages. Times of quiet and stillness are valued as 'a time to ask God for help, it calms me down and I can reflect on what I could do better.' Pupils have a good knowledge of gospel stories and they understand that Christians learn from Jesus' example and teachings and live their lives according to these. 'Through learning about Bible stories, you have a choice and you can decide what you believe and how you want to act.' Pupils have a developing understanding of the Trinity and worship often commences with the lighting of three candles to represent Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pupils are learning a significant amount about the structure and participation in worship through the half termly opportunities to plan and lead worship, supported by members of the clergy. They speak of developing courage and

confidence to present their ideas and role plays to the rest of the school. Collective worship is well planned, discussed and agreed at termly meetings between staff and foundation governors. Music and singing contributes significantly to worship. Pupils sing beautifully and understand that praising God through the lyrics of songs and hymns is an important way in which Christians honour him. The level of clergy involvement and partnership is a strength of the school. Weekly clergy led worship deepens the school community's understanding of the theological basis of worship and concepts such as the Trinity are explained in an age appropriate way. The local churches are used very well for festivals, Christingle services and carol singing. Pupils attend Sunday services on occasions such as Mothering Sunday and Remembrance Sunday, thus enabling good relationships to be built with members of the church community. Monitoring and evaluation taking place amongst pupils, foundation governors and senior leaders and subsequent decisions made on improving provision, at present are not shared and discussed at full governing body meetings.

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

Leaders clearly place great importance on the school's Christian foundation and have worked hard and consistently since the previous inspection to embed distinctively Christian values within the school. They understand how these values shape and define pupils as individuals, but also how the community as a whole can respond to others' needs and unite to support and encourage those who are going through challenging times. The school has worked hard on embedding key Christian values within its life and work. However, the good work which is happening in school is not sufficiently well communicated to either prospective or existing parents. The school strapline 'Enriching Young Minds' celebrates the exceptionally broad, rich and diverse curriculum on offer to pupils, but is not unpicked in terms of what this might mean within a Christian context. Self-evaluation processes enable the staff leaders to have an accurate understanding of where further improvements are needed. These are encapsulated in good quality action plans, both for RE and collective worship. These plans are not currently incorporated into the school's main development plan. Both RE and collective worship make a significant contribution not only to pupils' understanding of the chosen values, but also their knowledge about other world religions. Both support the development of respect for other beliefs and practices within a growing multi-cultural world. The delivery of collective worship and RE are good, with staff well supported to develop their skills, experience and confidence in leading worship and teaching other world religions. Recent staff training on the 'Emmanuel Project' has further strengthened understanding of how to teach key religious concepts. Parents are very supportive and appreciative of the school's work in caring, nurturing and educating their children. Their views on church school distinctiveness are not currently sought on a regular basis. The church partnership is strong and clergy interest, commitment and involvement significantly enhance pupils' understanding of Christianity as a living faith. Foundation governors work faithfully and committedly in their role of monitoring and evaluating the practices which enhance the Christian distinctiveness of the school. The outcomes of these monitoring activities have improved and shaped developments, such as an increased understanding of Anglican practices and liturgy. However, since very little discussion is recorded at main governor meetings on SIAMS related issues, there are insufficient opportunities for all governors to understand the impact of these monitoring activities. This limits the ability of the full governing body to be able to participate in the strategic development of the school as a church school. Links with the diocese are good and both staff and clergy have benefited from training opportunities and on-site advice and support from diocesan consultants. As yet, there has been no training for the whole governing body on aspects such as church school distinctiveness.

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