

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### Ixworth Church of England Primary School

Crown Lane, Ixworth, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP31 2EL	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>St Edmundsbury and Ipswich</b>
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	01 December 2017
Name of multi-academy trust	The Tilian Partnership
Date of inspection	19 July 2018
Date of last inspection	03 October 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary Academy 145234
Principal Headteacher	Andrew Berry Lyndsey Allsopp
Inspector's name and number	Judith Ruff 528

#### School context

Ixworth is a smaller than average school with 176 pupils on roll, plus a part time nursery. The school has moved to serve the full primary range since the previous inspection. An Ofsted judgement of inadequate in February 2017 triggered a sponsored academy conversion. The school joined The Tilian Partnership. There have been significant staff changes over the past two years. The current headteacher took up her post in April 2018. The majority of pupils are from a White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is below national average. Pupils in receipt of additional funding is above national average.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ixworth as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- Strong, well-developed links with the local church community have remained steadfast and true to retaining the Christian profile of the school. This faithful commitment has successfully provided a constant Christian witness within the school, bringing the pupils a clear understanding of Christianity in practice.
- Recent appointments of key senior leaders have brought a renewed enthusiasm and energy to the church foundation and together they form a determined and talented team committed to raising up the school's Christian distinctiveness.

#### Areas to improve

- In partnership with stakeholders agree a Christian vision statement for the school, along with associated values, which are theologically underpinned and take account of both the Church of England and diocesan visions for education.
- Review key policies to ensure that they reflect the newly agreed vision and that practice reflects and embeds both vision and values throughout the school.
- Ensure that public communications, such as the website and school signage, reflect clearly the commitment of the school to its vision, values and Christian foundation.
- Develop a clear understanding of spirituality, which can support the agreed vision and values and permeate throughout the curriculum and life of the school.
- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation arrangements in place are carried out rigorously and comprehensively, enabling the school to rapidly progress to become a vibrant church school.

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

Until recently the three core school values of aspiration, inspiration and respect have not been explicitly linked to biblical roots and pupils are unable to name these and explain how they can use the values in their academic and personal development. The current school focus on respect is not only much more clearly linked to the teachings of Christ and the apostles, but also makes meaningful links to current events such as the football world cup and caring for the school environment. The importance of respecting and caring for the school's external areas was demonstrated to pupils through a recent initiative to tidy up neglected areas of the grounds, enlisting the help of trainee cadets from the nearby Honington air base as well as parents, pupils and staff. Pupils are beginning to understand how values such as perseverance and courage can help them to succeed. They knew about the parables of the lost sheep and coin and talked about the perseverance of the friends of the paralysed man resulting in him being healed. Year 5 pupils looking to the national tests at the end of Year 6 spoke of needing to develop resilience, self-belief and trust in their teachers to prepare them well. Pupil outcomes are currently variable across the school from year to year. Vulnerable pupils are not attaining overall as well as they are expected to do in relation to national averages. Compassionate leadership from the headteacher, modelling the school's values into practice, results in vulnerable pupils and their families being given opportunities for fresh starts after short periods of fixed term exclusions. A member of staff with specific responsibility for well-being is having success in building trusting links between home and school, enabling the attendance of vulnerable pupils to improve so they are close to national averages. There is some understanding of spirituality amongst the school staff, but opportunities for spiritual development are not clearly identified in the curriculum or other aspects of school life. Spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is not sufficiently driven by the Christian character and values of the school. The behaviour of pupils is mostly good, with schemes such as buddy readers supporting the values of care and responsibility. Pupils' awareness of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith is very low at present. Their understanding of diversity within the Christian church, is at present limited to the Anglican church with little understanding of different traditions. Religious education (RE) makes a satisfactory contribution to the Christian character of the school. It provides opportunities for pupils to explore core Christian concepts and supports their understanding of how faith impacts on people's lives. Pupils have different views on their RE lessons. Some enjoy finding out about other world faiths and learning that there are both similarities and differences between these and Christianity, but that all beliefs need to be treated with respect. Others find the subject less interesting, but do enjoy cross-curricular opportunities, such as the use of art and drama.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory**

Following a recent training session staff now have a clearer idea of the importance and centrality of collective worship in a church school. The current headteacher is an excellent role model, demonstrating to all within the school community the importance of communicating Christian values through stories, drama, prayers and into everyday actions. Interesting ways of presenting key values do make a lasting impact on pupils. One parent recalled her children cutting up pieces of paper and putting them into a saucepan to make 'friendship soup'. Staff representatives spoke of their appreciation of a time to be quiet and reflect in the busy school day. Also, they recognise the importance of being present for worship so that key messages can be reinforced back in the classrooms. Pupils have learned a significant number of Bible stories through the fortnightly visits of the 'Open the Book' team. Other members of the clergy team have also visited fortnightly to talk about Christian festivals and the church calendar. Pupils understand that worship is a time 'to speak to God, to say sorry and to learn about Bible stories'. They listen attentively in worship and are keen to contribute their thoughts and ideas. They remember and appreciate opportunities to worship outside, such as the taking part in the local Remembrance Day commemorations. Half termly chosen values now form the basis for planning acts of worship. A display behind the worship table celebrates the discussions and information that has been collected by pupils and staff to illustrate the chosen value. The worship table itself is placed in a central position, with its altar frontal representing the liturgical colours. Prayers are written by pupils on the theme of the various values and these are developing in terms of depth of thought and awareness of what to include. Older pupils are worship monitors, ensuring that the technology works as well as setting out the seating arrangements. Pupils do know significant amounts about the life of Jesus. Parents report their children are 'Always talking about God and Jesus'. This knowledge has been reinforced by some very good work linking with the cathedral discovery team to explore Easter and the local clergy team members leading on Epiphany and Palm Sunday workshops. At present pupils are not familiar with the Trinity as referring to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Planning for worship is developing well under the leadership of the headteacher; it identifies not only the values to be focused upon, but also key festivals and events in the church calendar. The church is used for Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, harvest and for an end of term service. Pupils enjoy being part of these services through readings, prayers and singing songs and hymns. Pupils are keen to get more involved with the planning and leading of worship and school future plans reflect this in next year's priorities. Parents are invited to attend church services, but do not attend school-based worship or celebration assemblies. Neither have they been

asked their views on the collective worship provision that the school makes. There has been some monitoring of collective worship by the headteacher and staff, but this has not been extensive enough to show impact on improving provision further. The headteacher is bringing her experiences and passion for leading worship in other church schools to Ixworth. She understands what needs to be done in order to develop worship provision further at the school.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is satisfactory**

Leaders agree that at present there is no clear Christian vision for the school that all stakeholders can unite behind. The chosen values are now being more closely linked with biblical sources and awareness is building as to how these have the potential to impact on the whole school community and influence the thoughts, words and actions of all. The headteacher has made an excellent start to her leadership at Ixworth. She is totally committed to the Christian foundation of the school and fully understands the importance of modelling the values in practice on a daily basis. She treats staff with compassion, whilst still aspiring for all to use their skills and expertise to maximum effect so that all pupils have the very best opportunities to flourish. Relationships created between the headteacher and the principal and chair of governors, both members of the Tilian Partnership, are strong, built on mutual trust and respect. This has supported the headteacher very successfully in her first term at the school. School self-evaluation is accurate, developed in collaboration with senior leaders, demonstrating an honest assessment of where the school currently is, coupled with some excellent ideas of how to improve provision in the future. Worship planning and provision have been revitalised under the leadership of the headteacher. The leadership of special educational needs and /or disabilities (SEND) is also of high quality, enabling the school to be as inclusive as possible and to meet wide ranging needs in a caring, respectful way, valuing all as God's precious children. The leadership of RE is strong and committed. The RE leader has used diocesan training opportunities very well to raise her awareness of expectations of the Emmanuel scheme of work for RE used by many Suffolk schools. She has monitored RE outcomes through the 'scrapbooks' and is passionate about the impact of RE teaching permeating throughout the life of the school and encompassing the school values. Parents are supportive of the school's values but have not yet been offered the opportunity to express their views on the school as a church school. The church has provided good, committed levels of leadership to the school over a significant period of time. This takes many forms including regular leadership of worship, either through the clergy team or from 'Open the Book' members. Support for RE has been extremely valuable and greatly appreciated by school staff. Partnership with the diocese is strong through the use of training opportunities, use of expertise from cathedral staff and the involvement of the diocesan director of education in the appointment of the headteacher. The recruitment of the headteacher included substantive questioning around the distinctiveness of church schools. The school has not been part of the Tilian Trust sufficiently long for it to have received support from the foundation governors' committee. This means that to date, apart from some RE monitoring carried out by the present chair of the school's governance committee, no other church school related support has been received through the committees of the Tilian Trust. Key policies such as RE and collective worship have not yet been agreed. Monitoring and evaluation of aspects around the church school distinctiveness are under-developed.