

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Norton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

School Close

Norton

Bury St Edmunds

IP31 3LZ

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Diocese

Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Local authority

Suffolk

Date of inspection

24 November 2016

Date of last inspection

November 2011

Type of school and unique reference number

Primary 124710

Headteacher

Stella Hart

Inspector's name and number

Gillian Holmes 849

School context

Norton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is at the centre of its village community. It has strong links with the church and other aspects of village life. Since the last denominational inspection it has grown from a first school with 102 pupils aged four to nine to a primary school of 202 pupils. The headteacher has led the school for ten years and has a stable committed staff team. She is due to retire later this year.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Norton as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The school is led by a very professional team of caring staff who competently provide for all areas of their pupils' education.
- The school's very strong and explicit Christian ethos and values clearly shape school life, policies and relationships.
- Prominence is given to the worship programme to support the school's Christian ethos and values and the very good spiritual and moral development of pupils.

Areas to improve

- Develop 'pupil voice' by establishing a pupil worship committee, to enable even greater involvement of pupils in daily worship.
- Introduce the opportunity for more silent times in worship to provide pupils with a quiet space to reflect spirituality.

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

Norton CEVC primary school is explicit in its commitment to helping pupils to follow the example of Jesus. The vision statement 'Learning together, learning from God, learning with each other,' shapes school life and practice in a deep and meaningful way. The school's values, generosity and creativity this term, are very clearly expressed in Christian terms and underpinned by biblical examples. The headteacher's newsletters and the school website are used effectively to keep parents informed about the values and the wide range of spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) activities taking place within the school. These activities all contribute to the pupils' growing Christian awareness and an understanding of Christianity as a world faith. The school's involvement with the diocesan project in Kagera, Tanzania and their sponsorship of a child's education in the Gambia also contribute to this. The relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils are outstanding. Behaviour is excellent and incidents of bullying are very rare but are dealt with swiftly and fairly, in keeping with the school's Christian ethos of forgiveness and redemption. As an expression of its caring Christian ethos, pupils enjoy coming to school and so attendance is excellent. Exclusion is also very rare and has been used only as a final sanction after all other support strategies have been tried. The school has maintained its support for the individual during the transition to ensure that the pupil has the best possible chance of success in the future. The Christian ethos is displayed through the excellent support provided for all pupils, praised by the parents. Pupils with additional needs are fully included in all areas of the curriculum. Progress across the school is good, with attainment in-line with or above the national average. The teaching and learning is good or better in all classes. The school's recent introduction of 'learning muscles' which embrace the Christian values, encourage children with statements such as 'have a go', don't give up' and keep improving'. Pupils are enthusiastic about religious education (RE). RE introduces pupils to the lives of people of faith and encourages them to draw parallels with their own experiences. They are encouraged to ask 'big questions' in response to Christian beliefs and concepts. Pupils work in mixed ability groups with choices of activities in RE and other subjects; this supports full inclusion and provides excitement and challenge to their learning.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Daily worship is very well planned and delivered, indicating its central importance in school life. The Christian values are an integral part of the planning. There is strong pupil involvement in both leading and evaluating worship which contributes to pupils' enjoyment, enthusiasm and positive attitudes to worship. Informal monitoring may be done by any pupil completing a post-it at the end of worship. More formal monitoring is carried out regularly by the experienced and competent worship subject leader and a foundation governor. Staff also complete an evaluation when it is their turn to lead worship. All monitoring is used to enhance and develop the worship programme. All staff take turns to lead as well as a wide range of visitors. The Open the Book team come weekly, the incumbent leads worship fortnightly and clergy and other church leaders from other denominations are regular visitors. As a consequence pupils respond positively to this varied programme, have a growing biblical understanding and can clearly distinguish features of the different Christian traditions with a focus on Anglican practice. The Anglican church and the other denominational churches are used at different times of the year for school services. Parents and the local village community are invited to these. Parents feel that they are part of the school's worshipping community. All pupils have a clear understanding of the importance of Jesus as the centre of the Christian faith and pupils have an age appropriate understanding of the Trinity. They are able to talk confidently about the events of the main Christian festivals of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. Special experiences are arranged by the church community with the school to deepen pupils' experience of these festivals. Parents are regularly invited to share in some of these events and find these valuable times to find out more about the Christian message being shared with their children. Children understand the importance of prayer and staff suggest prayer when pupils are experiencing any difficulties. Prayer happens regularly through the day and three pupils are chosen daily in collective worship to say extemporary prayers. Pupils may write a prayer and put it in the prayer box. Year 6 pupils lead the Friday celebration worship and the prayers in the box are prayed by the whole school community at that time. Pupils understand the importance of reflection accompanying prayer. As a result pupils have played a part in reinvigorating a 'reflective garden'. Holding crosses, small hearts and reflective stones are given out to pupils each day in worship to provide focus during the times of prayer and reflection as pupils consider how to apply the Christian message to their personal lives.

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

The headteacher has a clear, strong vision founded on Christian values of generosity, creativity, wisdom, perseverance, service and responsibility which she and her staff communicate effectively. Based on these values the staff team and governors support the school in being a welcoming, caring, inclusive and celebratory place. The headteacher is ably supported by a stable and committed staff. The school has successfully addressed the areas for improvement from the previous denominational inspection, now ensuring that all members of the school community have a greater role in worship. The experienced and competent leaders of both RE and collective worship ensure that both areas have a high priority and that staff are given appropriate training and resources to deliver excellent practice. Arrangements for RE and worship meet statutory requirements. The whole curriculum is underpinned by a Christian vision for education agreed by all the staff. Governors competently fulfil their role of strategic partners in leading the school. They know the school well and are involved in monitoring and evaluating it as a church school. All staff work together to enable effective self-evaluation and in planning the ongoing development of the school. The RE and worship link governor is active in her support of these important areas of school life. She fulfils an effective monitoring role in ensuring their continued contribution to enhancing the school's Christian distinctiveness. Parents are actively involved in the life of the school as a church school through regular invitations to events and the informative website. Their views are frequently sought, valued and acted upon. Diocesan training has been attended by both staff and governors. Issues raised in the training have been implemented to enhance practice through very effective planning and the delivery of exciting and engaging RE lessons. New staff receive a comprehensive induction which embraces the school's Christian vision and values. The school works in close partnership with other local church schools sharing training, good practice and moderating pupils' work. The governors are aware of the importance of succession planning as they look ahead to the important appointment of a new headteacher to lead their outstanding church school when the present headteacher retires later this academic year. The deputy head and other senior staff have been working closely with the headteacher to gain the skills necessary to competently lead the school through this transition period. They share the headteacher's Christian vision for the school and will work to ensure the outstanding Christian distinctiveness continues.

SIAMS report November 2016. Norton CEVC Primary School, IP31 3LZ.