

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Risby Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Address	Aylmer Close Risby Bury St Edmunds Suffolk IP28 6RT		
Date of inspection	12 June 2019	Status of school	VC Primary
Diocese	St Edmundsbury & Ipswich	URN	124712

Overall Judgement	Grade
How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	Good
Additional Judgement	Grade
The impact of collective worship	Excellent

School context

Risby is a primary school with 171 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages, as is the proportion who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Since the last inspection there have been three headteachers. In September 2015 the school reorganised to include years 5 and 6. The local academy and its feeder middle schools chose not to restructure; a decreasing proportion of Risby pupils continue to transfer at the end of year 4. The role of parish priest is currently vacant.

The school's Christian vision

Believe, grow and shine

Explored through the parable of the sower, where good soil and careful tending of the crop enable growth and ensure a fruitful harvest. Matthew 13

Key findings

- A solid and cohesive approach to embedding the vision and associated values is shared by governors, clergy and all staff. This whole-team approach is a clear indicator of the strength and sustainability of the distinctively Christian ethos.
- Collective worship is a joyously spiritual occasion which is treasured by the majority of pupils and adults.
- The high status of religious education ensures that faith and belief are respected; the quality of delivery ensures that pupils have a good understanding of how faith impacts on life.
- The vision promotes a deeply held belief in the uniqueness of each individual. This is apparent in respectful relationships, commitment to wellbeing and high aspirations for all in the community.
- Whilst prayer is an established part of the school day, wider strategies for supporting pupils' understanding of personal prayer and reflection are not in place.

Areas for development

- Ensure that pupils are supported in exploring the place and purpose of prayer so that they can develop both an understanding of how and why individuals pray and a personal response to prayer and reflection.
- Develop the relationship with the parish church so that it goes beyond the role of the incumbent and enables pupils to meet people whose lives are enriched by their faith.
- Make provision for staff not working in classrooms to access professional development which gives them a deeper understanding of the theology underpinning the vision and values.

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

The vision for everyone to 'believe, grow and shine' is well established and remained at the heart of the school throughout a period of unsettled leadership. The current headteacher has led a drive to re-energise the core values, involving the whole school community in embedding them securely in the vision, exploring them in their Christian context and explaining them with reference to the parable of the sower. Leaders frequently revisit the parable and review how they provide the 'good soil'. The impact can be seen across every aspect of the school and extends to individual families. This is supported by the excellent exploration of the interdependence of the vision, the parable and the values on the website. Support staff, for example midday supervisors, are briefed by the headteacher but have few opportunities to explore the vision and values in depth. Pupils discuss their impact on themselves and identify them in others. Governors are effective. They keep up to date with current Church of England advice and apply their knowledge to monitor the distinctiveness of the school. This has led to improvements since the last inspection. The ethos committee considers pupil views and feeds back to governors in detail, although their reports do not specifically highlight suggested areas for action.

Risby has a history of academic success and outcomes are good. This is achieved through enabling every individual to grow and shine. In keeping with the vision, all successes are celebrated; curricular, extra-curricular and out of school achievements are equally valued. The curriculum is exciting and designed to broaden pupils' understanding of the wider world. As they move through the classes pupils focus on different continents, and this enables them to explore social and cultural diversity in a range of contexts. The religious education (RE) curriculum complements this. Pupils have good religious literacy and can apply their knowledge of worldwide Christianity and a range of faiths. Teaching approaches and learning skills from RE and philosophy are utilised in other lessons and, as a result, pupils are skilled in exploration and enquiry. Pupil interests lead to shared adult and pupil learning, for example Key Stage 1's focus on plastic pollution. All staff identify themselves as both leaders and learners. Training and professional development are valued, with staff and governors seeking expertise from the diocese, other Church schools and within their own pool of talent. All are clear that 'outstanding is not a lid'.

'Believe, grow and shine' is consistently used to reinforce the uniqueness of every individual. Pupils know that they are loved for who they are and are encouraged to be the best that they can be. They have a mature understanding of how they can help each other to grow. Carefully planned enrichment activities develop confidence and self-belief. Partnerships with the local high school and the cathedral, for example, broaden horizons and provide new challenges. Pupils are developed as leaders, for example in collective worship. They show understanding of moral and social issues, for example taking responsibility for selecting charities to support and giving good reasons for their decisions. The school is inclusive; everyone knows that their opinion matters, and they are not afraid to speak up if they see an injustice.

Koinonia is a core value and pupils understand this concept of community, explaining that it is a strength of the school. Mutual support is a very high priority for everyone. Disagreements are resolved with grace, focusing on taking responsibility, finding a solution and rebuilding relationships. Staff operate in teams so that there is wrap-around care for pupils and excellent support for adults. Pupils provide support networks too, the older ones speaking with pride of their various roles. There is a real sense of 'Team Risby', where everyone plays a part in enabling each other to 'believe, grow and shine'. This has a considerable impact on wellbeing. Pupils with emotional needs are swiftly identified and supported. Staff feel valued by leaders and managers who are proactive in looking at effective ways of managing workloads. Some aspects of the partnership with the Church are strong. The vicar is a regular presence in the playground and in school, providing a listening ear when needed. A governor reports to the parochial church council and there are shared initiatives, such as the food bank. However, pupils do not readily identify Church members as examples of living faith. All are united in the view that 'every voice matters'. Parents, in particular, cannot praise too highly the approachable staff who 'always find time'. Mutual respect and the dignity of the individual are at the heart of all relationships.

Collective worship has a big impact on school life. It is a joyful, reflective, spiritual and affirming experience which is distinctively Christian and deeply rooted in the vision. Singing, in particular, creates a sense of unity. Pupils and adults describe times when they have experienced personal transformation. There is no sense of having to finish by a set time. Individuals appreciate 'not having to rush our time with the Holy Spirit'. Effective training has raised standards, and carefully planned, invitational worship includes the whole community. Interim support from the church has been excellent. Adults and pupils are fully involved, and older pupils physically 'gather' the classes. Pupils are knowledgeable about Anglican worship practices and also experience leaders from other traditions. Prayer and reflection have a high profile in worship and pupils are encouraged to reflect at other times during the day. They do not, however, have a good understanding of the place and purpose of personal prayer and there are few suitable spaces for quiet contemplation.

Leaders and managers have high expectations for RE, considering it 'part of the soil' which encourages growth. It is well-resourced, passionately led and very popular with pupils and teachers. Lessons are exciting and pupils engage with enthusiasm. The vision and values are a core aspect of teaching and the curriculum has a good focus on individual reflection. Monitoring is thorough and assessment is under constant review which ensures that standards remain high.

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Inspector's name and number	Gill Hipwell 480