

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

### **Wetheringsett Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Church Street, Wetheringsett, Suffolk, IP14 5PJ

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>St Edmundsbury and Ipswich</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Suffolk
Date/s of inspection	17 November 2016
Date of last inspection	16 March 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	VC Primary 124746
Headteacher	Vicky Doherty
Inspector's name and number	Graham Lancaster 713

#### **School context**

This is a smaller than average primary school, with mixed age classes for the fifty nine pupils. Approximately one third of pupils travel to the school from beyond the local village. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language is below the national average. The number entitled to pupil premium is variable across cohorts but is generally low. The school recently restructured from four to three classes and the nursery provision was closed in the summer. The headteacher and most of the teaching staff have been appointed since the previous inspection.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Wetheringsett Primary as a Church of England school are good**

- School leaders have clarity of vision, drive and ambition for the school as a church school.
- The school is regarded as central to the life of the local community. Its Christian ethos is demonstrated in its inclusivity and the care shown to those in particular need.
- Relationships between all members of the school community are very positive, based on high levels of respect for one another.

#### **Areas to improve**

- For the centrality of collective worship in the life of the school to be strengthened as all staff exploit opportunities for embedding worship themes and by further development of the roles of the ethos committee and foundation governors.
- To extend opportunities for pupils to deepen their experience and understanding of spirituality through the creation of spaces which promote and inspire reflection and prayer.

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

A distinctively Christian ethos is firmly established at Wetheringsett, which is recognised and appreciated by the whole community. Parents describe how this is manifest in the warmth of acceptance shown to families from diverse backgrounds and the depth of care and love shown to those currently in particular need of support. They refer to

the Christian character as 'integral, embedded in the walls'. Pupils are able to explain how Christian values make an impact on their relationships with one another. Relationships are exemplary, modelled by adults and are particularly strong between older and younger pupils through the peer mentoring system. This is one of a range of responsibilities open to older pupils. Pupil behaviour is exemplary. Attendance is above the national average and there have been no exclusions. The school's ethos and values statement encompasses a commitment to the achievement of all pupils, underpinned by Christian values. However, the contribution of all aspects of school life to this statement currently lacks cohesion.

The school has experienced a period of staffing turbulence which had an impact on pupil achievement in 2016. This has been effectively addressed and the school has now put effective strategies in place to ensure all pupils make at least good progress. Despite the challenges posed by mixed age classes, staff have high expectations of all pupils which is reflected in the progress they are making in their workbooks. Aspirational targets have been set for 2017 and the evidence available indicates that pupils are on track for these to be met.

There is physical evidence of the Christian character of the school in shared areas, with the current value of 'service' given due prominence. The school's link with a Tanzanian diocese contributes to pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. In order to emphasise that religious education is about how faith affects personal choices and actions, as well as gaining factual knowledge, this subject has been renamed Beliefs and Values. This broadening of focus can be seen in teachers' planning as well as pupils' understanding. Pupils describe recent lessons with enthusiasm and each class has a display dedicated to their area of study. The recent Muslim visitor made a profound impact on pupils' understanding and appreciation of Islam. In response, one pupil wrote, 'I used to think that Muslims were bad but now I know that isn't the case. It is people doing bad things and wrong for them to say that it is in the name of Islam.'

Although corporate prayer takes place during the school day, spirituality has been identified by the school as an area for development. Pupils' understanding of spirituality is limited and there are few places set aside for quiet reflection. Pupils understand the importance of charitable giving and the pupil council has an active role in choosing which charities are supported.

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

Collective worship is important to the life of the school. Worship makes some impact on pupils' lives through the exploration of a different Christian value each half term. Plans for the community to explore these values in more depth in relation to their own lives are set out in the school's action plan, articulated as 'values to virtues'. First steps have been taken by developing the understanding and engagement of staff in worship and providing activities for parents and pupils to explore together. The Christian value is selected by the pupil ethos committee, which is growing in its roles of facilitating, leading and evaluating worship. The four members helped plan and lead the recent Remembrance Day service and referred to this as 'an honour'. Although this group have the qualities and enthusiasm to grow in their role, its understanding of the centrality of how worship can be central to the life of the school requires further development. The pupil council also discusses collective worship. In response to their evaluative feedback pupils now play a more active part in worship, for example, by acting characters in Bible stories. The majority of collective worship takes place in the village hall. There is an attractive focal point for worship, with lit candles, which pupils recognise as representing the light of Christ. However, significant challenges remain for this to become a venue which is conducive to worship. Anglican traditions of gathering and sending are well established. Worship is distinctively Christian, with stories from the Bible and references to the life and teaching of Jesus. Pupil-led intercessory prayers have recently been introduced, but these are not yet effective in fully engaging those present. Most pupils are keen to answer questions but there is scope to broaden the range of strategies employed to ensure all are actively engaged.

All teaching staff and the local vicar lead collective worship. The school has attempted to widen the range of leadership further but without success as yet. Plans are also in place for foundation governors to carry out systematic evaluation of collective worship in order to contribute to future developments, including its impact across the school community. Parental attendance at termly class-led collective worship is good and services in the parish church for major Christian festivals are well supported.

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

Leaders, including the foundation governors, have the vision, ambition and drive required to secure future success. They have ensured that the distinctive Christian character has remained a priority throughout the restructuring of the school and consequent staffing changes. The headteacher has highly developed evaluative skills which she employs to recognise and celebrate strengths within her team and to identify areas for improvement. Where there is a potential risk of pupils under-achieving she takes decisive action, for example, teaching in Year 2 herself each morning, to enable the class teacher to focus on reception and Year 1. Teachers are now using a common planning

format to ensure all groups of pupils are appropriately challenged, including the more able. She appreciates the finite capacity of her small team and seeks external support from other local schools or the diocese as required. Progress has been made against the areas for development identified in the previous inspection. Leaders have worked together with staff to draw up an ambitious action plan to strengthen the effectiveness of Wetheringsett as a church school. Actions are set against each term, with arrangements for monitoring progress clearly identified. This has already led to the training for staff in collective worship and embedding the recently introduced Emmanuel Project, which teachers have found particularly beneficial in supporting their teaching. The school's website has also been updated. Beliefs and Values is given a high priority and the subject leader has both the subject knowledge and enthusiasm to realise her plans for the future. These include further development of assessment. She and other leaders have accessed relevant training and support from the diocese. Within the scope of a small school there is a focus on identifying future leaders of church schools. Links with the parish church are strong but benefits to the school are currently largely limited to the valuable contributions of the local vicar, who has recently become the school's second foundation governor. They have formed an effective partnership, drawing on a wide range of experience and expertise. There has been a recent increase in their involvement in monitoring and evaluating both collective worship and Beliefs and Values but this has not had sufficient time to have a significant impact. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is strong and the emphasis placed on this by school leaders is recognised and much appreciated by parents. The Forest Schools programme contributes significantly to this area of pupils' progress, utilising the extensive school grounds to develop their awe and wonder at the world around them. Philosophy for Children provides an effective framework for listening to the views of others as well as challenging current beliefs and arguments. Pupils are thoughtful and articulate. They and their parents are proud of their school and confident in its leadership.

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