

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Whatfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	Rectory Road Whatfield Ipswich Suffolk IP7 6QU
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	St Edmundsbury and Ipswich
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Good
Local authority/date of academy conversion	Suffolk
Date of inspection	11 October 2016
Date of last inspection	November 2011
School's unique reference number	124718
Headteacher	Lynne Golding
Inspector's name and number	Gillian Holmes 849

School context

Whatfield is a small primary school with 32 pupils currently on roll. Two years ago it began to work in collaboration with Bildeston Primary, a community school. The two schools share a headteacher. The school has a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. There has been significant staff turnover since the last inspection.

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

- The Christian ethos of the school is seen clearly through the atmosphere, the behaviour and attitudes of the pupils and the caring, dedicated staff.
- Christian values are made explicit and implicit through all aspects of school life.
- Excellent links with the church, the community and the Diocese are used to strengthen the school's Christian ethos: these contribute very well to pupils' strong spiritual development.

Areas to improve

- Increase further the role of the pupil worship group by allowing them to take greater responsibility in planning and leading worship.
- Increase pupil participation by developing a greater range of opportunities for pupils to informally and formally evaluate worship.

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

All aspects of Whatfield school exemplify their strapline 'Every child matters to God'. The school is committed to, and successful in, providing high quality Christian education for all pupils. Christian values are seen both explicitly and implicitly in school life. They are deeply embedded in everything the school does. Behaviour is excellent based around the 'Golden Rules' which are underpinned by the Christian values. The relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils are outstanding. Incidents of bullying are very rare but are dealt with swiftly and fairly, in keeping with the school's Christian ethos. As an expression of its caring Christian ethos pupils enjoy coming to school and so attendance is excellent and there have been no exclusions. Attainment varies year on year due to the very small cohorts and the high proportion of pupils with special needs. However, all pupils make good or outstanding progress from their starting point. Parents praise the school for the way it successfully supports all children through personalised learning. Across the curriculum, including religious education (RE), pupils are often given choice in their learning activities. This helps to motivate them well. Pupils are excited and challenged by RE which effectively supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Spiritual, moral and social development opportunities are outstanding. There are excellent links made between RE, worship, the creative curriculum and the Christian values. This enables pupils to apply their learning in the world today. Pupils are exposed to a vibrant international curriculum which provides opportunities for all pupils to foster international thinking and greater understanding of global citizenship. The school supports a range of charities, both those chosen by the active school council, or in partnership with the local church and village community. These fund-raising events are in keeping with the Christian value of 'responsibility' as pupils recognise and act upon their responsibility to care for others. Pupils have opportunities to take part in many special events held at the cathedral. This is important for this very small school to feel part of the larger church school family. The successful collaborative partnership with Bildeston school has provided curriculum enrichment opportunities for pupils. Parents and pupils rightly praise the inclusivity of the school, where every child has access to both the full curriculum as well as the extensive range of extra-curricular activities.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils have a positive attitude to collective worship which plays an important role in the life of the school. This is confirmed by parents and governors. Prayerful and meaningful worship takes place with a focus on gospel values and biblical teaching. Worship contributes significantly to the life of the school, to pupils' spiritual and moral development and the enhancement of the school's Christian distinctiveness. Collective worship is effectively planned by the headteacher, the head of school and the incumbent. The themes are planned around the Christian values. At present children have limited opportunities to share in the planning or to help lead worship. Children do however play an enthusiastic role in worship by helping to act out stories and reading prayers. All children are encouraged to participate in worship by questioning and the use of talk partners. The pupil worship group regularly leads small groups in their discussions. Children are encouraged to decide themselves how the stories they hear illustrate the Christian values and impact upon their lives. These discussions are referred to throughout the day both in and outside of the classroom. This illustrates how the school acknowledges the importance placed upon worship and its impact upon pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. The local church is used for festival services and for the end of term service, when parents and members of the village enthusiastically join with the school. The incumbent leads worship in school fortnightly and she has ensured that pupils are aware of Anglican practices and the main Christian festivals. The church is also used to enhance the curriculum. Pupils have a developing understanding of the Trinity and recall many Bible stories. Pupils understand the importance of prayer and reflection. They frequently write their own prayers which are used in collective worship or before lunch. Pupils have taken the initiative to create quiet outside spaces for reflection. They understand that being reflective provides them with opportunities to be still and think deeply. Pupils talk enthusiastically about Friday's worship which celebrates pupils' achievements. These achievements make reference to how the Christian values have impacted upon excellent work and behaviour. They are also opportunities for the school community to celebrate how well it has performed in sporting and creative events with larger neighbouring schools.

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 which she communicates effectively to staff and governors. Based on these values the staff all ensure that the school is being a welcoming, caring, inclusive and celebratory place. Governors ensure the continued development of the Christian ethos through close liaison and discussion with the staff, shared diocesan training and regular school visits. Although the headteacher has to divide her time between Whatfield and Bildeston primary, where she is also the headteacher, she has been able to manage the collaboration to benefit pupils, parents and staff; extra-curricular opportunities for pupils, shared expertise and training for staff and collaborative parent workshops. This collaboration has ensured the school's sustainability. Governors are committed to Whatfield school maintaining its strong Christian ethos despite Bildeston not being a church school. This is continually reviewed in governors' meetings. The headteacher and head of school together effectively lead RE and worship which contributes significantly to the school's Christian ethos. Arrangements for RE and worship meet statutory requirements. The focus for development from the previous diocesan inspection has been addressed. Due to the school's rural location it has been too difficult to integrate 'Open the Book'. The leadership has now formalised monitoring of worship and the worship group is being supported by the head of school as they take on greater responsibilities. The whole curriculum is underpinned by a Christian vision for education which is owned by the staff and governors. The school is recognised by pupils, parents and governors as a 'Christian family'. The school is highly valued by the village community and the local church. This close relationship has enabled the school to use the adjacent village hall during the school day for lunches, physical education lessons and other activities. Members from the church and the community come into school to work with the pupils. They are proud of their very small church school and see it as an important Christian influence on the children in the village. The school works closely with the Diocese and other local schools benefitting from training through professional development and sharing expertise. Staff are well supported and in-service training has a high priority. The post of head of school shows the school's commitment to growing church school leaders for the future. In this small school all staff have multiple roles and are well supported by the leadership. All are valued members of the staff team. Senior leaders, the class teachers and governors know the school well. The result is accurate self-evaluation which informs a culture of continuous improvement. Parents are supportive of the school's overarching Christian ethos. Their views are frequently sought on all aspects of their children's education including the development of Christian distinctiveness. Parents praised the excellent communication between all members of staff and parents and believe that this is an excellent example of the Christian character of their school.

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