

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Scole Church of England VC Primary School

Norwich Road, Scole, Diss, IP21 4ED

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Diocese

Norwich

Previous SIAS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

Norfolk

Date of inspection

16 October 2017

Date of last inspection

14 December 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

VC Primary 121055

Headteacher / Acting headteacher

Claire Vosper/ Katharine Minns

Inspector's name and number

Linda Russell 893

School context

Scole Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is a smaller than average rural primary school. Almost all 94 pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (12%) is below the national average. Those with special educational needs (15%) is in line with the national average. The school is currently being led by a senior teacher as the headteacher is on compassionate leave. Ofsted judged the school to be good in May 2017.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Scole as a Church of England school are good.

- Pupils achieve well, with vulnerable pupils making at least the same amount of progress as their peers. This is consistently attributed by all to the strong Christian foundation of the school.
- The school provides an exciting curriculum rooted in Christian values which focuses on the development of the whole child intellectually, socially and emotionally as a unique individual.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the school as a Church school is well established with everyone playing their part and is making a real contribution to its Christian distinctiveness.

Areas to improve

- Tie in strategies for developing pupils' confidence and leadership skills with developing a greater understanding of how Christian values underpin the ethos of the school by, for example, offering opportunities to plan and lead worship.
- Ensure that the school continues to make the most of development opportunities, such as gaining the religious education quality mark (REQM), as a mechanism for driving whole school improvement and embedding good practice.

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

Christian values of love, friendship and respect are clearly central to the work and good relationships at this school. As a result there is a harmonious atmosphere, with pupils saying they feel safe and secure. Responsibility is taken seriously, with pupils recognising the importance of being good role models and many Year 6 pupils train to be school buddies, an example of the Christian value of service. Pupils' opinions are regularly sought with a recent survey finding they like coming to school and enjoy their learning. As a result, attendance is good. Parents feel they are well supported by a caring staff and this is backed up by pupils who say, 'teachers really care at this school and that makes us care so we can all help each other.' As a result of its positive behaviour management system,

exclusions are extremely rare and the school has success with pupils who have found schooling challenging elsewhere. All stakeholders are clear that it is the underlying Christian ethos which enables pupils to flourish. The introduction of 'challenge through choice', based on Christian values of truth and honesty, contributes to the vision of high aspirations for all and has been very effective in ensuring that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards is higher than those achieved locally or nationally. The rate of progress for vulnerable pupils compares favourably with that achieved by the rest of the pupils. Pupils have a Christian understanding of compassion and are keen to support a number of local charities, such as the Brain Tumour Trust following a former pupil's battle with this condition Pupils describe with real pride their achievements not only academically but socially and morally and are keen to be awarded the Christian distinctiveness cup at the end of each term. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils is important to everybody at the school and this is demonstrated by the way it is embedded across the curriculum. As such, it makes a significant impact on the harmonious atmosphere and the quality of discourse. Pupil voice is well catered for through the provision of a school council, buddy groups and a collective worship group. Pupils speak with pride about how they have impacted on the working of the school, for example, pupils now leave the hall after collective worship from the back to the front as a result of their suggestion following an evaluation. The enquiry based programme of learning in religious education (RE) contributes to pupils' enjoyment. Pupils can identify the main world faiths, saying 'it is important to understand different religions and how to respect them'. This aids their SMSC development. Opportunities to ask deep and meaningful questions about God and Christianity develops an understanding of core concepts and pupils' use of the correct terminology has been noted in monitoring records which indicates that RE teaching is effective.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

It is clear to all that worship is an important part of the school day. All staff attend and take turns in leading worship. Regular monitoring by staff, pupils and governors ensures shared ownership. Christian values, highlighted in worship, are displayed permanently around the school, together with Bible quotes which pupils refer to as they go about their daily work. Collective worship is well planned by the collective worship leader from the Values for Life resource and is clearly rooted in the Bible and Jesus Christ. Pupils have a good knowledge of biblical stories and can identify the messages that they contain, for example how we should treat one another after listening to The Good Samaritan. Pupils' involvement through the collective worship group is making an impact on the worship experience for all. In the worship observed pupils listened attentively and participated eagerly and this behaviour was also noted by staff and governors in various worship observations. Pupils clearly see worship as a special time because 'we come together as a family to worship God'. Pupils are aware of the church year and a banner made by pupils to reflect this is proudly displayed in the hall. A visual explanation of Trinity supports pupils' understanding of this concept. Spirituality is supported by regular opportunities to write and say prayers, a prayer tree and the Reflection Shed. The Reflection Shed, situated in the playground, offers access to all throughout the day as well as before and after school. Pupils readily use the space for quiet contemplation and there is often a queue, with pupils making responses such as 'hope is a gift for the Baby Jesus' and 'wise men were guided by a star, friends, parents and teachers guide us in this school.' The provision and use of this reflection space demonstrates the school has responded to a previous focus for development in the last church school inspection. The many examples of prayers written by pupils show they understand the nature and use of prayer, for example, 'thank you for the sunsets, the smell of cut grass and Summer' and 'dear Lord, I hope everyone has a great week'. Local clergy are involved in delivering worship and conduct services for pupils at the local church. Attendance at these services ensures all stakeholders gain an insight into Anglican practice. As a result of recent monitoring and evaluation by pupils, Open the Book sessions led by local members of the church community are now planned in advance with the pupils who are taking a greater part in acting out the Bible passage. This has led to pupils expressing a real desire to do more in whole school worship. All major Christian festivals are celebrated. Worship fully complies with legal requirements.

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

Leaders promote a distinctive ethos based on shared, well-established Christian values such as respect and love. They have worked hard to ensure that this underpins all that it does. As a result, there is a united team who come together to embed these values so that they inform policy and underpin practice. This was evident during the inspection with the school running with clear direction and purpose during the long-term absence of the headteacher. The robust strategic monitoring cycle ensures that the school is constantly looking to improve for the benefit of the pupils in its care. Leaders are proud of its Christian foundation and ensure stakeholders can be in no doubt about what being a church school means by having a dedicated area on the website and pupils receiving a hymn book when they turn seven which they then use in daily worship. 'We all know where we are headed because this is a church school. There is a common goal and a shared language'. This informs everything it does and has a positive impact upon standards and progress. The new headteacher has brought a sharper focus on the Christian foundation of the school, particularly in collective worship and by the establishing of displays of Christian values all

around school which has become embedded in school practice. The way pupils' work from the 'Understanding Christianity' resource is displayed shows RE is at the heart of this school and is valued, with work such as 'the river of values' providing a clear indication of Christian distinctiveness. A closer relationship with the church has been effectively pursued by the headteacher, which can be seen in an increase in services at the local church under her leadership. There is good support from local clergy in RE teaching, and pastorally, which staff say helps them take on new challenges. Policies are rooted in the school's Christian values and interactions between staff, pupils and parents show that these values are deeply embedded in the school. The school works effectively with parents who speak of being empowered by the 'cafe' programme, helping them support learning at home. Leaders have ensured that the key points for development highlighted in the last church school inspection have been fully addressed. Governors have worked well with leaders to produce a school development plan which includes Christian distinctiveness as a core element and as a result they are well informed, monitor effectively, and balance challenge and support. Leadership of RE is particularly strong. The committed RE coordinator is well supported by leaders. Time is given to promote the development of the subject, especially with the recent introduction of the 'Understanding Christianity' resource. Governors are mindful of staff workloads and in order to ensure that the new initiative is properly introduced with maximum impact, the decision has been made to postpone work towards the gaining of the RE quality mark (REQM). The diocese has provided excellent training for both the RE leader and governors which has impacted positively on the development of this well-resourced subject. Leaders see partnerships as essential to the sustained success of Scole as a church school and encourage staff to be active members of learning networks. This is developing their skills as leaders which is clearly evident in the confident leadership of the acting headteacher. RE fully meets legal requirements.

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