

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Wisbech St. Mary Church of England Academy

Churchfield Way Wisbech St. Mary Wisbech Cambs PE13 4RJ	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Ely
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	1 September 2016
Name of multi-academy trust	Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Trust
Date of inspection	3 May 2017
Date of last inspection	9 July 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 142810
Headteacher	Nina Redhead
Inspector's name and number	Pat George 845

School context

Wisbech St. Mary is a one form entry village primary academy close to the town of Wisbech. It became a Diocese of Ely [DEMAT] academy in September 2016. The current headteacher and senior leadership are new in post since the last inspection. The 170 children on roll are predominantly White British with 12% of children from Gypsy Roma Traveller backgrounds. The school has a high percentage of vulnerable pupils including pupils eligible for pupil premium. Attendance was below national expectations and is now improving and the current zero rate of exclusion reflects the improvements in attitudes and behaviour since the school had an adverse OFSTED judgement.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Wisbech St. Mary as a Church of England school are good

- School has a clear vision that is articulated and explained by all the members of the school community and is embedded in its daily life through the key words of ready, respect and safe. Pupils can explain what these words mean to them.
- Positive relationships and mutual respect have played a significant role in recent school improvement. There is a clear impact on pupil good behaviour and wellbeing.
- Collective worship and religious education (RE) have a significant role in the daily life of the school.

Areas to improve

- To make the underpinning Christian values and their link with worship and biblical teachings more explicit so that the core values of the school are more prominent and celebrated.
- To further develop age-appropriate pupil understanding of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as the Trinity, to support pupil understanding of Anglican tradition in worship.
- To continue to develop involvement in worship of pupils and other Christian denominations, including monitoring and evaluation of the impact of worship and Christian values, providing opportunities for pupils to feed back more formally to the governing body.

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

School states it functions as a Christian community with its core vision based around three key words, 'ready respect and safe'. Pupils are clear these words are the basis of their daily life in school. These are linked to Bible stories, including through display, and to the themes in collective worship. They have a positive impact on pupil spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development through providing a code for conduct and relationships. Relationships between all members of the school community are excellent. Parents and governors speak of it as a family. Parents and carers speak very positively of the confidence the Christian character gives their children, especially at times when they need additional support, and of the difference the faith in school has made to attitudes and behaviour. Parents say school has "old fashioned values that are important" and "has restored his faith in people". They view the relationship with the Church as a positive. They value the buddy system to support new pupils. School supports pupils as individuals and this enables all their needs to be met, social and emotional as well as academic. Progress and attainment data is improving so that the majority of pupils are achieving at least national expectations. The improvement in attendance and exclusion rates reflects the impact of the Christian values on pupils' self-esteem and sense of responsibility. Pupils feel their school is special because they have worship and go to church. They explain the three "rules" and are very articulate about how they show they follow these in school and the impact on relationships, explaining being ready includes taking responsibility for themselves and contributing to daily school life. However they are less clear about the term "values" to explain the different elements of their rules. They are confident in managing their own relationships but know adults are there to help if needed. They are clear that there is no bullying and that everyone supports each other. Staff have developed the curriculum so that the values of the school are threaded through subjects where appropriate. The themes through which the curriculum is delivered build on the Christian values. The input of RE into the distinctively Christian character of the school and its impact on SMSC is evidenced by pupils. Work at KS2 on the Trinity supports pupils developing understanding. The school has good links with a school in Kenya, celebrated through display and used as a resource for RE and geography, effectively developing pupils' good understanding of Christianity as a worldwide faith. Pupils are well supported to understand what is happening in the world and can talk about the significance of events in Africa and Syria. They are aware of difference and diversity within Christianity but do not as yet have many opportunities to experience this through visits and visitors; this is a development priority.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is firmly focused on values, distinctively Christian and linked to world events and pupils' lives. Although the values are not explicitly named, pupils know that worship provides an exemplar for behaviour and personal choices. It follows the gather, engage, respond and send format which reflects the pattern of Anglican worship. It is led by senior leaders and the incumbent. Although Bible stories are regularly used in worship, their role is not always prominent in making links to the values and the 'three words'. Displays in the hall and the focus objects support pupil spirituality during worship. Music is used effectively and the lighting of the candle is understood by pupils. They speak of Jesus being the light of the world. A liturgical greeting and pupil response begin worship. Pupils understand that worship supports them in their daily lives, they feel it helps them know how to behave. Although they are regularly involved in worship, their opportunities to plan and lead independently are not yet as well established. They have some experience of being supported to choose Bible stories related to the theme and delivering these through drama. Worship is used to broaden pupil understanding of the 'ready, respect, safe' themes. In the worship observed pupils could explain how it is important to help others be safe and that being a Christian means doing, not just saying. They spoke of trust in God and others to help them. They were clear that respect is important to them and that you like people for who they are and difference is not important. They could explain differences between church festivals such as Easter and Christmas and celebrating as part of fundraising, eg Red Nose Day. Pupils are positive about worship and the impact it has on them in school. "We go to worship so we can know about God." They spoke of Bible stories in school, at home and in church, demonstrating a good level of biblical literacy. They enjoy worship in church and don't see this as different to worship in school. They value reflection time during worship and have a good understanding of the purpose of and reasons for prayer, asking for forgiveness, saying sorry, asking for help, to talk to God. Classes have prayer boxes and children write and share prayers in daily worship. They say the Lord's Prayer with confidence and respect. Pupils enjoy the times of day when they pray apart from worship. They are aware they can pray anywhere as it's talking to God and would like to have special places inside and outside where they can be quiet, pray and reflect. They have a good understanding of the Trinity but its place in worship is less developed. Pupils explain God is the greater, Jesus is the light of the world and the Holy Spirit is everywhere. They are proud that they have crosses in their classrooms, as it reminds them of Jesus.

Planning is by the worship coordinator and the incumbent contributes to planning so church and school worship are linked. Staff regularly evaluate worship according to engagement of pupils and their response and this feedback contributes to future planning. Parents appreciate the opportunity to join with their children for worship in school

and church. Governors informally monitor worship through visits and comments are shared at meetings. The governor responsible for RE and worship formally monitors and feeds back to the governing body and headteacher. Although areas for development have been acted upon, for example to improve opportunities and time for reflection during worship, the formal system for monitoring, evaluating, action and review is not yet well developed. Gathering of pupil views is at present through informal conversation, although their views are fed into future practice.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Teaching in RE is based on key big questions using the locally agreed syllabus and school generated schemes of work where appropriate. Cross curricular links were clear in the lessons observed, confirming the school's assertion that RE is woven across the curriculum. In Foundation Stage pupils confidently spoke about why God sent the flood, linking the story of Noah's Ark to their topic on the sea. They spoke about Noah trusting God. Pupils learn about religion and from religion and have opportunities to link this to the world around them. They talk about different religions and faiths in this country. They say they enjoy RE. Pupils are given opportunities to reflect, answer deep questions and share their views and thinking. Their ideas on what God looks like are displayed in school. They can discuss similarities between different religions eg holy books. They can link themes in RE to their everyday lives, eg why Christians go to church. They can make links between RE, Bible stories and collective worship. However the terminology of explicit Christian core values eg love, compassion and forgiveness is not yet consistently used. RE displays in each class and its inclusion into termly reporting to parents help maintain the high profile of RE. RE teaching is predominantly good and standards in RE are broadly in line with national expectations and other core subjects. Evidence from lesson observations and work scrutiny shows pupils are making good progress from their starting points. Vulnerable groups eg pupil premium and SEND pupils make progress commensurate with their peers. Teacher assessment in RE is termly and used to identify gaps in learning and understanding which contributes to future planning. Marking in RE is regular with pupils given time to respond to next steps, which encourages reflection and shows a deeper understanding. The subject leader has a clear focus on the development of RE in school and uses the local network and online sources to keep up to date. All staff have had internal training and additional professional development from the diocese, including Understanding Christianity materials. Impact is clear in questions in their RE books and this will be the focus for RE teaching from September. School has rightly identified a priority for visits from people of other faiths to broaden pupils' experiences in RE. A governor monitors pupils' response to RE

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

Leaders articulate and promote a vision based on Christian values although these are not always explicitly named. They say pupils are educated within a Christian ethos and the three words statement is based on explained values of love, compassion, friendship, tolerance and trust, linked to the Bible. Leaders feel this is evidenced in the inclusive ethos and priority given to pupil wellbeing. The development of the school as a church school is a priority and both the development plan and reports to governors include a Christian distinctiveness focus. Governors are committed to staff development to enhance Christian distinctiveness, including sharing training with school staff, eg on Understanding Christianity. They contribute to the vision and say that their aim is for pupils to leave with an understanding of Christian values developed through the family culture in school. Leaders feel that worship and RE in school have a significant impact and that the explained values have a positive influence on standards, learning behaviours and attendance.

The relationship with the church is positive and the incumbent is fully involved in the life of the school through chaplaincy, leading worship and visits. The Explorers club, run by a governor, is effective in linking church, school and the community, supporting the underlying values. Parents feel the school is a family and staff are always accessible. Worship has a high profile within the school and is well led. Leaders are clear it is at the heart of their school, however, they are not yet sharing and celebrating this through the website nor clearly articulating the underlying values. Leadership in RE is strong and is committed to ongoing development of the role of RE and its links to other curriculum areas and worship. Leaders feel that this is allowing pupils to grow and develop their own ideas.

School has effective links with other church schools which is supporting their development as a church school and enables them to feel part of a wider community. The academy trust and the diocesan staff provide support for improving standards through regular monitoring and professional development, including on values. The school is proactive in developing staff to teach and lead in a church school. Leaders have ensured the areas of development from the last inspection have been met and that the school has an ongoing vision for its development as a church school.