

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Ellingham VC Church of England Primary School

Church Road
Ellingham
Bungay
Suffolk NR35 2PZ

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Norwich
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Local authority	Norfolk
Name of Federation	Ellingham & Woodton Primary School Federation
Date of inspection	27 June 2018
Date of last inspection	16 July 2015
Type of school and unique reference number	VC Primary 121035
Headteacher	Charlotte Whyte
Inspector's name and number	Pat George 845

School context

Ellingham is a small school with 101 pupils on roll from this and surrounding villages, attracting pupils from outside the catchment area. It is federated with a nearby non-church school. There has been significant staffing turbulence since the last inspection and the school now has four part-time teachers and a federation deputy without a class responsibility. All pupils are of white ethnicity and there is rural deprivation. 15% of pupils attract pupil premium funding and 21% have special educational needs. There is currently no incumbent for the parish. The school has very recently gained a good OFSTED judgement.

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

- The school has a holistic approach to meeting the needs of all its children. They are well supported to develop as individuals and to fulfil their potential within a caring Christian environment.
- The highly positive relationships between all members of the school community are clearly based on Christian values. Adults are effective role models in living out the values.
- Religious education (RE) makes a strong contribution to both the Christian distinctiveness of the school and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.

Areas to improve

- To provide opportunities for pupils to put prayer at the heart of school life both inside and outside through writing and sharing their own prayers so that their spiritual development is enhanced, and they can, if they wish, be calm, reflect and pray at different times of the day.
- Governors and leaders to support the further development of pupil involvement in worship so that they are both independently planning, delivering and leading worship and developing the confidence to contribute formally to monitoring and evaluation including feedback to the governing body.
- To broaden, at an age appropriate level, pupil understanding of the Trinity so that the characteristics of each part are understood and its place in worship is more prominent.

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

The school vision is to enable all children to fulfil their full potential in an ever-changing world. This is supported through the values and the aims, which reflect how God values each person as a unique individual in their own right; a God who wants his people to know his love and care for them. This forms the bedrock of the provision in school for each individual. The whole school community can articulate the impact of the distinctive Christian values which are deeply embedded and explicit in the daily life of the school. The values are displayed around school and pupils can explain how they influence their behaviour and the expectations that school has for them. However, the impact that the Christian values have in school is not reflected in how they are presented on the website or in documentation. The role of the Christian values in supporting the delivery of British values is not yet sufficiently explicit; however, pupils are aware that there is a link and that both inform them of how they should behave towards others.

The Christian character makes a positive contribution to learners' personal wellbeing through developing self-esteem and resilience which impact positively on their academic progress. Trends for progress and attainment are positive. Vulnerable pupils achieve well. Core Christian values support the pupils well, consequently they are clear everyone gets on well and cares for each other. They feel their school is special because everyone is kind and friendly. Pupils are clear the values show them the right things to do and provide a basis for understanding service and responsibility. They have opportunities to contribute to school life through the school council and the eco team and can explain how this links to the vision and values. They also have a buddy system, with older pupils supporting younger ones.

Parents feel all the children gain by being in a church school and learning about faith. They are positive about the impact of the values. Pupils talk about Bible stories at home and they feel being in a church school helps them question and discuss important questions; for example, 'Is there one God? Do other people believe in more than one God?'

Learners are showing some awareness that Christianity is a worldwide faith but are still developing their depth of knowledge about this. Pupils are accepting and respectful of others with a range of different faith traditions, however their understanding of diversity with Christianity is underdeveloped. The input of RE into the distinctively Christian character of the school and its impact on SMSC is clearly evidenced by pupils. It supports the Christian character of the school by providing opportunities to explore key Christian concepts and questions. The Christian character supports a focus on responsibility and service, including fundraising for those in need from the wider community both local and worldwide, an example of this is the pupils' support for Water Aid and toilet twinning. These activities also have a positive impact on pupil spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Collective worship has a clear place in the daily life of the school and the messages from worship are reinforced and discussed with pupils by adults. Planning is mainly done by the headteacher, who is the collective worship lead, and themes are linked to the Values for Life themes, Bible stories and the church year. The foundation governor contributes to worship planning, monitoring and evaluation. Different adults in school lead collective worship. The church does not currently have an incumbent or church wardens, so the school uses the church without that input. The pupils think of the church in terms of visits at major Christian festivals not as a regular place to worship. Parents, pupils and staff speak positively of the carol service in the church as bringing the whole community together to worship.

Children share their thoughts on worship and other parts of school life in class worship later in the week. Parents are welcome to join in celebration worship on a Friday and value this opportunity. Pupils are respectful and engage and participate well. They are keen to answer questions including 'I wonder' questions. However, their independent contributions to the act of worship in school are limited to this and to setting and tidying the hall. Although there is a values display with some pupil work on the Trinity and crosses and a Bible story visible, there is not a focal point for worship such as a table and candle. Worship does not start with an appropriate liturgical greeting and the Anglican pattern of gather, engage, respond and send is not clearly established although some elements can be seen in worship. Pupils can talk about the important festivals in the church year. They are confident that Bible stories tell them how to behave and have a moral but are not confident in discussing a range of stories. They could explain the current weekly message as God helping Saul to change to doing good not bad things. They can relate this to how they should behave. They enjoy the singing part of their worship.

Prayer does not have a high profile in school although pupils and adults worked together on the school prayer. Pupils do not currently write and share their own prayers, although writings by the eco team on looking after their world are presented using traditional prayer language. Pupils do not currently pray at other times of the school day but can articulate some reasons why people pray. 'To praise God, to have hope, to ask for help in hard times.' Classes have a calm down/reflection area but there are no formal prayer or spiritual spaces in school.

Pupil understanding of the Trinity as a three is well established and they can name the three. They were hesitant in explaining the characteristics of each part, especially the Holy Spirit. Examples given included 'God is the father of everything, Jesus helps out, he listens when we pray.'

Worship is monitored by governors and adults. Pupil responses to the message are followed up later in the week and governors solicit verbal pupil feedback when they are in school. However, there is no formal recording by pupils of their views of worship and its impact on their daily lives and there is also no formal mechanism for pupils to regularly contribute to planning and feedback to leaders, including the governing body

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

The school has experienced changes in staff since the last inspection when the headteacher was fairly new in post. The school has actively sought support from other sources whilst there is no incumbent or church wardens and has recently engaged with the parochial parish council who are keen to be involved with developing worship. The school is keen to develop links with other church schools to share good practice.

The headteacher's strong vision for the school has been developed since then and is shared by stakeholders, all of whom continually uphold the Christian values and articulate the Christian ethos, providing good role models for pupils. This ensures that pupil SMSC is a priority and the impact across the school is evident in highly positive relationships. Parents praise the strong family ethos of the school and its care for its more vulnerable pupils. School self-evaluation is strong and leaders use data effectively to ensure all pupils fulfil their potential and make the progress they should. They are clear that the Christian distinctiveness underpins all the school improvement initiatives. Strong leadership supports the identification of the needs of each individual child and the school lives out the belief that 'every child is the whole child'.

The vision and values are used to support decision making, especially in terms of pupil wellbeing. Self-evaluation and improvement planning include distinctiveness. Support staff comment on how the Christian distinctiveness ensures that the school is inclusive of everyone and everyone is supported with respect for differences. The RE leader provides strong leadership and has a clear improvement plan for RE to enhance its contribution to the values and vision of the school. Leadership is committed to ongoing development of the role of RE and its links to other curriculum areas and worship. The school is beginning to introduce Understanding Christianity to improve provision and widen pupil knowledge and understanding. The broader curriculum is said in the vision to reflect 'a creative God therefore we are creative and imaginative people in the way we live and learn'.

Governors put living out the values at the centre of their relationship with the school and how they make decisions. Wellbeing of all is very important to them and they provide strong leadership and support. The foundation governor spoke of the school having a clear vision and feels that it is the Christian values that encourage the behaviour and respect for others in school, developing confidence which has a positive influence on standards, attitudes to learning and attendance. There is a steering committee for monitoring and developing Christian distinctiveness. Governors regularly attend worship and carry out formal monitoring and evaluation. However, the format used to record monitoring doesn't fully allow for the impact on school improvement to be evidenced and evaluated.

The school accessed diocesan training and support after the last inspection and this has resulted in an improvement in the effectiveness of its Christian leadership