

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Nicholas Priory Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

St Nicholas Road, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk NR30 1NL

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Norwich
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Local authority	Norfolk
Date of inspection	04 May 2018
Date of last inspection	27 November 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	121093
Headteacher	Maria Grimmer
Inspector's name and number	Christopher J Allen 847

School context

St Nicholas Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is a large school in its first year as a fully-fledged primary school after being in transition from a junior school context. The head teacher has been in post since April 2017 and a new leadership structure was introduced into the school in January 2018. The school is situated in the centre of Great Yarmouth which ranks in the multiple deprivation index as the 57th most deprived area out of 354 nationally. The school has a growing population of pupils with English as an additional language; currently at over 43%. The school is very close to the Minster in the town and they share a breakfast club.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Nicholas Priory as a Church of England school are good

- The new Christian vision of the school consistently informs its approach to issues around attendance, behaviour and achievement of every pupil by providing a 'team around the child' to fully support each individual.
- The leadership team of the school is driven by a dedicated and hardworking head teacher who inspires, enthuses and lives out the Christian teachings the school is founded upon.
- Collective worship is a calm and still time in the school day that provides spiritual nourishment for every child and adult as people of God.
- Religious education (RE) is given high profile in the school, children take pride in their learning in RE and engage enthusiastically in their RE lessons.

Areas to improve

- Embed and share further the school's vision and aspiration as a church school so everyone in the local community can understand, support and see it as a beacon of excellence.
- Increase further the opportunities pupils have to plan, lead and monitor collective worship so their views are heard and acted on regularly and systematically.
- Enable pupils to develop their ability to make complex connections in their learning in RE, allowing them to appreciate the deeper level of understanding they are developing.

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

The school's Christian character consistently informs its approach to issues around attendance, behaviour and achievement. Current standards show a rapidly improving school, with strong progress this year across the year groups. The work in Y1 has built on phonics and outcomes are matching national in 2018. The new vision informs decisions made to enable every child of God to succeed by building a 'team around the child' providing, often, a wide range of services to ensure all are fully included and supported to reach their full potential whilst celebrating their differences. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary; they demonstrate strong and sustained relationships with one another and staff, whether it be the 'check-in' with pastoral staff at the start of the school day or using self-help resources to manage their own behaviour and conduct. This structure has built a resilient team that knows every child as an individual created by God. One leader said, 'We surround our children with love and as a result they want to serve one another.' This is seen in how pupils support each other and use the carefully developed support systems around them to flourish in school. As a result many children completely turn their challenging behaviour around and the school admits many children with permanent exclusions from other schools because of its nurturing approach.

The Christian character of the school contributes to the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of pupils – this can be seen in the high aspirations they have and the belief in themselves. They experience a great deal of local heritage as well as exploring the diversity of their own community. Home languages are frequently used in school as a means to engage and extend learners as well as to celebrate diversity. As a result pupils have a good understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural worldwide faith; this has been further enhanced in recent months by holding interfaith services at the Minster to truly reflect the rainbow of beliefs in the school. Children really appreciate this and also understand how to use their knowledge from RE to inform them of the school's Christian distinctiveness, being confident to compare and contrast their own beliefs to others in the local and wider community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The school has addressed the areas for development from the previous SIAS inspection by forming a Faith in Life sub-committee of the governing body. This committee, working closely with the Minster team, has developed collective worship to include everyone and has provided training to all staff in how to deliver worship. As a result everyone really values collective worship and all feel they can take part in this special time of the day. A real sense of gathering in God's presence is felt. One pupil said, 'I like collective worship as we all get to come together and talk to God in prayer'. Prayer is central to worship, children and adults alike are able to contribute prayers to the daily gathering; they recognise the different ways and meaning of prayer and use a prayer tree and personal prayer spaces around the school to speak with God in their busy and complex daily lives.

Collective worship explores the theological meaning of the school's core values and follows the rhythm of the church traditions and festivals. For example; the value of trust was explored in many ways including 'Trusting in God to lead is in the right way, trusting in people around us and trusting our faith like Jesus advocated when he walked amongst us on earth'. Learners are aware of the importance of Jesus in their daily lives and recognise God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit – being able to make sense of this and what it means to them. One pupil said, 'The Holy Spirit is in all of us and helps us to live and be alive just like Jesus was on earth'. However, worship does not consistently use biblical texts and stories to illustrate aspects of Christian teachings.

Monitoring of collective worship is now happening in the school but does not yet include children; likewise planning worship is only just becoming established within the pupil population. However pupils do contribute to worship and do so enthusiastically and with confidence – this begins with responding to the invitation to worship with God at the start of collective worship and then continues by sharing a new song they have learnt, performing a play or reading a prayer. A true sense of respectfulness and reverence is seen in how the pupils conduct themselves in collective worship, entering the hall in pairs holding hands, sitting peacefully and encouraging everyone to actively participate. As a result worship goes beyond being invitational to being transformational – reflection time at the end of worship allows individuals to think about the messages they have heard and how this will support them through the school day. This is then revisited at the end of the day when each pupil pays another a compliment related to the values they have displayed through the day.

Collective worship meets the statement of entitlement (2016).

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The standards in RE are as good as those in English and other subjects, with pupils in all groups making significant progress from their starting points. Pupils take pride in their learning and engage enthusiastically. Monitoring suggests that teaching is consistently good, and this view is supported by the high quality of work in books. It is evident pupils understand and value the subject, not just by the quality of their work, but also from how they engage

in lessons and by their comments – one pupil said, ‘In RE we explore lots of different religions so we can celebrate differences and get along with one another better.’ A wide range of creative responses to the RE learning is evident in the school, reflecting the visits and visitors they experience to bring the subject alive in the classroom. Sometimes lessons draw on the multi-cultural community the school serves, where home languages and beliefs are celebrated through RE days, cultural evenings and themed learning events at the Minster.

A well organised curriculum has been developed by an effective and active subject leader. The school is well placed to develop the pupils’ ability to make deeper connections in their RE learning and capitalise on the work they have successfully achieved through some of the ‘Big Questions’ they have chosen to explore. The school has invested time and resources into the RE lead’s development and supports work undertaken with the local diocese and East Coast RE group. As a result effective monitoring and rigorous assessment procedures are in place to ensure the subject continues to improve. Governors are also a key element of this process – making regular monitoring visits to the school. They are able to clearly state what is happening in RE and what needs to improve further based on first-hand monitoring. The school has worked hard to raise the profile and standard of RE since the last inspection and there is now a real academic rigour to the subject in all year groups.

RE meets all statutory requirements.

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

The head teacher, senior leaders and governors articulate and promote a distinctively Christian vision which, whilst it is new, has already enabled a different approach allowing everyone to lead the development of Christian values in the school. The vision is well known to the staff and is actively and systematically developed through year group leads. As yet there have been no opportunities to develop the vision with the pupils to make it more meaningful to them as well as being accessible to the wider community. The dedicated leadership of the head teacher commits to the school shining out as a place of God in the community it serves. Her relationships with staff, pupils and parents as well as the support she gives to allow everyone to flourish should not be underestimated; one staff member said ‘I never have a morning I don’t want to come to work’. The ability of the head teacher to live out her Christian vision and find the good in everyone means children and adults thrive in the school, as everyone finds a place where they can be most effective. The sensitivity of the staff is seen in how hard they work to ensure the whole community feels it is treated with respect and dignity; no one is prejudged. A wide range of support around pastoral care, behaviour and attendance is provided by home grown staff to ensure that a ‘team around the child’ exists for the most vulnerable in the school; this goes far beyond just the child, including the family as well. Leaders put a high value on the importance of the consistency of its provision in supporting families. Nurture has a high priority and has begun to be framed in a spiritual context. Strategies are under consideration to ensure that, as further developments are made, adults fully understand what makes this approach distinctive and are empowered to champion the school as a true beacon of light in the community. Parents really appreciate this saying how amazing the school is, how accessible everyone is and what a difference the school makes to their children. This is further supported and enhanced through the links the school has developed with the diocese in training new leaders in the school and the way the school works with other church schools to develop best practice for the pupils and staff in its care.

A clear example of how the leadership of the school invests in its staff is how the school is managing its journey after the tragic and recent loss of a young member of staff. The love, fellowship and care the staff and children gave to one another, as well as the support of Minster team, really shines out here. One adult in school described it as the Minster coming into the school and placing the arms of God around everyone to help them through what has been one of the saddest times the school community has faced. The comfort of being part of the Church and the support that was given and received made a transformational difference to this community. This is further supported by the regular and open prayers of staff and children to help the ongoing healing process.

Further work on developing pupils’ individual spirituality comes from the strong relationship with the Minster breakfast club which nurtures and feeds both physically with food and spiritually in song with the Minster music team. The club is well attended and used to support many children in different ways, including those with challenging behaviour. Parents recognise the benefit of this club and the relationship the school has with the Minster. One said, ‘The school and the breakfast club really helped my child; they stick by them and are very positive. They listen and make a real difference. If it wasn’t for them my child would not be in school now.’ The school really does feel at the centre of its community and should be proud of the warmth it both radiates to everyone within it and which surrounds it on its journey to be an outstanding church school.