



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Mary's Endowed Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

Chapel Road
Roughton Norfolk
NR11 8AF

Previous SIAMS grade: Satisfactory

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Norwich

Local authority: Norfolk

Dates of inspection: 28th September 2015

Date of last inspection: 8th July 2010

School's unique reference number: 121125

Headteacher: Kathryn Jackson

Inspector's name and number: Gill Hipwell 480

School context

This is a small but growing rural school which has developed this term from two full time classes to three. Cultural diversity is low but there is a wide socio-economic mix and the incidence of pupils with specific emotional needs is high. The current head teacher has been in post since September 2014, the sixth to hold the position in seven years. Temporary leadership was in place during the final eight weeks of the summer term 2015 due to compassionate leave of absence. The benefice is currently in interregnum.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary's as a Church of England school are good

- Shared responsibility for strategic planning and evaluation has enabled the school to maintain its strong Christian ethos and sense of purpose during leadership changes
- A culture of personal reflection, supported and enabled by the quality of prayer spaces and the spiritually uplifting environment, has made the exploration of faith and belief part of everyday life.
- The respect and responsibility at the heart of all relationships means that children and adults know they will be heard and open discussion leads to improvements
- Partnership and interdependence between the church and the school means that pupils see themselves and the adults who visit as members of a wider church family with a focus on Christian service

Areas to improve

- Implement a more structured monitoring process for governors so that the views of pupils have a formal place in the evaluation and improvement cycle for religious education and collective worship

- Access high quality training in religious education (RE) for all teachers in order to develop confidence and subject knowledge
- Provide sufficient time and resources to ensure that the quality of RE teaching is monitored in order to support teachers' professional development and raise standards

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

Pupils say that their school is a happy place where they feel special. There is little, if any, bullying and pupils say they 'can talk to a teacher' and that 'she helps us to make up'. The impact of a curriculum which is rooted in Christian values and explores topics from a strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) angle is shown in the way that pupils of all ages engage with abstract concepts. They were able, for example, to make quite complex links between worship, learning and behaviour without resorting to narrative. Their understanding of values as distinctively Christian is good and is underpinned by biblical literacy. Pupils make secure links between what they explore in RE and their own values and behaviour. Quite young children articulated an aspiration to become better people, speaking of living out Christian values by being kind to others. Cultural diversity is low but in the context of their own experience pupils are accepting of others and actively seek to be inclusive. They have impressed adults with the level of acceptance, compassion and friendship shown to children with severe learning or behavioural difficulties. Attainment for most pupils is good and data shows progress as steadily improving. Small classes enable individual learning plans and those experiencing difficulty are nurtured and encouraged. Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school. Although attendance last year was just below the national expectation there are no issues around persistent or casual absence and this term's figures show good improvement. The school environment is rich with opportunities for spiritual reflection and personal interaction with Christian faith and belief.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Morning worship begins the school day and all gather to 'learn about God, ourselves, our world'. Pupils, staff and church members share a spiritual journey which impacts on the remainder of the day through its message, challenge, time for personal reflection and invitation to change. All classroom staff attend worship daily and office and kitchen staff on special occasions. Younger pupils say that worship makes them think and older ones gave examples of how it has influenced their own attitudes and behaviour in order to 'be a better person'. Pupils identify the opportunity to reflect during worship as 'important' and say that this encourages them to use the prayer areas in their classrooms. Prayer is important to many of them and they value opportunities to 'write prayers and to answer them'. A year 4 pupil said that he always read the prayers others had written to 'see if there is anything I can do to help God to answer it'. The focus value for each half term starts with a 'messy collective worship' led by the head teacher with active participation for all. Input from clergy – which has been maintained during the interregnum – and the Open the Book team is always linked to the focus value. Pupils lead some aspects of the services held in church every half term and class-led worship is on the termly plan. Pupils do not readily identify themselves as worship leaders although they say that they enjoy participating and particularly enjoy singing and Open the Book. Pupils can speak confidently about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Older pupils discussed the Pentecost story and the similarities with Moses and the burning bush. One said that 'the Holy Spirit is God's soul'. Governors observe worship for monitoring purposes but do not seek pupils' views.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

There has been significant work on religious education (RE) in the last year. Instead of all lessons being taught by one person, each class teacher takes responsibility for the subject and the subject leader has provided in-school training to boost subject knowledge and confidence

in assessment. The curriculum has been reviewed and there is a new focus on enquiry-based learning. Pupils enjoy RE, describing it as 'awesome' and 'my favourite subject'. Planning is sound and in the lessons observed there was evidence of good teaching skills, positive relationships and pupils taking responsibility for their learning. Scrutiny of exercise books demonstrated that most pupils have a good understanding of concepts. Disruption to the plans for further development of RE last term means that the effectiveness of the subject is not yet 'good' because teachers have not had access to specialist training; there has not been an opportunity for lesson observations by the subject leader and as a result teachers were not confident during the inspection; assessment is not fully formalised, although expectations mirror those in the core subjects and standards are broadly similar. There is a good programme of professional development in place and the capacity for improvement is good.

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

Governors are united with the head teacher and her staff in their vision for a school rooted in Christian values, where the wholeness of every individual is celebrated and care for each other comes first. They are strategic leaders with a passion for succession planning and the growing of church school leaders at every level; this has helped to ensure stability over recent years. They ensure that values are embedded in policy and monitor to confirm that those policies are lived out in practice, identifying inclusion, acceptance, tolerance and forgiveness as key attributes displayed by pupils. Governors' observations and reports do not as yet monitor pupil perception; RE monitoring is not in place although governors have supported the current improvement plans and hold the subject in high regard. The head teacher is a quietly inspirational leader who encourages and empowers others so that there is shared responsibility for enhancing and celebrating the school's ethos. She has developed a culture of listening to the views of others. Parents appreciate the new forums where they can discuss issues, make comments and offer suggestions; several of these have been acted upon already. The partnership with the church is strong; Trustees are regular visitors to the school and take responsibility for developing personal relationships and showing that the church cares for the school. There is helpful input from the Diocese, both with regard to school improvement and pastoral support. Inter-diocesan links are being forged as the school looks for an Anglican partner school in London to broaden the cultural understanding of both groups of pupils. The school meets the statutory requirements for both RE and collective worship.

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