

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### Caston Church of England VA Primary School

The Street Caston Attleborough NR17 1DD

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Norwich</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Norfolk
Name of federation	The Dove Federation
Date of inspection	10 July 2017
Date of last inspection	8 December 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	VA Primary 12111
Headteacher	Cor Dekker
Inspector's name and number	Gill Hipwell 480

#### School context

This is a village school situated between two small market towns. The school is small but growing, increasing its roll from 49 to 75 over two years. The school is federated with a VC primary, sharing a headteacher and religious education (RE) coordinator. The headteacher has been in post since April 2017. The RE coordinator is an established member of staff, currently based at the partner school but previously at Caston. After a parish vacancy, an interim priest has just been appointed for a one-year period. Although the school is situated in an affluent area, numbers of pupils eligible for pupil premium payments is above the county average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (SEND) is high, and the majority of these pupils come from outside of the catchment area.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Caston as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- Leaders demonstrate faithful Christian commitment and purpose. Each has a vision for the school rooted in its core values but there is no commonly articulated, shared Christian vision informing strategic planning.
- A consistent emphasis on the worth of the individual enables every pupil to feel special, giving them the confidence to aim high whatever their starting point.
- Collective worship is emphatically Christian with a strong focus on the Bible.
- The school environment is spiritually enriching, with a range of Christian displays and invitations to prayer. Pupils' response to these is thoughtful but lacks breadth.
- Governors know the school well and are generous with their time but their role in the strategic cycle of developing Christian distinctiveness is underdeveloped.
- Religious education (RE) is well-led and has an increasingly prominent position in the curriculum.

#### Areas to improve

- Revisit the core values and the vision statement, ensuring that these are explored, known, shared and understood in their Christian context by the whole school family.
- Establish a robust and comprehensive strategic planning and evaluation cycle that has clear roles for governors and includes feedback from pupils in order to monitor impact effectively.
- Ensure that there is sufficient differentiation within RE planning both to support the least able and to provide opportunities for engagement at a deeper level.
- Enrich pupils' worship experiences by broadening leadership, including both representatives from the local church and pupils themselves.

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

Christian values are explored, expressed and promoted through many aspects of school life. Pupils understand the importance of the values in relation to their own behaviour and in the context of the wellbeing of the school community, particularly in their understanding of responsibility for others. However, they neither describe these values as distinctively Christian nor relate them to examples from the Bible.

Staff model warm, affirming and respectful relationships. Clear expectations of how others are to be treated create a strong family feel, where everyone is seen to be important. A pastoral, yet firm, approach to issues of concern, such as attendance, secures improvement through building trust and raising expectations. This has resulted in good academic progress and outcomes for all groups and has boosted attendance from an area of concern to meeting the national target figure. Vulnerable pupils are well catered for; loving and focused support ensures that they make excellent progress in an environment where all feel valued and welcome.

RE provides a sound structure for pupils to discuss Christian concepts in some depth, supporting the Christian character of the school. Older pupils are aware that Christianity is a world-wide faith and have some grasp of different denominations but their understanding of the cultural breadth of the Anglican church is not well developed. Although there is not a great deal of cultural diversity locally, the school makes the most of available opportunities to introduce visitors from other faiths or cultures, either first hand or through activities such as sponsoring the education of an African child.

Older pupils say that they like being given time to reflect on their RE learning, which suggests that there is a degree of spiritual development. However, as this is neither specifically included in lesson planning nor monitored by governors, there is no evidence to show the extent of this. Younger pupils equate spiritual reflection with appreciation of God's creation. A wealth of high quality displays around the school encourage pupils to think about Christian values. Pupils are proud of the ones they have helped to create.

Moral and social development are catered for through a broad range of curricular and extra-curricular experiences. Pupil responses to local, national and international events and appeals demonstrate their understanding of service, compassion and responsibility.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory**

Pupils enjoy collective worship and say that they sometimes find it inspiring. It is always faithfully Christian and Bible based with an appropriate focus on the life of Jesus. Pupils have good biblical literacy but do not consistently see the relevance of these stories to themselves and cannot always relate them to the school's core Christian values. They do say, however, that what they hear in worship often has an impact on their attitudes and behaviour.

There is always time for reflection and prayer, which pupils say that they enjoy. Prayer areas in classrooms and outside are well-used by many pupils, who describe them as 'peaceful' and 'a good place to be if you want to talk to God'. Prayer is part of the daily routine, including in classrooms, but although pupils pray confidently both together and as individuals, their understanding of prayer focuses mainly on worship and thanksgiving.

Worship is primarily led by staff and a monthly visitor from a local church, with classes also having occasional opportunities to lead. Pupil participation is the norm; staff include them frequently and effectively. However, pupils say that they would like to be more involved in planning and leading. During the parish vacancy, the input of the parish church into school worship has not been maintained. However, the newly arrived interim priest has already made contact with the school.

There is a worship record book in the hall, which is filled in by those who lead, but monitoring procedures are not sufficiently rigorous to inform improvement. There is some informal governor monitoring and occasional pupil surveys but outcomes are not discussed by the governing body.

Festival services are celebrated in the church and pupils enjoy these visits. They contribute to their understanding of Anglican tradition, including the significance of the liturgical colours which match those on the school worship table.

Although there has been some exploration of the Holy Trinity, resulting in a thoughtful display, pupils were unable to give a coherent explanation of what this might mean.

The statutory requirements for collective worship in a Church of England school are fully met.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

Since the previous inspection there has been a considerable improvement in the quality of RE teaching. A well-qualified, passionate and experienced coordinator has overhauled the curriculum to ensure that it comprehensively covers the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Planning is good. Teachers and pupils enjoy exploring concepts together and there is deep respect for personal faith and belief.

Investment in diocesan training and support, such as the Understanding Christianity course, has led to more confident teaching using an enquiry-based approach. In-school training to support the teaching of Christianity has

had a big impact but this has yet to be extended to cover other religions.

Teachers assess progress at the end of each unit and the coordinator monitors standards across the partner schools. She undertakes moderation of work annually. Scrutiny of pupils' books and teacher records suggests that outcomes are generally good.

Resources are carefully prepared but there is some evidence to suggest that these are not always well-differentiated. They are sometimes inaccessible for the least able or fail to provide sufficient depth of challenge for the most able. Lesson observation on the day of inspection confirmed that pupil engagement is good. There was appropriate, effective and well-focused adult support for pupils with additional needs, enabling them to participate. The enthusiasm of the teacher for the subject shone through and this had a highly motivating effect on pupils. A group of higher attaining pupils took on the additional role of 'observers' feeding back to the class on what went well or could have gone better from the perspective of their group. Some comments showed good insight and demonstrated a high level of trust and respect between pupils and their teacher.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is satisfactory**

The depth of Christian commitment from the headteacher, governors and staff leaves the visitor in no doubt that this is a school where God matters. There is a strong and consistent focus on embedding Christian values and the results of this are seen in relationships, behaviour, confidence and aspirations. Individuals articulate their Christian mission and aims for the school but there is no shared Christian vision to provide a focus for strategic planning and development.

Governors are very supportive and generous with their time but their recent input has not been focused on enriching the Christian character of the school. The headteacher is beginning to develop an approach which relies on greater rigour of governor challenging and questioning but there is insufficient recent evidence from monitoring for this to be effective.

Governors value the level of care provided by staff for all pupils, acknowledging that this often 'goes beyond what can be expected'. Parents, too, are generous with their time and work in partnership with the school to provide extra facilities. The 'Friends' group made sure that the new outdoor prayer area went up in record time and staff supported pupils in devising resources to make it a special place.

During the parish vacancy links have been maintained with the local church, with pupil work regularly displayed there and school support for church projects. Input from the church to support RE and school based worship has lapsed. However, the new interim priest is already making himself known to families by attending school events and being present at the school gate. With the headteacher, he is planning ways of developing a new and effective partnership.

The headteacher and RE coordinator, supported by the governing body, make sure that both RE and collective worship have a high profile with pupils and staff. Their quality is seen as an essential element of a Christian school and improvements include a stronger focus on the Bible in worship and more time dedicated to RE. Governor monitoring to provide evidence of the impact of these strategies has not yet taken place, in spite of the fact that RE monitoring was an action point from the 2011 SIAS report.

The school has benefited from considerable diocesan support over a number of years. The federation offers some opportunities for shared leadership responsibilities and joint projects, although the impact of these on developing Christian leadership is unclear. There are growing links with other local schools, both church and community, focused on raising standards. All of these are helping the school to develop its outward-looking character and to provide broader experiences for pupils and staff.

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