

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

### Blakeney Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

|   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| Wiveton Road, Blakeney, Holt, Norfolk, NR25 7NJ |                           |
| <b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>           | <b>Good</b>               |
| <b>Diocese</b>                                  | <b>Norwich</b>            |
| Previous SIAMS inspection grade                 | Satisfactory              |
| Local authority                                 | Norfolk                   |
| Name of federation                              | Pilgrim Federation        |
| Date of inspection                              | 01 March 2017             |
| Date of last inspection                         | 04 July 2014              |
| Type of school and unique reference number      | 121108                    |
| Executive Headteacher                           | Mary Dolan                |
| Inspector's name and number                     | Christopher J Allen (847) |

#### School context

Blakeney Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is a very small rural primary school, with 43 pupils on roll. It is part of the Pilgrim Federation of Church of England Primary Schools which has one executive headteacher, deputy head and governing body. It has a higher proportion of SEND and pupil premium pupils than the national average. Most pupils are from a White British background. The school has had a complete change in teaching staff since the last inspection and was judged good by Ofsted in September 2016. The parish church of St Nicholas is next door to the school.

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

- Distinctly Christian values are clearly expressed, both through the physical environment and the relationships held in the school and as a result the school and wider community recognise the positive impact this has had on the school since the last inspection.
- The strategic leadership of the school by the executive head and foundation governors has brought the school along a journey where it is now ready to fully embed its distinctiveness to become an outstanding church school.
- Collective worship has been transformed since the last inspection, all members of the school community see the importance it has in their daily life and how it drives the ethos of this church school.
- Religious education (RE) has systematically developed since the last inspection and drives the school's irresistible learning that supports the natural inquisitiveness of the learners in the school.

#### Areas to improve

- To embed the pupils' understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the daily act of collective worship so that they understand the importance of God as three persons in Christian theology
- Build on the good work happening in the monitoring of RE and collective worship to include the pupil voice more frequently so that pupils feel their spiritual and moral needs are met.
- Embed the tracking of RE attainment and progress to reflect the high expectations of the school's planned RE curriculum and to match the systematic rigour this has in all other curriculum subjects in the school.

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

The school's Christian character consistently informs its inclusive approach and is reflected in the high attendance (97%) and strong engagement of pupils and their families, despite their personal backgrounds or needs. The school has worked hard since the last inspection to express its Christian values and ethos both in the physical environment and the relationships held in the school. One foundation governor spoke of 'every child now feels valued and we now feel we provide the right grounding for them to believe they can achieve anything they want to'; this expresses the Christian vision of the school in helping all pupils to flourish as children of God. Learners behave well and live out the core values of the school, they show compassion towards one another, love of God's creation around them by developing outdoor learning spaces and service through supporting local fundraising events. Many pupils can talk about the values but they do not consistently fully explain their explicit links to the Christian faith. Cohorts in the school are small which makes judgements against national standards difficult. However clear assessment systems and pupils' work, as well as their attitude to succeed, demonstrate they are making good progress from their starting points. In September 2016 Ofsted clearly recognised the work the school has undertaken to secure the best outcomes for its pupils. Current Year 6 pupils are on track to make the expected standard in reading and maths; in writing dedicated support ensures every pupil will reach their full potential regardless of their current ability. This reflects the ethos and values of the school expressed in its vision statement of 'we all play our part in achieving excellence in everything'.

Learners enthuse about the irresistible learning the school has developed. This provides a wide range of spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development through a range of visits and visitors in the school. Pupils speak of their time at Norwich Cathedral, Walsingham Shrine and Binham Priory, where they not only spend time with their friends from across the Pilgrim Federation but have spiritual nurture as well. The impact of this on learners' daily lives is evident in their good ability to express their thoughts clearly and with confidence. It is also reflected in the way older pupils care for younger pupils in the school and take responsibility for them seriously. However pupils are aware of Christianity in the world but not what this may look like or mean in another country.

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

Collective worship was a focus for development from the last inspection. It is clear that a transformational journey has taken place and today collective worship is central to school life. All members of the school community now see the importance of worship in the daily life of the school. Parents attend weekly celebration worship, visitors regularly lead worship and staff and pupils consider worship as the highlight of their day. One parent said 'it underpins our ethos, it sets our character and it has deep roots in Christian tradition'. Learners enjoy worship fully though taking on roles in Open the Book, singing passionately and planning special services. Year 6 pupils spoke of their day learning about Lent with their fellow Year 6 friends across the federation and the planning of their founding day service with foundation governors. Learners also contribute to worship through writing and reading prayers each day. It is clear learners are now ready to take on a wider role in collective worship and they are keen to plan, lead and monitor worship on a more regular basis, governors have clear plans to include pupils in this within their cycle of monitoring for further improvement.

Prayer plays an important role in collective worship and took on three clear elements that were meaningful to every pupil. It began with the Lord's Prayer and then the school prayer before moving on to the pupils' own prayers that were offered to God. One said 'I like collective worship because we get to come together as a school and we get to speak to God in our life each day'. Prayer continues beyond worship into the classroom, with dedicated reflective spaces and prayer boards. These are actively used by all pupils, during a learning walk with pupils in Yr6 and Yr2 they were keen to discuss these spaces and the prayer they have written. One said 'we can write prayers and put them in these special places, these are quiet places where we can ask God to help us'.

Pupils speak with great knowledge about Bible stories such as Noah's ark and the creation story; this is a direct result of work the school has completed with their local incumbent on Godly Play. It was evident through discussion and pictures that the pupils and staff thoroughly enjoyed this approach. It is clear that the school has developed fruitful links with St Nicholas, the local parish church. Parents and their children speak enthusiastically about the monthly Messy Church, the new communion service introduced by the school and the many services held in church through the school year. From this many Anglican traditions were clearly embedded in worship, including some of the liturgy used in church. Pupils can talk of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit but do not encounter the theological references of the Trinity in the daily act of collective worship, something that the school is aware it needs to develop.

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

RE is recognised as a core subject and seen as important in developing 'enquiry and reflection rather than just learning facts'. RE makes a good contribution to the Christian values of the school and the learners' SMSC

development; the systematic changes since the last inspection are clear as stated by the RE subject leader 'it is now at the beating heart of our school'. Changes such as the development of a structured RE programme to include big questions like what is the Kingdom of God? why do Christians celebrate communion? and is life a journey? have used SMSC to support the development of RE. Attainment is broadly in line with or sometimes better than national expectations. Attainment is good in relation to standards across other areas of the curriculum but tracking is not yet developed enough to demonstrate progress clearly compared to other subjects. The RE scheme of work is embedded as it is fully understood and creatively delivered by teachers, this is a result of the training staff have received and support from the diocesan RE advisor. The current cycle of this scheme has been reviewed by the RE subject leader to consider how new initiatives such as the Understanding Christianity project can support deeper understanding for the pupils.

Learners understand the value of RE and learn well. The school's irresistible curriculum drives the natural curiosity of the pupils; one said 'I like RE as we learn together and sometimes our questions mean we might not know where our learning might take us'. RE has an appropriate balance between content which focuses on Christianity and that which focuses on other world faiths. Pupils are given good opportunities to reflect on their beliefs and to think about the significance of faith for themselves and for others. Teaching is good and uses the enquiry approach with big questions to full effect – these shape the pupils' learning with relevance. Questions are captured on enquiry boards in each classroom and pupils are encouraged to continue to reflect and act on these in other lessons. This means that they are confident in their learning.

Assessment procedures are in place and are used to inform planning, teaching and learning. Further development of the tracking of RE is identified as a priority by the school as they wish it to match the rigour they have within other subjects. Currently the RE subject leader and deputy head for the federation have developed a simple spreadsheet based on assessment criteria from the RE Scheme that teachers complete each term separate to the school's established tracking system for other subjects. Their plan to merge this into the established online tracking system the other subjects use is yet to be implemented. The subject leader for the federation effectively communicates high expectations to senior leaders, governors and staff to continue to enable further improvement in the teaching and learning of RE. Significant time and money have been invested into RE subject leadership which ensures the leader is well informed and supported in his role. RE meets the statement of entitlement (2016).

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

Since the last inspection the school has gone through many changes culminating in a complete change in staff. The executive head and non-teaching deputy head have driven the school forward with support and accountability from a strong governing body. Leaders now articulate and promote the shared Christian vision for their school with confidence. All decisions are made based on the school's distinctly Christian values and directly and positively impact on the whole life of every pupil and family, one parent said 'our children are confident because of the nurture and support the school provides through its Christian values'. Parents, the local church, diocese and wider community contribute fully to the life of the school in so many ways, such as the work of the school support officer from the diocese (DSSO) in supporting leaders to develop rigorous systems for the school and wider federation has ensured the Christian values are regularly returned to in all discussions, decisions and evaluations governors and senior leaders make. People from outside of the school clearly see the school as a church school and comment on the Christian values it holds and brings in to their community; they talk of the how the school invites them to services and events regularly and how the church is alive through its work with the school. Parents are kept suitably informed about their children's education. They appreciate the school's care and concern and recognise this as part of its distinctive Christian and inclusive ethos.

The capable governors who drive the school self-evaluation strategies have led directly to school improvement and as a result everyone who visits the school speaks passionately about it. The work of the vision, values and ethos committee considers carefully and sensitively the many distinct elements of the school that make it a church school. The formation of this committee was a critical factor in the school's impressive journey from the last inspection. Staff are encouraged to develop professionally whilst working within a church school, one teacher said, 'the school helps you follow your dreams and gives you confidence that it is the right time to develop yourself'. Whole staff training and teachers taking part in a specific training courses provided by the diocese have enhanced the provision the school offers this is clear from the depth of knowledge teacher now have particularly in RE.

Strong links with the parish church of St Nicholas impact positively on the school's character and on pupils' religious, spiritual and moral development. The local incumbent spoke of the church being filled with families from the school for Messy Church, Christingle and how the family service is growing in numbers. Until recently a youth missionary has worked with children and staff to directly shape their ethos and values. The local incumbent is very supportive of the school and knows every pupil and family as a result.

Areas for development from the previous denominational inspection have been appropriately addressed.