Statutory Inspection of Anglican & Methodist Schools

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Blakeney Church of England VA Primary School

Vision

As God's children, we all play our part in making learning irresistible within our Federation communities. We all learn through the Christian values that are at the heart of our schools and strive to be the best we can be, knowing that, "What we will be has not yet been made known." (1 John 3:2)

Blakeney Church of England VA Primary School is living up to its foundation as a Church school and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish. It has the following notable strengths.

Strengths

- The Christian vision is deeply embedded and drives the life of the school. A commitment to flourishing and growth unites the whole school community.
- Partnerships with the schools in the Pilgrim Federation, and with the local church and beyond, enhance the work of the school. They provide pupils with meaningful opportunities to learn beyond the classroom.
- Superb care from a hugely dedicated staff team supports pupils and families to flourish. This is enhanced by a particularly close and effective partnership with the local church.
- The quality of relationships across the school is extremely high. Pupils have a powerful sense of their responsibility to themselves and each other, leading to a caring environment and respectful behaviour.
- The leadership of Blakeney as a Church school is especially strong. This means that both religious education (RE) and worship are well supported through planning and resources. As a result, they are both areas of particular strength.

Development Points

- Embed strategies to develop spirituality across the whole school curriculum and environment. This is so the impact of planned spiritual experiences, and opportunities for individual reflection, are enhanced.
- Expand opportunities for pupils to engage actively with issues of justice. This is so they can apply their developing leadership and independence to causes that matter to them in the school, community and beyond.
- Extend the RE curriculum to include the exploration of Christianity as a worldwide faith. This is so pupils can understand religious diversity beyond their local context.

Inspection Findings

The Christian vision is at the heart of this caring and loving school. It underpins the warm and welcoming atmosphere that is a hallmark of life at Blakeney. The vision is deeply embedded, inspiring people across the school community to 'play their part'. The strong relationship between the four schools of the federation benefits from this sense of shared purpose. Working closely together, leaders are better able to share good practice and support staff workload. The joint governing body also plays an active role. They set the Christian vision as the standard against which to evaluate the school. This, in turn, supports further improvement. As a result, the vision is highly impactful in driving a school that nurtures and cares for its community. In the spirit of Christian love, pupils and adults flourish here.

High quality relationships are at the centre of the school's work. There is a keen sense of togetherness, in which pupils and adults are treated with love, dignity and respect. As a result, wellbeing and mental health are high on the agenda. In line with the vision that all are children of God, pupils are individually well known and cared for. Consequently, their particular needs and vulnerabilities are quickly recognised and well supported. The quality of relationships is particularly valuable when families are experiencing a period of difficulty. In these times, the empathy and diligence of staff is especially appreciated. Staff go above and beyond in their support and, for some, this leads to transformational change. Because of the strong relationships built with families, there is good parental engagement with the school's vision and purposes. In response to this inclusive ethos, volunteers are increasingly drawn into Blakeney's work. The active parent/teacher association is rooted in the quality of relationships built by the school. The church's role is also central. The monthly 'messy church' and 'big breakfast' bring the school and wider community together. This leaves a lasting impact as it creates a sense of deep connection for people with their local school and church.

'Big questions' are core to Blakeney's approach to the curriculum. This encourages pupils to think deeply and stimulates a developing spirituality. Careful thematic planning ensures learning is inclusive of all ages in the school's multi-year classrooms. This ensures that children enjoy a full breadth of curriculum opportunities. Leaders are committed to making the curriculum 'irresistible' as they want pupils to delight in their learning. Because of this, learning is enhanced by a range of trips, visitors and residentials. Many of these are run across the federation, such as the annual Founding Day celebration. These benefit pupils because they extend their experiences and friendships beyond their own small community. They regularly walk the trails and coastal paths of the local Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This provides engaging learning opportunities for pupils and moments of spiritual reflection. They develop mindfulness and appreciate the awe and wonder found in creation. However, explicitly planned opportunities for spiritual development in the curriculum and the school environment are in their infancy. As such, they have yet to impact fully on pupils' spiritual life.

Collective worship is valued highly by pupils and adults. It is at the heart of school life because it is here that the vision and values are explored and reinforced. Leaders go out of their way to ensure that worship is inclusive and invitational. This reflects the school's vision that everyone should be able to 'play their part'. Worship includes interactive activities and focussed use of technology. This makes the worship inspirational, and the community responds eagerly in joyous singing. Visitors from the local church make bible stories interesting and memorable. Because pupils are so engaged in the worship, they can reflect and think deeply. This means that worship is a time when spirituality is developed. For example, one pupil described worship as a safe space where people can express their spiritual life without judgement. Creative activities, such as completing thankyou cards, offer practical

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approaches to reflection. The partnership with the local church in worship is deep and strong. This enhances spirituality as it underpins a powerful sense of belonging. The involvement of pupils, and their work in the worship council, enhances the feeling of togetherness and participation. Evaluation of worship is beneficial because it engages the views of pupils and adults. This, in turn, ensures that worship is fresh and meaningful, contributing to the spiritual development of the whole school.

Leaders have made an understanding of the wider world a core focus of their work with pupils. They have engaged with the diocesan Racial Justice Network, which has increased learning opportunities and pupils' understanding about diversity. Pupils encounter a further range of justice-related issues through their curriculum and collective worship. This enables them to discuss issues with increasing maturity. They are developing their ability to find their voice in challenging views and disagreeing well. Opportunities such as litter picking, or charitable giving to the church foodbank, help pupils contribute to their local community. This gives them a sense of belonging and social responsibility at a local level and across their federation. Regular visits to a nursing home develop important skills in communicating with different people and understanding other groups in society. Leaders have begun to identify curriculum opportunities to encourage pupils to think about how they can impact on wider matters. However, whilst pupils actively 'play their part,' they do not see themselves as able to champion appropriate causes independently.

Leaders give priority to RE and this contributes to it being one of Blakeney's strengths. The curriculum is well-planned and gives pupils coherent progression in their learning, notwithstanding the mixed-age class structure. Support from the diocese has been valuable in developing this. Consistent training sessions across the federation ensure that teachers feel confident in delivering the subject. As such, teaching and learning is highly effective, so that pupils value RE and are proud of their work. They think deeply in lessons and relish discussion of thought-provoking questions, such as 'Is the true meaning of Christmas lost?' Their appreciation of diversity is strengthened as they engage with differing faiths and world views. For example, learning about Islam has led pupils to appreciate the importance of the hijab. However, Christianity is not always represented as a diverse, global, living faith. Varied assessments – through written activities, artwork or discussion – and use of feedback mean pupils understand their learning and next steps. Standards are moderated across the federation, ensuring teacher assessments are reliable and accurate. As such, leaders ensure that teaching and learning is of a good standard and pupils progress well.

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National Society for Education
Church of England & Church in Wales

Methodist Schools

Information

Address	Wiveton Road Blakeney Holt Norfolk NR25 7NJ		
Date	21 January 2025	URN	121108
Type of school	Maintained Voluntary Aided	No. of pupils	29
Diocese/District	Norwich		
MAT/Federation	The Pilgrim Federation		
Headteacher	Tom Snowdon		
Chair of Governors	John Burrows		
Inspector	Paul Seeman		