

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

<b>Earsham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School</b>	School Road Earsham Bungay NR35 2TF
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Norwich</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Outstanding
Local authority	Norfolk
Date of inspection	20 October 2016
Date of last inspection	18 October 2011
School's unique reference number	121114
Headteacher	Sue Armstrong
Inspector's name and number	Caroline Clarke 711

### School context

Earsham Church of England VA Primary School serves the village of Earsham and the surrounding rural area. Its Christian ethos attracts some families from further afield. The school has very strong links with its parish church, which is close to the school. There have been significant changes in staff and governors since the last inspection. The local incumbent has also changed and the school has changed from a first school into a primary school. Despite all these changes, the school and church have an established and successful record of working in very close partnership.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Earsham as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The strength of Christian purpose and partnership and passion to nurture, enthuse and support one another is evident in the teamwork and whole school achievement seen.
- A very positive, successful and caring school family based around a strongly embedded Christian ethos and set of values, results in parents from out of catchment selecting this school.
- A vibrant, inviting, stimulating and spiritually enriching learning environment, enhanced by very strong links with the local church, is key in ensuring that religious education (RE) has a very high profile and is taught well.
- All actions from the previous SIAS inspection have been very thoroughly addressed and their impact embedded.

### Areas to improve

- Develop a deeper understanding of diversity and difference amongst pupils through encouraging more visitors from other faiths into school and trips out to other places of worship.
- Provide further opportunities for lesson observations in religious education (RE) so that strong practice can be shared and celebrated.

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

The importance of the school's Christian character is highlighted throughout the building via vibrant displays, religious symbols and thought provoking questions. The Christian values are even inscribed in the school windows. The school's ethos statement 'Shine from the inside out' is at the very core of all the school does. Staff and pupils regularly discuss Christian values and spirituality. For example, an older pupil during role play interviewed a 'leper' saying, 'How did you feel when you were banished from the village?' The pupil responded by explaining the word 'banished' and providing words like lonely, unworthy, ashamed and 'a burden' for the feelings experienced. Behaviour and learning attitudes are very good; the nurture group is highly successful for vulnerable pupils and strong understanding of the school values enables pupils to make good choices. All children make good progress from their starting points, including those children from vulnerable groups. A carefully planned curriculum that provides regular opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures that pupils are confident and articulate and respect one another's views. The beautiful 'Visits and Visitors' scrapbooks created in every classroom are exemplary and show the strong emphasis the school puts on understanding and respecting others through learning about their lives. Although there is a lack of cultural diversity in the community, the school places a strong emphasis on celebrating and valuing differences in faith, race and ability, through thoughtful and detailed curriculum planning. The youngest pupils can retell the stories of Jesus and know they come from the Bible. The link between collective worship, RE and the school's Christian character is seamless, with pupils and staff making daily connections. Pupils talked about how the miracle they were making playdough characters for was just like the other miracle they had heard about in collective worship that day as both were performed by Jesus. All four classes always have pupils' RE work on display at the local church, reinforcing the very strong links between the school and church families.

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

Collective worship is recognised by all as a distinctively Christian part of every day. Collective worship, RE teaching and the school's Christian ethos are all intrinsically linked, underpinning all that the school achieves and ensuring that messages from worship make a difference to the relationships between individuals and within the community. Well planned worship, led by all teachers, has a very strong Christian focus and is firmly rooted in Anglican practices. The delivery of collective worship is enriched by weekly acts of worship led by the local incumbent, the benefice schools' worker and other members of the benefice ministry team. This means that the pupils have the opportunity to participate in high quality guided reflection. There are regular opportunities for pupil led worship. This means that the worship leaders gain an in-depth understanding of the message and the rest of the pupils respond to Christian leadership from their peers. Pupils show a good understanding of the purpose of prayer, regularly contributing ideas for prayers themselves. Quiet reflection spaces indoors and outdoors are well used and the pupils are especially proud of their outdoor labyrinth because it "allows them space to think, reflect and sometimes change their behaviour." Pupils of all ages have an excellent understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit demonstrated by their work and conversations. Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship has improved significantly since the last inspection. This is because governors, pupils and staff all collect evidence that is used to measure the impact of collective worship and changes have been made as a direct result of this. For example, the headteacher has made sure that the school and church use a shared liturgy and focus value.

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

All groups make good progress in RE compared to national expectations, including those with additional needs. The school has introduced a tracking system to enable staff to identify gaps in learning. On the day of the inspection the whole school participated in a half termly RE Day. The theme for the day was 'The miracles of Jesus' and all teaching observed was at least good. Pupils of all ages make clear links between their RE learning and acts of collective worship, including the values of the school. Pupils talk with knowledge and enthusiasm about the focus value and what it means to them. For example, a pupil explained how Jesus walked on water. 'Relationships sink if you don't trust someone, just like Jesus would sink in the water if he didn't trust God.' Teachers ensure that activities are challenging, well resourced, exciting and well differentiated; pupils of all ages and abilities are very

engaged in their learning. There is a whole school approach to teaching that uses the structure: engage, enquire, explore, evaluate and express. As a result pupils recognise these terms and really understand how to use their enquiry skills and how to widen their knowledge by engaging at a deeper level with topics taught. Although Christianity is the principal religion studied there is an appropriate focus on other faiths as set out in the Norfolk Agreed Syllabus. Pupils are encouraged to compare world religions. For example, Y3 and Y4 pupils have been learning about the importance of pilgrimage for Muslims and Christians. Consistency and progression was clearly evident in the four lessons observed and in teachers' planning. The RE subject leader is new to her role but has a clear plan of action and is being mentored very well by a teacher as part of school succession planning. The RE leader has delivered training to colleagues and has carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work in RE. She has yet to observe teaching across the school and therefore does not currently have a clear understanding of strengths and areas to improve. Plans are in place to address this.

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

The headteacher, in partnership with staff, governors and the incumbent, provides excellent leadership. They all clearly articulate the school's Christian vision with ownership and understanding. The school ethos statement 'Shine from the inside out' was chosen by pupils, parents, staff and governors. Governors link the ethos to the idea of Jesus shining as a light. Staff and governors have developed a school improvement plan around this ethos, ensuring the Christian character of the school is central to the daily work of the school. The chair of governors is an ordained local minister; she is supported by several governors who are actively involved in local churches. This means that the school has good access to a wealth of theological experience, resources and opportunities to further develop its Christian character. The headteacher places a strong emphasis on staff well-being. Governors and the local incumbent are a real strength to all in times of need. Parents praise the school for its kindness, nurturing environment and the way it reaches out to every pupil. Governors ensure staff are challenged and leaders evaluate initiatives thoroughly to ensure impact. School leaders have thought very carefully about succession planning. Robust systems exist to ensure that strong Christian leadership of the school is maintained and continually developed via training from the diocese on distinctiveness and the financial commitment that has been made to provide focused and specific support for the new RE leader. Partnerships with the local church, other church schools and the diocese are very strong. The school participates in cluster RE training and the RE subject leader visits other benefice church schools to share best practice. A very popular church holiday club is held at the school annually with staff involvement, there are shared services in the church that unite the congregation and school for Anglican festivals and the school participates in diocesan events such as workshops at the cathedral. As a result pupils and others jointly participate in shared Christian experiences and pupils have the opportunity to see the impact of working with others as part of a wider Anglican family.

SIAMS report October 2016 Earsham CEVA Primary, Bungay NR35 2TF