

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Orford Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

School Lane, Orford, Woodbridge, Suffolk. IP2 2 LU

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Diocese	St Edmundsbury and Ipswich
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Suffolk
Date of inspection	01 November 2016
Date of last inspection	22 September 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 124777
Headteacher	Vanessa Wells
Inspector's name and number	Elizabeth Pitcher 448

School context

This rural primary school serves Orford and several surrounding villages. There are 63 pupils on roll, six of whom are eligible for pupil premium funding spread over three mixed age classes. In the past five years, the school has been led by four headteachers and has been a part of two partnerships. The current headteacher, with no previous headship experience, was appointed from September 2016, having been with the school for almost two years, during which time she was senior leader and then interim headteacher for two terms. Six new foundation governors have recently been appointed. Staff undertake multiple responsibilities in meeting the challenges of a small school.

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

- The commitment of the headteacher, supported by the staff, to promoting Christian values creates a supportive environment which leads to pupils' academic and personal development.
- Support from the local church enriches the partnership between the school, the church and wider community.
- High quality relationships characterised by respect and trust within an inclusive, family atmosphere promotes well-being throughout the school community.

Areas to improve

- To embed a robust, strategic cycle with clearly defined planning, resourcing, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and improvement in order to make sustainable changes.
- To give teachers sufficient time and support to develop subject knowledge so that the impact of the Emmanuel Project is maximised towards consistently good, differentiated teaching and learning in religious education (RE).
- To embed opportunities for spiritual development in planning across the curriculum and monitor the impact on pupils' spiritual development in relation to the school's Christian ethos.

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

During her interim post, the current headteacher prioritised and led a review of the Orford mission statement and aims involving all stakeholders, including pupils. This key document was formally revised and agreed at the end of the summer term, as a platform for the further development of the school's Christian character. Consequently, Christian values are placed more centrally at the heart of the learning and development of the whole child which is 'central to the growth and improvement of the school'. This gives increased cohesion to a shared sense of purpose and ownership of what it means to be a church school. This is reflected in the way the school approaches attendance and exclusion, through nurturing positive attitudes to learning and behaviour, leading to motivated, well-behaved pupils who are eager to come to school to learn. As a result, attendance has much improved and standards of attainment of most pupils in core subjects are in line with or above national expectations. The school also extends its inclusive ethos by welcoming pupils with behaviour issues from other schools. These disaffected pupils settle well into the nurturing environment, promoting positive change in attitudes to learning. Parents speak highly of how their children are supported because, 'everyone looks out for each other'. As a consequence of the Christian character of the school, and the expectations that stem from this, the values of respect and truthfulness are reflected in pupils' positive behaviour to each other and to visitors. Adults at Orford consistently reinforce the Christian values explored in worship, encouraging pupils to consider how these might be reflected in their lives. For example, showing compassion for those less fortunate than themselves by their sacrificial giving to the Shoebox Appeal. Pupils are secure in their understanding of how Christian values are relevant to their everyday lives.

Pupils are proud of their school and many enjoy the kitchen garden, which is particularly popular for working together, growing and cooking produce and preparing and sharing special meals, 'as a family', which contributes to personal development. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the Bible quotations and Christian values boards, enabling a strong connection with the school's Christian foundation. Although, the extent of pupils' spiritual development is difficult to measure, because some pupils do not yet have the language to express their thoughts, there are indications that opportunities for deeper reflection on spiritual issues in RE and other areas of the curriculum are increasingly included in planning and pupil response is developing. Monitoring of this aspect is at an early stage and begins to resolve an issue from the previous inspection.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is central to the daily life of the school. This is because it is effective in promoting the school's Christian ethos and brings everyone together as a church school family, underpinned by Christian values. The headteacher has recently taken responsibility for collective worship, supported by the Values for Life programme. Consequently, a clear structure of biblical teachings and themes influence pupils' attitudes. In response to a previous action point themes and values are integrated into the daily life of the school, so that messages from worship are consistently reinforced through the curriculum and beyond. This encourages pupils and adults to live out the Christian values of the school and demonstrates the strong impact of worship.

In the worship observed on All Saints Day, pupils were quiet and showed respect by listening attentively and responding eagerly as the headteacher shared her favourite places linked to specific saints.

A systematic plan is in place to ensure that worship is varied in style through a range of worship leaders, including the rector who regularly visits the school. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the Open the Book team, who are particularly popular because of their interactive approach to the retelling of Bible stories. These opportunities make a good contribution to biblical literacy, encourage guided reflection and build meaningful links with local Christians.

Good links with the local church lead to pupils and parents regarding the church as a part of the life of the school, as together they enjoy celebrating major Christian festivals in the church. This helps deepen their understanding of the rhythm of the Anglican year, whilst experiencing its liturgy and patterns of worship. A core group of Year 6 pupils contribute to worship by choosing hymns, prayers and music and the action plan identifies that the leadership role of pupils will be increased by planning, leading and evaluation of worship. Staff, other than the headteacher, do not currently plan or lead worship, which has been a strategic decision at this time of transition for the school. Teachers have focused on providing spaces in classrooms for reflection and personal prayer, and some pupils show an understanding of the purpose and place of prayer in their own lives, as well as during the school day.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

The headteacher has recently taken responsibility for RE. She holds a clear view of the actions needed to ensure the subject develops, which is to continue to review and refine assessment tracking systems and to continue to improve monitoring. The recently introduced diocesan Emmanuel Project forms the basis of teachers' planning, exploring Christianity themes and other world religions. Diocesan training has taken place and training is being organised for a new teacher for increased consistency.

Evidence of learning outcomes is limited because in the past year only a small number of lessons have been monitored and progress over time is not currently being recorded. The available information suggests that most pupils are attaining expected standards or above in RE and that teaching and learning is judged by the school to be good. However, the inspector judged lessons to be satisfactory during the inspection, although pupils listened intently and responded well by quickly locating Bible verses and eagerly answering questions. When given time to express their views, pupils responded with insight by making links between concepts and values they learn in RE and what they learn in CW. For example, in preparing for the Remembrance service, one pupil made the explicit link between the sacrifice of soldiers for their country and 'the sacrifice made by Jesus on the cross for us'. However, there was limited opportunity for pupils to then reflect or explore this theme. Teaching does not consistently take account of the challenges presented by mixed ages and mixed ability, therefore, progress is limited for some pupils. Marking and feedback in RE books does not consistently support pupils to work towards further improvement. RE is not yet good because there has been insufficient time to embed the strategies introduced by the new leadership and because the limited evidence from monitoring and evaluation and in pupils' books does not indicate consistently good practice.

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

On the appointment of the permanent headteacher in September 2016, the school entered a period of stability. In order to root the school in explicit Christian distinctiveness, leaders and managers are focusing on a number of strategic actions. For example, the review and the newly revised ethos and aims it identified has been an essential starting point for implementing a clearer strategy for the promotion of Christian values. Progress in the newly established leadership and management teams is reflected in the strategic development of CW and RE through ongoing training in the leadership of both for the headteacher, and for staff in the implementation of the Emmanuel Project. The Christian character of the school is a standing agenda item at governors' meetings; the newly established ethos committee has the remit to consider how the school's Christian ethos can influence practice and policies for further curriculum development in order to impact on pupils' personal, academic and spiritual development.

Although school leaders and managers have a clear grasp of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, they have yet to put in place a robust procedure that gathers strong evidence when monitoring and evaluating the impact of the Christian ethos, RE and CW. For example, the importance of providing opportunities for pupils to explore matters of faith and belief is identified as a school development point.

Leadership and management is not yet good because there has been insufficient time for the school to settle into the pattern of new leadership or to embed and monitor the impact of recently introduced initiatives. However, capacity for the school to progress and improve is maximised because it is making the most of strong partnerships between leadership, governance, the church and the diocese.

The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship, but the school is unaware of the Church of England's Statement of Entitlement for religious education.

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