

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Thorndon Church of England VC Primary School

Address The Street, Thorndon, Suffolk, United Kingdom, IP23 7JR

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Overall grade **Good**

The impact of collective worship **Good**

School's vision

Our vision is that each child and adult in the school should 'believe and achieve'. Everyone should believe in themselves and in each other to inspire confidence and curiosity, with high quality teaching and learning which cares for all, reflects the love of God and enables all children to flourish.

Key findings

- Leaders are able to articulate the school's Christian vision. They can demonstrate how it is lived out practically in every day school life often through the school's values. It has shaped recent policies and strategic decisions but planning and other documentation lacks clarity of vision.
- Every individual is highly valued within the school family and encouraged to believe and achieve. This nurturing ethos creates a happy, safe and respectful place where pupils flourish. Although not routinely planned for, there are clear opportunities for spiritual development throughout the school.
- Collective worship is a valued moment in each day in which pupils and adults take part. It is invitational and inclusive. Pupils enjoy their roles in worship but opportunities to evaluate and feedback are limited.
- The long-standing partnership with All Saints' Church enriches the lives of both communities and supports the further development of the Christian vision in many aspects of the school.
- Pupils flourish in religious education (RE) because of the skill and knowledge of the subject lead. RE securely meets Church of England requirements, and enables pupils to develop a good understanding of Christianity and other world religions and worldviews.

Areas for development

- Ensure that the Christian vision is woven through improvement planning and policies, so that it shapes school actions and has the greatest impact.
- Establish a shared understanding of spiritual development amongst staff, so that it can be planned consistently across the curriculum.
- Increase pupil involvement in collective worship so that they plan, monitor and evaluate it in ways that lead to improving practice.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Inspection findings

Although the leadership structure of this nurturing school changed recently, its Christian vision and values continue to enable all to flourish. The vision is rooted in the understanding that God believes in us. This is firmly supported by the values of responsibility, perseverance, co-operation, friendship, kindness, honesty and respect. Pupils proudly wear their 'rainbow values' on their uniform, they understand that these come from the teachings of Jesus and will help them 'achieve'. The head of school's dedication to the entire school community is tangible and everyone trusts in her. This family school knows one another well. They believe in each other and take great joy in celebrating individual achievements and the flourishing of all. Improvement planning documentation and older policies are not driven by the school's Christian vision. However, the executive headteacher, head of school and governors have demonstrated it drives strategic direction through their decisions and actions. Leaders have put their vision in action by making the decision to convert to an academy, choosing a multi-academy trust whose values are clearly aligned with their own. This proactive approach is ensuring their transition to academy status is already mutually beneficial. The school benefits from the support of their diocese and local church. The passionate religious education (RE) leader has made good use of diocesan training on RE and collective worship. She has used this training to provide support to staff in school which has impacted upon pupil learning and flourishing.

The school's broad and balanced curriculum, underpinned by the school's Christian vision, is driven by questions to arouse pupils' curiosity. Pupils are further inspired by a visit or visitor linked to their learning. This enhances learning through real-life experiences with pupils flourishing as a direct consequence. A significantly high proportion of pupils have additional learning needs or vulnerabilities. Leaders actively encourage the nurturing ethos of the school, making it an effective place for all to learn, regardless of need. Staff know their pupils well and believe that all can achieve success. They find ways to make learning accessible to all so that all will flourish. Staff also work with parents to enable them to support in their child's learning at home. Learning opportunities occur that support spiritual development in the curriculum, for example, forest schools, topic 'hook days', making music, quiet times for reflection. However, there is not a shared understanding of spiritual development amongst staff, to establish consistent planning for it across the curriculum.

Staff use links within the curriculum, news events and their own personal connections to develop pupils' awareness of wider global society. Consequently, pupils have an understanding of diversity and social injustices experienced by people in different areas of this country and overseas. This has included learning about pride month and black history month. When they have identified disadvantage and deprivation, pupils have appreciated what they have. This has led to toy donations for refugees, harvest food for the local foodbank and essential items for the homeless. Pupils are guided by their 'rainbow values' and see it as their responsibility to show friendship, kindness and respect. Their response has currently come from a shared sense of compassion and not as independent courageous advocates for social change. Behaviour and care for one another is exemplary at Thorndon. The new behaviour policy is underpinned by the school's vision. Forgiveness and reconciliation reflect this as does pupils' respect for different points of view. Leaders value the wellbeing of every member of the school community equally. In order that all can flourish, a member of staff has been trained to support good mental health. Leaders are mindful that their role is to develop a well-rounded child ready for the next phase of their education. This means that the school actively supports the whole family through challenging times.

The relationship between the local church and the school is highly valued and further strengthens the sense of community. The rector supports a team of collective worship ambassadors in their role. Prior to covid-19 restrictions, the collective worship ambassadors played a much greater active role in worship. This is gradually resuming. Currently the collective worship ambassador's involvement is limited; they deliver gathering and sending messages and give occasional readings. Each term, they are asked to evaluate worship and their role, which is fed back to leaders. Their recent evaluation has led to a collective worship ambassadors' board which includes the class prayers, written by pupils. They flourish through their unity in prayer. Pupils enjoy worship and prefer it when they are most involved. Some of their opportunities for spiritual growth occur at times when there is a greater sense of togetherness. This is encountered during singing, celebrating someone's achievements, listening to Bible stories and reflecting upon them in their prayers. They especially like to hear prayers they have written. The school prayer was written by pupils and is something that everyone finds uplifting and reminds them of their vision. Special Christian festivals take place in church, most recently harvest festival. Pupils are proud of their involvement and parents enjoy the opportunity to attend. As well as being a place to worship, the church often provides much needed space for

the school such as a venue for school plays or the place to meet a horse when learning the poem 'The Highwayman'!

Religious education (RE) has a prominent position within the school's curriculum. Pupils value RE because of the depth of knowledge they acquire about world religions and worldviews. They consider this learning important so they are able to accept views that differ to theirs without inadvertently causing offence. Pupils develop skills of enquiry through focussing on questions; identifying what they already know and what they need to learn. The knowledgeable RE leader has a genuine enthusiasm for her subject which permeates through the school. It ensures that those involved in the teaching and the learning flourish from the experience. Challenging questions and quizzes develop pupils' deeper thinking skills and enables staff to assess pupils' learning.

Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	07 October 2022	URN	124745
Date of previous inspection	20 May 2015		
School status	VC	NOR	054
Name of Multi Academy Trust or Federation	N/A		
Diocese or Methodist Circuit	St Edmundsbury & Ipswich		
Headteacher	Daryl Jones/Hannah Meadowcroft		
Proportion of pupils deemed to be disadvantaged	In Line with National Average		
Proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Above National Average		
Additional significant information (if needed)	The Executive Headteacher and Head of School have been in post since September 2022. This is a small school in rural Suffolk with a declining roll. The number of classes within school has been reduced from 4 to 3 this term which resulted in staff changes.		
Inspector's name	Christina Galletly	No.	0975