

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Catfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

School Road, Catfield, Norfolk NR29 5DA	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Norwich
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Norfolk
Name of federation	Swallowtail Federation of Church Schools
Date of inspection	23 January 2017
Date of last inspection	17 July 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled Primary 121103
Executive Headteachers Head of School	Jo Nutbeam and Julie Wones Natalie Butcher
Inspector's name and number	David Bunkell 815

School context

In 2013 the school joined with two small infant schools to create the Swallowtail Federation of Church Schools, with one executive headteacher and governing body. The current headteacher was appointed from September 2014. Since September 2016 she has worked for three days per week, sharing the post with a full-time colleague who has the role of executive headteacher for the other two days. When they are at the other schools, the head of school is in charge. The school is much smaller than average, currently attended by 56 pupils aged 4 to 11 in three classes. Nearly a quarter of pupils are on the special educational needs register. A separate pre-school shares the school site. The benefice has a vacancy; a new incumbent is likely to be appointed soon.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Catfield Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- The school is a happy and cohesive community, firmly centred on Christian values.
- Themes for collective worship raise pupils' aspirations and challenge them to take responsibility for their own conduct, often expressed in Christian terms.
- Leaders clearly live out Christian values, are excellent role models and as a result all aspects of life at the school benefit.

Areas to improve

- For pupils to derive even more spiritual benefit from collective worship, seek to ensure that it is clearly Anglican in nature, recognising more fully the church year.
- Develop pupils' understanding of the broad ecumenical nature of Christianity in the UK by comparing and contrasting Anglican worship traditions with those of the other local Christian communities who are involved in leading school worship.
- While refurbishing outside areas, consider enhancing the spaces set aside for prayer and reflection, to augment pupils' personal experience of prayer.

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

Pupils are very much aware that they attend a church school, proudly talking about the displays throughout the school that reflect the Christian distinctiveness. As a result of a recent visit to Norwich Cathedral, pupils have now created their own versions of stained glass windows to enhance further the religious displays in the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school, so rates of attendance are high. A compassionate approach helps any families who find regular, punctual attendance difficult. Pupil exclusions are infrequent, and on the rare occasions when they have been necessary are in the best interests of the individual child, implemented only when all other possible measures have been exhausted. Academic progress and attainment are nearly always in line with or better than national expectations, with no discernible differences for pupils with special educational needs. This was recognised by Ofsted at the end of 2015, judging the school overall to be good.

All are welcomed, regardless of religious beliefs or background. Pupils demonstrate a high level of spiritual development, seen in the way they treat one another with great patience and respect, often with humility as older pupils were seen to go out of their way to support younger children. Behaviour is generally exemplary, and on the rare occasions when there are lapses, pupils explained that they can generally sort things out without adult intervention, forgiving one another with reconciliation.

In a largely mono-cultural rural area, pupils have some basic understanding that Christianity is a world faith, although in conversation with some pupils there was a degree of misunderstanding about this. Pupils like the opportunity to learn about the practices and beliefs of those who follow other religions, but could not always explain the importance of acquiring this knowledge.

Pupils enjoy religious education (RE), and it undoubtedly makes a significant contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to the Christian values and character of the school, as they were seen to be adept at comparing what is in the Bible with contemporary issues that they encounter.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils and adults say that they value the opportunity to join together for their daily time of collective worship (CW). Adults play a full part, for example volunteering responses during CW on the inspection day to say when they had persevered. Pupils could explain how the half-termly theme for CW enables them to reflect on their own behaviour and choices, for example how the current theme of perseverance encourages them not to give up when they encounter difficulties. Pupils are very keen to participate in CW, singing and signing enthusiastically. On the day of the inspection CW was led entirely by a group of four pupils. It had good structure, with frequent engagement with fellow pupils and adults, and was clearly linked to the current theme. Staff support pupils when they lead CW, but the choice of content is entirely theirs. The notice board where pupils can sign up to volunteer to lead CW showed that many do so. Biblical material is frequently used, on this occasion relating a verse from Philippians to the perseverance needed by athletes, helping to link the ideas to pupils' own lives.

At the start of CW a candle is lit while a suitable prayer is said, and at the end the candle is extinguished and a Christian dismissal used. In discussion, pupils were aware of a few festivals in the church year, but were not able to explain them in detail, and were sometimes confused. Currently both church benefices for the federation are without incumbents, but retired clergy sometimes lead CW, as does a Methodist lay pastoral assistant. Representatives of the Salvation Army have also done so, although some pupils thought that the Salvation Army was an agency to give food to the needy, rather than being a Christian organisation.

Themes for CW are carefully chosen for their relevance, and contribute to pupils' moral and spiritual development. As a result pupils understand the importance of sacrificial giving. Members of the school council described their actions in arranging events to contribute to the Children in Need appeal, and in bringing harvest gifts to school. Prayers are said during CW, and also before lunch and at the end of the school day. Many prayers are written by pupils, and are displayed throughout the school buildings, some as paper chains, or written on leaf-shaped paper. Each classroom has an area for prayer or reflection, and pupils said that they frequently use these. Outside is a basic quiet area which pupils said was not conducive to prayer or reflection. With the recent demolition of a shelter, further work is planned to refurbish some outside zones.

CW often includes teaching about Jesus Christ, and pupils could explain at a basic level his centrality in the theological concept of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. One younger pupil waved his arms to demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is all around, while an older pupil drew a detailed demonstration of the Holy Trinity, depicting the Holy Spirit as a dove.

The parish church is nearby, and several times each year CW takes place there. Staff and foundation governors plan the CW programme, and governors often attend to monitor its effectiveness, leading to improvements such as ensuring that hymns or songs are now relevant to the theme. Pupils complete daily a 'Collective Worship Reflection Book', summarising and commenting on that day's CW.

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

The school motto 'Caring and Achieving Together' was seen to permeate every aspect of school life, with the two executive headteachers and the head of school working well together to promote a vision founded on Christian values. As a result, pupils feel valued and enjoy coming to school. Governors and staff work together on the self-evaluation of the school's performance and Christian distinctiveness, helping to ensure that pupils achieve well. Leaders attach great importance to CW and RE by ensuring that each has high-quality resources and that outcomes are closely monitored to inform future planning, so both have a high profile in the school, and meet all statutory requirements. The monitoring process includes pupils annually completing a detailed survey based on SIAMS inspection criteria about their understanding of Christian values, relationships and effectiveness of RE. Parents are highly supportive of the school, with all who have responded to Ofsted's Parent View saying that they would recommend the school to others. Parents are welcome to attend CW each Friday, and many do so. A half-termly 'Newsletter for RE and Values' includes details of how families can consider the current value at home. In addition to annual generic questionnaires for parents, another survey each year is specific to Christian distinctiveness, anonymised results showing high levels of understanding and appreciation. In conversation with parents, some said that they had specifically chosen this school because of its Christian tradition and values. Links with the local church have been very strong, with the incumbents of the two benefices being foundation governors, so during the current vacancies this has inevitably lapsed slightly, but a churchwarden ensures that the church heating is on when the school wish to use the church in the winter, and a governor liaises very closely with the PCC. The formation of the Swallowtail Federation has strengthened the Christian character of the school, for example by the one governing body including two members of the clergy to bring separate views and experiences to bear. News about the school is published regularly in a village magazine, and local residents are encouraged to attend such events as open days, by doing so enhancing contact with the local church and members of the congregation, who see the school as part of the church's outreach. Links with the diocese are strong. Older pupils recently spent a day at Norwich Cathedral. Full use is made of diocesan opportunities for staff training, so staff are well prepared for future leadership of church schools. The role of a diocesan school support officer is greatly valued by senior staff and governors. Leaders have demonstrated their commitment to strategic planning by creating the federation, and are now very carefully considering the future, exploring their options wisely when considering further inevitable changes.

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