

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

### Creeting St Mary Church of England VA Primary School

All Saints Road, Ipswich, IP6 8NF

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>St Edmundsbury and Ipswich</b>
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Suffolk
Date of inspection	10 March 2017
Date of last inspection	29 May 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided Primary 124770
Headteacher	Christine Friar
Inspector's name and number	Linda Russell 893

#### School context

Creeting St Mary is a smaller than average, rural primary school with 81 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average. The headteacher has been in post since September 2016. Since the last inspection, the school has become a primary school, catering for the age range 4-11. There was a recent one day Ofsted inspection.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Creeting St Mary as a Church of England school are good

- The school, under the leadership of the headteacher, operates as a Christian community which is inclusive and welcoming, encouraging all to use their God-given talents.
- A strong sense of community means that pupils and families feel supported and nurtured.
- Pupils are well behaved, care for each other and demonstrate the Christian values of love and respect on a daily basis.

#### Areas to improve

- Develop systems to enable governors to monitor and evaluate impact of Christian distinctiveness on individuals and the daily life of the school in order to inform future development.
- Create more opportunities for pupils to plan, deliver, and reflect on collective worship in order to enhance their spiritual experience and develop their understanding of prayer.
- Identify further spiritual, moral, social and cultural links across the curriculum to enhance learning for pupils so that all are clear about the contribution this makes to pupils' development in a church school.

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

The inclusive Christian vision of the school promoted by the recently appointed headteacher ensures pupils are motivated and supported in their personal well-being. All pupils make good progress from their various starting positions because of the individual attention they receive. Vulnerable pupils say they know they are valued and this helps them to achieve well. Appropriate academic and pastoral support demonstrates the impact of the Christian character of the school, especially the belief that 'we leave no-one behind.' Pupils know the newly adopted motto 'anything is possible' and understand what it is to have aspiration. Attendance is good with pupils saying they enjoy being at school and feel safe, 'I feel cared for because the teachers make sure we are safe and go home with people we know'. Pupils behave well and show the behaviour policy rooted in the Christian value of reconciliation is effective. Staff and parents attribute the harmonious community within the school to its Christian ethos and values, 'I like the way my child is being taught Christian morals at this school'. Parents appreciate the emphasis on biblical stories in both collective worship and religious education (RE) which has led to Bibles being purchased for home. Relationships

between pupils of all ages are strong. The focus on taking responsibility for one another and the positive interaction between the pupils gives a real sense of a Christian community. The 'buddy system' which pairs an older child with a new arrival enables pupils to demonstrate care and the Christian value of responsibility for others. Pupils nominate one another each day for acts of kindness, honesty and fairness. Pupils are able to draw inspiration from Christians, enthusiastically describing Buzz Aldrin taking communion on the moon, saying that 'he was thankful to God for reaching the moon safely'. Understanding of Christianity as a worldwide faith is supported by the biannual residential trip to the African Adventure Village which is part of the Christian Youth Ministries and by an annual Kagera day where funds are raised by the school to support local people in developing safe water sources. Pupils from varied religious backgrounds are keen to share their traditions with their peers. In this way, the school is developing pupils' respect for diversity and preparing them for life in a multicultural society. The school environment shows its Christian distinctiveness through the display of crosses and inspirational quotes from notable Christians which pupils and staff refer to. There are specially designated quiet areas outside which are used by pupils to take time to reflect. Both the school council and eco council offer the pupils an opportunity to serve the wider school community but the importance of looking after the world from a Christian viewpoint has not been fully explored with the pupils.

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

Collective worship is the driving force for Christian values and is carefully planned by the coordinator using the Values for Life resource and then shared with local clergy. Worship is led by school staff, local clergy and visitors from other Christian traditions. Previous and current worship themes are displayed around the school and referred to by pupils. Worship, rooted in the Bible, enables pupils to recall stories about Jesus and use the messages in them to inform their daily lives, especially their behaviour. Themes are supplemented by the main Christian festivals of the church year, celebrated with services in the local church which are enjoyed by staff, pupils and their families. More opportunities for worship at the local church have been provided and pupil feedback shows they enjoy the opportunity to take part in services. The use of the local church enables pupils to explore a place Christians hold as special and these visits are designed to give pupils opportunities to reflect and develop their own responses as they did during a recent baptism service. School worship, regarded as a special time by all, offers opportunities for pupils to be involved by setting up the worship table and lighting a candle, enabling them all to be clear that 'God is with us and he is the light of the world'. All staff participate in worship and enjoy the opportunity worship provides to come together as a school family. The use of different coloured altar cloths is understood by pupils who referenced the colours when describing the major festivals celebrated as part of the church year. Regular class worship takes place across the school giving Year 5/6 pupils opportunities to plan and deliver a worship session to their peers. Older pupils are keen to be involved further by planning, delivering and evaluating whole school worship. In all worship pupils use a liturgy which reminds everyone of belonging to a wider Christian family. Regular reflection time in worship is used to enable pupils to think about the messages they have heard. Pupils regularly access prayer tables, prayer boxes and reflection areas in the classrooms to make individual responses. Regular use of the Lord's Prayer enables pupils to talk with some understanding about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Collective worship is monitored informally by the headteacher to check the plan is being followed, but monitoring in terms of the impact of worship on the daily life of the school and those who attend is yet to be developed.

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

RE is taught as a discrete subject through the Emmanuel Project. Since its introduction staff have gained in confidence and universally enjoy teaching RE. All staff have received training from the diocese and value the support given to them. Improved subject knowledge has impacted on teaching and learning and, as a result, standards in RE are in line with those achieved in other subjects for all pupils, showing that teaching of RE is good. Effective differentiation and support for vulnerable pupils enables all to make good progress. Through effective teaching, pupils are learning about Christianity and other world religions using a wide range of activities. Pupils enthusiastically created a set of rules based on the ten commandments given to Moses by God, saying following these rules show respect for God. The subject leader provides good leadership and has recently introduced an assessment system to bring RE in line with the way the rest of the curriculum is assessed. This supports the school's view of RE as a core subject. A recently organised RE cafe, which saw parents working alongside their children regardless of age, was well received, enabling the school to demonstrate its family atmosphere and the importance of RE to the school. Older pupils demonstrate knowledge of specific religious language when they talk about gospels and disciples. There is a clear monitoring system in place enabling the subject leader to check standards through direct observation of teaching and scrutiny of work. Although pupils say they enjoy RE, the subject leader is aware that more formal collection of pupil perception is required as part of her effective action plan which clearly shows the direction of travel for the school. Links with other curriculum areas are developing with pupils able to bring skills from drama to the RE lessons, for example the youngest pupils were acting out Jesus' arrival on a donkey in their preparation for Easter. As yet there has been no system for identifying opportunities for RE across the whole curriculum or those spiritual, moral, social and cultural

opportunities that can be used. Pupils are given opportunities to learn about other faiths with Year 3/4 sampling Matzo crackers and recognising the symbolism of the salt water as being the tears of the Jewish people going into exile when learning about Passover. Marking extends pupils' thinking by posing a question. This addresses a focus for development from the last church school inspection. In this way pupils are being encouraged to think more deeply and coming up with questions such as 'If God made the world in seven days, how did dinosaurs live for so long?'

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

The energy and vision of the headteacher has given the school forward momentum and is bringing about effective change which is supported by all stakeholders. Various nurture groups, an expression of the school's Christian vision and values that everyone is special, offer support to vulnerable pupils and help them achieve well. This focus on individuals enables pupils to succeed because they feel valued, encouraged and respected. Parents praise staff for going above and beyond in order to help pupils achieve. Standards are good and this shows that a focus for development from the previous inspection to consolidate best practice within the expanding age range has been addressed. Following a survey, leaders quickly identified the need to strengthen the partnership with parents and created a plan to address this. Parents particularly appreciate the opportunity to share ideas with the headteacher and governors. Termly parent forum sessions provide useful feedback and enable the school to be responsive. Recently introduced progress meetings in Year 6 are now attended by parents following a suggestion from a governor and are having a positive impact on motivation. Governors appreciate the quality of the information they receive, enabling them to have a good understanding of the school's performance. They are developing their role as 'critical friend' and are involved in monitoring the school development plan as a recent visit to monitor nurture groups by talking to the pupils demonstrates. Governors also attend target setting meetings to check on the effectiveness of progress measures. These activities are enabling them to hold the school to account and measure the impact of initiatives, but monitoring and evaluation of the school as a church school is underdeveloped. Governors are looking at succession planning by identifying potential governors in the community. Leaders invest in staff development, taking advantage of training from the diocese which impacts positively on pupils because the teaching of RE has improved. The effective partnership with the local church has been maintained and developed by the headteacher. The parent association regularly holds its meetings in the vestry. Local clergy are regular visitors to the school, not just as part of the worship team, and are seen as part of the fabric of the school, offering welcome support to staff and parents. These tangible links, alongside the recent visit of the Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich and the Bishop of Dunwich as part of their Lent pilgrimage, signal the Christian foundation of the school to all stakeholders as does the increase in church services attended by pupils. Developing middle leadership has been a focus for leaders and this has certainly been beneficial in RE where the leadership being shown is bringing about improvements in teaching and learning. The school's arrangements for RE and collective worship both meet statutory requirements. The headteacher acknowledges that she has asked a great deal of her staff since her appointment in September 2016. It is a testament to the way she has done this that there is universal support for her and demonstrates her vision of 'deeds not words' in action.

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