

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Bedfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Address	Bedfield Woodbridge Suffolk IP13 7EA		
Date of inspection	30 October 2019	Status of school	VC Primary
Diocese	St Edmundsbury & Ipswich	URN	124720

Overall Judgement	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	Grade	Requires improvement
Additional Judgement	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good

School context

Bedfield is a primary school with 45 pupils on roll, more than 60% from out of catchment. Most pupils are of White British heritage and no pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national averages. An Ofsted inspection in June 2019 judged the school to require improvement, although pupil personal development, behaviour and welfare were deemed to be good. The headteacher has recently been given more time out of class to fulfil her role. The RE leader is new to the post.

The school's Christian vision

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13

Our Christian faith provides the foundation for the love, respect and care we provide to all our children, and we believe that through God's strength and guidance anything is possible. We want our children to feel brave, curious and determined in all aspects of their lives.

Key findings

- The headteacher is a passionate, committed and hands-on Christian leader who is always mindful of the workload of her staff. Individuals routinely give well above what can be expected but the small team carries a heavy burden of responsibility. This makes finding time to carry out every role difficult.
- The deeply embedded and distinctively Christian ethos and values have been given a sharper focus by the new vision statement. Strategic decisions are carefully thought through to ensure that they reflect the vision but monitoring of these is generally focused on provision rather than impact.
- The commitment of staff and governors to the happiness, well-being and all-round development of pupils has led to a strong sense of belonging for all. Families are included and supported.
- There has been investment in religious education (RE), including training for the new subject leader. Provision has been improved but assessment of how this is impacting on pupils' progress is not in place.
- Collective worship supports pupils' personal and spiritual development. They make decisions based on Christian values and routinely practise prayer and reflection outside of worship, including at home.

Areas for development

- Ensure that governors have clear and agreed success criteria for monitoring Christian distinctiveness and spiritual development. Focus evaluation on impact rather than provision.
- Make sure that planning in RE takes account of the age and ability range in each class, so that activities engage and challenge every pupil in every lesson. Monitor the impact of this robustly.
- Provide appropriate training for all staff and governors to enable them to share responsibilities for supporting and developing the Christian distinctiveness of the school.

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

This is a small school with a big heart. A long held and deeply embedded Christian ethos is expressed through a strong set of values which pupils and adults understand, discuss and aim to live by. They explore them in worship and express them through their daily interactions and in their willingness to be of service to others. Adults are very good role models and, because they are loved and respected by pupils, this has a significant impact on attitudes and behaviour. There is a strong conviction, reflected in the vision, that every pupil can and will achieve great things. Parents, many from outside the catchment area, are universally positive about their children's experiences because they trust the school to nurture and develop them as individuals. This is an inclusive community; every effort is made to ensure that all pupils and families feel welcomed and valued.

Worshipping together is a highlight for most pupils, who enjoy 'time to rest and think of the day'. Services in the Church are attended by parents, and Church members all come too. Pupils like this sense of being part of a bigger community and say they would like it to happen more often. Daily worship involves everyone and has an impact on pupils' attitudes and behaviour. The focus on Christian values is reinforced in lessons, including but not solely RE, and in the playground. Pupils enjoy the Bible stories they hear and can retell them. Their understanding of the significance these stories might have for them is variable. Monitoring of worship does not assess its impact on individuals, which means that ongoing planning lacks a sharp focus on improving engagement. However, pupils can talk about how worship makes a difference to them. They generally understand the purpose of prayer for groups and individuals. A significant number have developed some degree of personal prayer life.

The school makes the most of the joys brought by its small size. Older pupils enable younger ones to grow in confidence. In doing so they themselves develop an understanding of responsibility and service to others. Pupils with additional needs are fully integrated, a practical example of how to include everyone in a mutually respectful family. Pupils have a strong sense of fairness and will stand up for what they feel to be right. This indicates that they have a developing understanding of justice and of what it means to be a courageous advocate. Opportunities to lead are plentiful; there is a role for everyone. All pupils feel included in some form of decision making. This enables pupils of all ages to flourish socially and emotionally.

The structure of the curriculum exemplifies the vision. Times for reflection are built in, along with developing curiosity and the courage to try new things. Creativity is central, with pupils investigating topics through art, music and dance. These media also enable pupils to explore different cultures, extending their understanding of diversity locally, nationally and internationally. Multi-cultural resources are used, and literacy planning ensures that there are stories from around the world. Visits and visitors are carefully chosen to broaden pupils' experiences. However, monitoring focuses on provision rather than impact and there is no shared understanding of how to assess spiritual development. RE follows the Emmanuel Project, developing pupils' understanding of the role of faith in modern society and allowing them to explore Christian concepts in depth. Reflection and deep thinking are integral to the RE curriculum, although older pupils do not consider that they are given important questions to explore. Pupils' RE work shows a range of learning activities but the breadth of outcomes does not consistently reflect the age and ability range in the class. The RE leader is new in post and has not yet implemented assessment and monitoring protocols.

Delivering a curriculum that inspires and challenges across the very wide ability and age-ranges in each class is time-consuming and demanding. The progress of each individual is tracked. Pupils with additional needs are given targeted support. Some outcomes are good but there are inconsistencies across subjects and groups. Essential roles and responsibilities are shared amongst a very small team. Staff are generous with their time, but it is not always possible to keep on top of everything. Staff are always keen to develop their skills and knowledge and, where possible, attend relevant training to develop their roles. There is a lot of informal sharing of knowledge, people often staying at the end of the day to update each other or to seek support or training. The headteacher is an inspirational leader who commands great respect and affection. She lives the vision. Under her leadership there have been tangible improvements in how the school expresses its Christian foundation. She is, however, working under pressure because of the weight of responsibility.

Governors are passionate advocates of the vision. They have responded positively to recent challenges, firm in their belief that they can 'do all things through Christ.' They have begun to look at ways of supporting the headteacher by, for example, giving her more management time and applying to join the diocesan academy trust.

There is not yet, however, a long-term sustainable strategy for achieving and maintaining consistently high standards. There has been no training for governors or staff to develop their understanding of what makes a Church school distinctive, how to look at spirituality and how to assess the impact of the vision.

The school makes use of partnerships and external support as a means of improving outcomes for pupils and for staff. There has been a mutually beneficial relationship with the Church for many years, with joint initiatives such as sending harvest gifts to a women's shelter. The incumbent is a familiar face at worship in school and at Church. He provides good pastoral support for the headteacher. As his team grows, he is working with the headteacher on plans to extend the Church's role, including support for the pupil collective worship council and more opportunities to use the Church building as a curriculum resource. Good use is made of diocesan advice and support, such as training for the RE leader and meetings focused on the challenges faced by small schools. Expertise is shared with local Church schools, which are also a source of support for the headteacher.

This school is cherished by its community. Governors and staff believe in the school and hold fast to the vision. There is much to commend but there are also areas in need of improvement.

Headteacher	Martine Sills
Inspector's name and number	Gill Hipwell 480