

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Palgrave Church of England Primary School

The Green, Palgrave, Suffolk IP22 1AG	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	St Edmundsbury & Ipswich
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	August 2016
Name of multi-academy trust	Tilian Partnership
Date of inspection	02 May 2017
Date of last inspection	21 June 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 143071
Head of School Executive Principal	Julia Waters Andrew Berry
Inspector's name and number	Jean Johnson 608

School context

This is a smaller than average primary school with 75 pupils on roll. The school is part of a federation of four Church of England schools which make up the Tilian Partnership. The partnership became a multi-academy trust in August 2016. The school is led and managed by the head of school, with the principal having responsibility for the partnership as a whole. The school is adjacent to the parish church.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Palgrave Primary as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The school's strong Christian ethos is celebrated by all, and has a recognisable impact on behaviour, attitudes and relationships within the school.
- The strong and effective partnership between the school and local church community consistently promotes the school's Christian character and has a positive impact on all stakeholders.
- The strong leadership of collective worship has been instrumental in ensuring that Christian values are firmly embedded in the everyday life of the school.
- School leaders have a shared vision for the school as a church school and are committed to embedding and enhancing this within the Trust.

Areas to improve

- Provide more visual foci for reflection within classrooms to develop pupils' personal spirituality.
- Increase pupils' involvement in collective worship by giving them responsibility for planning acts of worship.
- Give pupils more opportunities within religious education (RE) and collective worship to explore Christian values in the context of biblical material so that they can develop a better understanding of the roots of those values.

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

Christian values, for example compassion, responsibility, courage and perseverance are deeply embedded in the everyday life of the school and have a significant positive impact on behaviour and attitudes. These values, together with associated biblical texts and practical examples of their achievement, are displayed in the school's entrance, reinforcing its status as a church school. Pupils show a good understanding of these values when they talk about what they mean to them. They say, for example, that they show courage when they do something even though they are afraid to do it, just like David when he approached Goliath. Pupils are confident to express their views and offer for example a personal response to questions such as 'How can you show you are sorry when you have done something wrong?' Parents feel that their children gain a good practical understanding of Christian values during their time at the school and that this is illustrated in the excellent relationships evident in the school. They value the school's 'open door' policy as well as its caring, nurturing ethos, which they say supports their children to do their best both academically and socially. As a result, most pupils make at least expected progress during their time at the school and attendance is generally above national average. Additional targeted support enables disadvantaged pupils to reach expected levels.

Individual achievements are recognised and celebrated at the weekly 'sharing assembly' which is also attended by a number of parents. Parents see this as a time when the school's Christian values are exemplified and reinforced for their children. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is supported through a wide range of activities. School trips to for example London, together with visitors representing other faiths and cultures extend pupils' cultural understanding. The school council takes the lead in raising money for a variety of charities including Children in Need and the Food Bank. Pupils associate these activities with the Christian value of service. They also talk about how 'team bears' are awarded to children who gain the most tokens in recognition of behaviours linked to the school's values. Pupils' individual talents and interests are valued and nurtured in a variety of extra-curricular clubs.

Pupils talk about their learning in RE, and how they have been interested to learn about other faiths for example Islam and Buddhism. They can compare these faiths to Christianity and acknowledge the similarities between the different faiths. Pupils' responses also show that they have a sound understanding of Christianity as a diverse and multi-cultural world faith. Pupils also reflect on the values introduced in collective worship and consider how these relate to their own lives and the lives of others.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Evaluations from governors, staff and pupils led the school to reconsider their planning for collective worship at the start of 2017. All staff lead collective worship and planning is now based on the 'Roots and Fruits' materials with a half termly theme centred on a Christian value. As a result, pupils develop a good understanding of Christian values and appreciate the opportunities they have in collective worship to reflect on key messages and how they relate to their everyday lives. The good behaviour and attitudes seen in school illustrates their understanding of these values. They are however less sure about relating these messages to biblical teaching.

A member of the local ministry team leads collective worship fortnightly, increasing pupils' understanding of local church traditions and practice for example the cycle of the church's year and associated liturgical colours. Evaluations indicated that pupils would like to take a more active part in worship. Church members lead a weekly 'Open the Book' act of worship in the church. Pupils now volunteer to take speaking parts in Open the Book plays and practice these with church leaders in a lunch time club. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the parts they have played and these experiences add to their Biblical literacy. Key messages from these sessions are discussed in school, and reflection time books show pupils' thoughtful responses to questions posed such as, 'How would you feel if Jesus walked into your room today?' and 'How can you help make people happy?' Pupils also lead prayers and contribute their own thoughts in collective worship, their ideas showing a good understanding of the theme. Pupils talk about how they enjoyed the recent 'Easter Experience' organised in the church by the Open the Book team and how it contributed to their understanding of the Easter story. The school also comes together with parents to celebrate major festivals in the local church. Pupils take an active part in leading these services and contributing to them, strengthening their understanding of festivals in the church's year.

Pupils have a sound understanding of the purpose of prayer and write their own prayers which are used in collective worship and during the school day. They also add personal prayers to the prayer tree. Pupils have a developing awareness of the Trinity and talk about the relationship between God and Jesus his son. They have a more limited understanding of the Holy Spirit. A year 6 pupil has special responsibility for preparing the worship space, selecting prayers and organising children to take part in Open the Book. Pupils have not yet taken responsibility for planning acts of worship.

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

Leaders both at local and trust level have a clear vision for the school as a church school within the federation as a whole. This vision is expressed in the school's mission statement. The overall vision is underpinned by clearly stated Christian values which are in turn interpreted by each of the individual schools in the federation. Responses to the parent questionnaire and the comments they make, demonstrate their support for these values and the contribution they make to their children's education and wellbeing. Effective monitoring of collective worship and the school's Christian ethos by governors and staff has ensured that leaders have an accurate view of the school and appropriate areas for development, including to the Christian distinctiveness of the school, have been identified in the school development plan. An emphasis on prayer and reflection has, for example, led to a more focused reflection time being introduced into collective worship, with planned, related in class follow up activities linked to the school's Christian values. Behaviour and attitudes seen in school, together with pupils' and parents' comments, demonstrate the positive impact this has had on pupil's SMSC development. Strategic planning for the future leadership of church schools has taken place at trust level, and those responsible for governance have received guidance and training from the diocese. As a result of this, they are able to effectively monitor and evaluate the school's Christian distinctiveness. School staff benefit from the opportunities they have to discuss and exchange ideas on aspects of Christian distinctiveness within the federation and new staff have attended training focusing on Christian distinctiveness run by the diocese.

The school has a productive, well-established relationship with the local church. Parents feel that the school and church work well together to give their children a good understanding of Christian values and Christianity, which will enable them to make choices for themselves in the future. As well as leading and supporting worship, church members volunteer in school, acting as role models and exemplifying Christian service. The school is used for regular 'coffee and cookies' Sunday worship which families from the school and elsewhere attend. The school is currently advertising a choir which local church members are in the process of setting up. Parents appreciate these activities as giving their children more opportunities to experience church in the community. The school has also established beneficial links with the village, raising its profile within the community, and is, for example, able to use the community centre as an overflow classroom.

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