

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

### North Elmham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Holt Road, North Elmham, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 5JS

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Norwich</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Norfolk
Date of inspection	23 March 2018
Date of last inspection	March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled Primary 121049
[Acting]Headteachers	Sue Tobin/Craig Isherwood
Inspector's name and number	Lizzie McWhirter 244

#### School context

Currently there are 94 pupils on roll who are mainly White British and from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is higher than the national average. There have been some staffing and leadership changes since the previous denominational inspection. In April 2017 North Elmham entered into a partnership with Stibbard All Saints, a voluntary aided primary school which was judged to be outstanding in January 2016. Two acting headteachers work across both schools and there is an assistant headteacher based at North Elmham

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of North Elmham as a Church of England school are good

- This is a nurturing and inclusive Christian community which serves its pupils and its families very well. Consequently, North Elmham Primary School ensures all are encouraged to do their best within the context of a Christian family environment.
- The partnership between the churches and the school enriches the worshipping life of this school community and supports their spiritual, moral and personal development well.
- The commitment and dedication of all staff and governors is seen in a renewed impetus to take forward the distinctive Christian character of this school on its journey of school improvement. As such, this embraces care, wellbeing and nurture together with a new Christian vision which is beginning to make a difference.

#### Areas to improve

- Ensure the rigorous and regular monitoring of religious education [RE] by the governors so this key aspect of Christian distinctiveness is on a par with other core subjects. This will inform the governing body of pupil achievement in terms of their spiritual and personal development and support the RE subject leader in her role.
- Enrich pupils' understanding of Christianity as a worldwide faith as an important part of their

spiritual and personal development as members of a church school community and so deepen their global awareness.

- Extend the programme of visits and visitors and pupils' encounters with people of all faiths and none to enrich their spiritual and cultural development.

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

North Elmham's vision to 'Believe, Achieve, Belong' helps inspire all on their journey to develop knowledge, faith and skills. Christian values, such as courage, compassion, hope and perseverance, enable pupils to learn, grow and flourish. Relationships and behaviour are good, with a new behaviour policy in place. For example, pupils' kindness has been observed outside school. Staff go the extra mile in supporting needy pupils and their parents. Consequently, North Elmham serves its pupils and their families very well in this nurturing Christian family community. Each class has made good steady progress, with a focus on reading, which has always been a strength of this school. The new library is well used. Much work has taken place with Stibbard All Saints, their partnership school, to put systems and processes in place to great benefit. This includes moderation work and sharing good practice with intervention work ensuring that progress in reading, writing and mathematics is in line, both locally and nationally. Displays in a positive learning environment have all helped to raise the profile of learning so all are encouraged to achieve. The use of play therapy and also pet therapy, involving Max the dog, has proved to be particularly successful with some vulnerable pupils, and also a calming influence for staff. In addition, the school runs a very successful nurture group entitled, 'The path from Anxiety to Courage' club. Such activities help support pupils with any challenging behaviour to be reconciled to others and to embrace forgiveness. As a result, some pupils are making expected progress and sometimes better than expected progress. This extends into activities and events outside school. For example, pupils did well at a recent football tournament, with one boy encouraged by comments that he made great saves which 'put a smile on my face'. Another pupil excelled at cross country. All achievement is valued, with all pupils learning to play the violin in whole class lessons and also playing the recorder, with the opportunity to take part in end of term services. Sloth club and other lunchtime and after school clubs are on offer and prove to be very popular and inclusive of all pupils, with differing needs and abilities. This is because to believe, achieve and belong is for every child and member of staff. Worship and RE make good contributions to pupils' spiritual and personal development. For example, WOW days are enriched by using quiet spaces around the school. In addition, there are joint school Arts Days at Houghton Hall and the coastal study day in Cromer for Year 5 and 6 as well as pupils being able to take part in Young Voices at the O2. RE follows the Norfolk Agreed Syllabus and 'Discovery RE'. The teaching of Christianity is also supported by the 'Understanding Christianity' resource. There is a new long term plan in place which encourages reflection on challenging questions. The impact of using such resources is that pupils gain an understanding of how the Christian faith underpins the character of the school. East Coast RE builds upon the understanding gained in previous years. Rural Norfolk is not very diverse; whilst the school is mindful that a varied programme of visits and visitors enables pupils to widen their experience of people of all faiths and none, currently this is not in place. In addition, whilst pupils' knowledge of the Christian faith is good and they can relate the Christmas and Easter story very well, they say they would like to deepen their global awareness of Christianity worldwide. At North Elmham, pupils learn 'all about the cross and Jesus and God', as one might expect in a church school. Some pupils can explain the story of raising Lazarus from the dead. Whilst pupils can recall the events of Pentecost and the 'disciples speaking all different languages', they are less secure in their knowledge of Ascension-tide. Pupils study Islam and Judaism, and young pupils can, for example, explain the Shabbat meal well. They enjoy asking big questions, such as, 'The first thing I want to ask God when I get to heaven is what is the meaning of life?'

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

Collective worship at North Elmham is an important part of school life which is valued by adults and pupils alike. It is varied throughout the week but always has an emphasis on Christian values, key festivals in the

church year and biblical teaching. For example, pupils reflect on the story of the Last Supper and how Jesus showed humility. One pupil commented, 'Humility is not always thinking about yourself, but helping others like Jesus. He got down and washed his own disciples' feet. The local 'Open the Book' team and other local Christian organisations, such as Kidz Club and Youth For Christ make a good contribution to worship. For example, pupils are able to recall Bible stories they hear and relate them to everyday life. Stories which particularly resonate with pupils include Daniel in the lions' den. One pupil spoke of 'standing up for what you believe in, having your own opinion and not being ashamed of it'.

The strong partnership between church and school enriches the worshipping life of the school community. Pupils especially enjoy worship led by visitors. There are close links with nearby St Mary's Church and its clergy. The pattern of worship includes church services every half term when Year 5 and 6 pupils read from the Bible. Pupils are encouraged to pray and reflect, with prayer boxes, The Lord's Prayer, lunchtime prayers and class prayers well used. Pupils say they find the reflection areas are the places they go to if they 'feel frustrated angry or upset'. School leaders confirm there has been a 'massive confidence in pupils to lead prayers at the end of Key Stage 2 worship'. Moreover, there are many pupils who want to lead collective worship and there is a waiting list to lead worship. Consequently, pupils are growing in confidence in their leadership roles and responsibilities as well as valuing what it means to belong to a team as part of the school family. Pupils comment that worship supports their school work. For example, one pupil said that, 'The most important part of worship is when we reflect before we pray. I like thinking about things so I can improve and do better next time.' Pupils say they like worship in church as they enjoy kneeling to pray. It has been noted by outside agencies that the school has 'a much more spiritual feel' in recent years. Pupils are inspired by the themes covered in collective worship to raise money for charities, such as Cancer Research. Leaders affirm that pupils' knowledge that they are all God's children inspires them to actively raise money and support those less fortunate than themselves. Regular monitoring of worship takes place on a Thursday as an associate governor always attends. Class worship is monitored on Tuesdays by foundation governors, as part of the monitoring cycle of the teaching, leadership and assessment aspect of the school improvement and development plan. Pupils' views are currently gathered in a new termly questionnaire.

Pupils are growing in their understanding of the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For example, they explain how they were helped to visualise the Trinity by a local youth worker who is a regular and welcome visitor to school, leading worship. Even the youngest children speak of 'My God is someone I can trust' and 'My God gives people a second chance.' Leaders acknowledge the importance of knowing God's love and powerful work as three in one. Deepening pupils' understanding of the Trinitarian nature of God has been identified for ongoing development to help raise the profile of RE and worship in school as well as governor monitoring and pupil leadership of worship. This all forms part of the school's priorities to move forward on its journey to school improvement.

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

This school's Christian character is woven throughout all aspects of school life, where leaders and staff model Christian values and the vision to 'Believe, Achieve, Belong'. Dedicated staff and governors encourage everyone to do their best and achieve. This results in pupils inspired to 'believe that God is with us and we can achieve and always have a goal'. Areas from the last inspection have been addressed. The partnership with Stibbard All Saints is making a difference, with good practice and leadership skills, as well as diocesan training and support for staff and governors, shared between the two schools. For example, progress and attainment have improved over the last two years, with Christian distinctiveness now a strength of the school. In addition, the current spiritual, moral, social and cultural development plan clearly shows the key priorities which have already been met, such as developing prayer spaces. Also identified for the summer term is the work with pupils on extending the outdoor reflection area. There is an RE action plan which is reviewed termly. Much of the current plan is already in place, with the programme for visits and more visitors as well as assessment in RE a priority for the future. In addition, the monitoring of RE and collective worship as well as ensuring appropriate training and support to empower leadership is identified for ongoing action. The RE subject leader attends training and feeds back to staff

and governors. This has resulted in teachers' confidence to teach Christianity in the classroom, which covers theology, philosophy and social sciences. Teachers are enjoying using 'Understanding Christianity' which underpins progression and deepens knowledge of the big picture of the Christian story.

Whilst collective worship and RE meet statutory requirements, governors want to raise the profile of worship and RE and develop the school's distinctive Christian character across the school so all staff know its importance. For example, governors confirm the importance of pupils knowing 'what the church looks like in other countries'. Currently this does not happen. Staff wellbeing is always part of governing body meetings and minutes. 'Valuing all God's Children' is read, and has refreshed governors' thinking and is implemented into all policies, notably the new behaviour policy. Governors visit all classes on 'deep dive days' to check policy and practice. Such visits inform them of progress, behaviour and ethos, which is good.

Community links are good, especially through the parish church and the team rector of St Mary's and events such as 'Easter experience' held in church. Parents like the values and church services and appreciate the 'strong connection, with the children getting excited when they are going to church'. Parents praise the approachable school leaders, and they too say they are inspired to 'believe in yourself and hopefully achieve it'. They feel updated and informed about their children's learning, speaking of how the school is a 'platform to fulfil their potential'. They speak highly of the values instilled from an early age and 'the pastoral care of teachers looking after the pupils' as well as themselves. They 'love the way we get our children to reflect, pray and learn from the lives of Christians and others'.

SIAMS report March 2018 North Elmham CE VC Primary School, Norfolk NR20 5JS