

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Lyng Church of England Primary School

Wensum Road, Lyng, Norwich NR9 5RJ

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Diocese

Norwich

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

Norfolk

Date of inspection

13 March 2018

Date of last inspection

21 January 2013

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Controlled Primary 121102

Headteacher

Helen Watson

Inspector's name and number

David Bunkell 815

School context

The school is housed in a modern building in an extensive site on the edge of the village, overlooking farmland in the valley of the river Wensum. It is a voluntary controlled school. The site is shared with privately-run nursery provision. Currently 105 pupils aged 4 to 11 attend taught in four mixed-age classes. A new incumbent of the nearby church was appointed in 2017 and is a foundation governor. Most pupils live in the village or other nearby rural communities, and almost all are White British. In October 2017 Ofsted confirmed their previous judgment that this is a good school.

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

- As a result of the deeply embedded Christian values pupils' behaviour is excellent and the highly-positive relationships between all in the school community are based on mutual respect.
- Collective worship has a central place in the life of the school, making an invaluable contribution to the well-being and high aspirations of all.
- Governors know the school very well and are committed to its future success as a church school.

Areas to improve

- Increase the range of leaders of collective worship to include other Christian traditions, to enable pupils to have a better appreciation that Christianity is a varied and multi-cultural world faith.
- Strengthen the links between the school and diocese for the benefit of pupils by, for example, seeking opportunities for pupils to visit Norwich Cathedral to extend curricular and extra-curricular experiences.
- Extend opportunities for pupils to plan and lead collective worship to give it greater relevance for all.
- Review indoor areas for prayer and reflection and regenerate the outdoor provision to enhance pupils' spiritual journeys.

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

The distinctive Christian values of the school are apparent in all aspects of school life. Pupils readily link the school's motto of 'Learning, Growing, Achieving Together' to Christian values and the effect this has on their daily lives and the perseverance that enables them to succeed. Pupils' progress and achievements are consistently at or above national expectations, with no significant differences for vulnerable groups of pupils. Levels of attendance are high, as pupils say that they enjoy coming to school. When families have had any particular difficulties, case studies show that Christian values of compassion and perseverance are at the centre of help given.

As recognised by Ofsted, pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good, and as a result pupil exclusions are very rare, the most recent being three years ago. Christian values are so ingrained in the life of the school that they are often referred to just as 'values' or 'core values'. One pupil said that he thought that perhaps the word 'Christian' was left out as it is obvious to everybody. Pupils could link the values to specific Bible stories. However, in conversation pupils' knowledge of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith is limited. Although school trips take place to museums in Norwich, the cathedral has not been visited and some pupils were unaware that the city has a cathedral.

An ethos of spirituality pervades. Pupils' spiritual growth is encouraged as they are taught to reflect and consider the big questions of the meaning and purpose of life. One pupil commented that while studying the Brazilian rain forest, specific mention had been made of the importance of Christian faith to many Brazilian people, reflecting on how this might affect an individual's attitude to their surroundings, what it would be like to live in the rain forest and how Christian belief in stewardship might affect views on local industry.

Pupils are extremely confident without any suggestion of arrogance, and express themselves clearly, showing humility and trust. Because the Christian ethos is so important, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding (SMSC) is highly developed, regardless of the ability, background or faith of each pupil. Pupils show an understanding of morality in knowing what is right and wrong, and can usually sort out between themselves any minor disagreements. They are socially aware, going out of their way to be helpful to all and having great pride in their school. Their cultural development and knowledge of diverse communities have benefited from visits by Chinese students and a musician from Zimbabwe.

Pupils appreciate God's creation in their own varied and extensive school grounds and in their interest in the horses and other animals and crops in neighbouring fields. Some pupils have joined an 'eco group', relating this to Christian stewardship and taking very seriously the chance it gives to improve their environment through recycling, and the display unit that shows at all times how much electricity the solar panels are generating and the resultant reduction in carbon dioxide emissions.

Pupils enjoy their weekly religious education (RE) lessons, further enhancing their SMSC development, as they make connections between the school's values, biblical teaching and their own behaviour. Good teaching of Christian beliefs and concepts creates opportunities to identify aspects of these in school life. With an emphasis on Christianity, pupils also enjoy learning about other world religions, and in a lesson observed were empathising with a Sikh guru and his followers as they wrote a letter to the guru. One wrote 'I feel ashamed of myself because I have been really greedy'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Daily collective worship (CW) is seen by many in the school community as an important part of the day, whether as a gathering of the whole school or one or two classes together. During the inspection pupils were seen to enter the hall in a calm and reverent manner, and were eager to volunteer to participate in drama or to answer questions. A display at the front was a constant reminder that the current value is 'justice', alongside a tree depicting all the values, enabling cross-referencing when pupils' responses included other values, for example 'thankfulness'. Their responses showed that they understood the relevance of a parable to their own lives, with a need for justice and fairness in school and at home. A time of silence for reflection preceded reciting and signing the Lord's Prayer.

Singing is an important part of CW, with all pupils participating enthusiastically. This creates a sense of belonging, and understanding that the words deepen reflection. Music is seen as a way of praising and honouring God.

CW is distinctively Christian, putting the school's values into their Christian context and making much use of the Bible. In discussion pupils showed a mature understanding of the central role of Jesus Christ in worship, as part of the Trinity of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. A candle was lit to signify the start of CW and a special lenten greeting used, written by pupils. The worship table currently has a purple cloth, and pupils could explain that this signified Lent, recalling other seasons and colours, showing an understanding of local Anglican traditions. Pupils enjoy celebrating festivals with CW in church.

Prayer has an important place in CW, with prayers for use in CW and before lunch often written by pupils. Pupils understand that prayer is a conversation with God, with listening as important as asking. The prayers written in the

'prayer books' in each classroom showed that they pray for their own concerns, and that these books support pupils by developing the confidence to use prayer creatively.

Staff and governors plan worship together, and the incumbent leads a session weekly. All staff contribute to leading CW. Pupils therefore benefit from a range of leadership styles, including input from the incumbent which reflects local Anglican practice. They do not, however, have opportunities to experience Christian worship from other traditions. Pupils write prayers and oversee matters such as playing recorded music and arranging furniture for CW. Through this some progress has been made towards the recommendation of the previous inspection to involve pupils in planning and leading CW, as they now take on roles of responsibility in worship which have resulted in a greater sense of engagement and ownership. They do not, however, have opportunities to plan or lead worship independently.

Governors attend CW, and observations and monitoring both assess the impact of worship on pupils and inform developments in worship. Pupils' views on the impact of CW are regularly sought, with one recent comment that it 'helps me to be a better person and help people around me', showing the link between CW and other aspects of school life, such as behaviour and relationships, so CW contributes to the SMSC development of pupils. All classrooms have displays to reinforce the current value, sometimes with cushions nearby that pupils said could be used for private prayer and reflection, but there are no indoor spaces specifically for this purpose. Outside a stone labyrinth is somewhat overgrown, although older pupils did mention that when younger they had enjoyed walking around it. Although pupils expressed an interest in quiet spaces, insufficient provision is made for individuals to engage in private prayer and reflection.

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

Senior staff and governors ensure that the distinctively Christian values of the school are at the centre of every aspect of school life. Displays in every part of the premises give a constant reminder of the Christian ethos. In each classroom this is done in accord with the ideas of individual teachers, so pupils say that the variation gives more impact than a standard scheme would have. In one case it extends to the use of apparent stained-glass windows, with a large cross on the door and a depiction of St Margaret (patron saint of the parish church) on a window. Leaders all constantly stress the impact of Christian values on the well-being of pupils and the success of the school as a whole. All the current governors have been elected or appointed since the previous inspection, and their skills, educational experience elsewhere, commitment to the school and enthusiasm are greatly valued by staff. They achieve an excellent balance of holding staff to account and offering support. Governors are fully involved in the school's process of self-evaluation, and clearly understand its performance and distinctiveness. Self-evaluation leads directly to improvement, and improvement plans include matters directly relevant to the Christian ethos. For example, last year's plan had as a priority 'Renewed focus on Christian values to promote pupils' SMSC development', with actions and impact clearly recorded. An ethos working group had reviewed the school's vision statement, adding a picture to aid understanding, with a central tree of three representing 'uphold Christian values'. Parents are very grateful for all that the school does for their children. One wrote that her son 'has developed confidence and resilience' and that the school offers children a fantastic start on their educational journey. Another parent said 'Christian values underpin the work of the school' and that the children often discuss these at home. Partnerships are nurtured to develop understanding of the place of the school in its local community and as part of a worshipping Christian family. Parents are welcome to CW in church and to some sessions in school, and attend in large numbers. Links with the local church are strong, and pupils' work is often displayed in church. Pupils said they had enjoyed singing carols at a local care home. A village magazine regularly features news about the school, always written by pupils.

Staff and governors benefit from training and support provided by diocesan staff. Recently appointed governors say how helpful their training has been in helping them to understand the Christian ethos and to plan for change. In recent years several new members of staff have been appointed, and they say that they are very carefully nurtured as a result of the Christian ethos. The commitment to uphold this Christian ethos is an essential element of the appointment process.

Senior staff and governors are planning very carefully to be fully prepared for future inevitable changes in the life of the school. The headteacher herself currently oversees leadership of RE and CW while nurturing others to be able to take on these roles in the future, and setting a pattern that is shared by all staff. The RE subject leader's planning is comprehensive and helpful for others who teach the subject. The arrangements for RE and CW meet statutory requirements.