

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Dereham church infant and nursery school			
Address	Withburga Lane Dereham NR19 1ED		
Date of inspection	11 July 2019	Status of school	VA infant and nursery
Diocese	Norwich	URN	121195

Overall Judgement	Grade	Excellent
How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?		
Additional Judgements		
The impact of collective worship	Grade	Excellent
The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Excellent

School context
Dereham is an infant and nursery school with 188 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national averages. The headteacher was appointed to her substantive post in November 2019. Prior to this, she had been in an interim shared leadership post since September 2017.
The school's Christian vision
The theological vision 'Jesus said let the little children come to me and do not hinder them for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these'. Matthew 19v14
Key findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Christian vision, lived out by all, sets the strategic direction. The values permeate every level of the school and impact on how the school operates. • The curriculum, including for religious education (RE), is planned around the needs of pupils. This enables them to achieve at least expected levels in progress and attainment. Vulnerable pupils, and those with SEND, frequently make better than expected progress. • There is a shared understanding of spiritual development which underpins curriculum planning and delivery. This enables pupils to articulate challenging thoughts and ideas and reflect powerfully on their daily lives. • Pupils participate in the running of the school in many significant ways. The input of the curriculum ambassadors is exceptional.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further develop pupils' involvement in environmental and ethical issues such as eco-schools so that they receive equal weighting with spiritual, social and moral ones. • Consider ways to share innovation and excellent practice with other schools to further develop leadership skills.

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

Since the previous inspection, the school has sustained and developed excellent practice. The Christian vision is central and is lived out by all staff. It shapes the strategic direction of the school. Christian distinctiveness is at the heart of and is integral to the school's success. The inspirational headteacher promotes servant leadership and this is modelled at all levels. She is supported by a dedicated staff who share her aspiration to provide pupils with the best possible experience of school within a Christian context. The values which underpin the vision are central and permeate all aspects of school life. They are biblically based and incorporate British values. Because the values are clearly modelled by the headteacher and staff, pupils know how to treat each other and 'be kind'. Pupils know that the vision is important. They sing the vision song to help keep it in mind. One said, 'I know the vision is there to help us and keep us safe.' Parents speak highly of the school. Many choose to send their children because of the spiritual and moral guidance that it provides. They appreciate the support they receive especially in time of need and attribute this care to the Christian ethos. Policies align with the vision and values, and as they are reviewed governors ensure that Christian principles are firmly embedded. Implementation is monitored regularly. Expectations for learning are high and there is a culture of continuous improvement. Awards and kitemarks confirm a commitment to excellence. Strong emphasis is placed on building a learning environment which is safe and happy.

Staff work together closely in an atmosphere of trust. They support and care for each other knowing that leaders including governors are mindful of their well-being. This is fostered by the collegiate approach taken when making key decisions. The recent curriculum review, for example, was undertaken collectively by teachers, support staff, pupils and governors. Leaders regard this as one way for all to contribute their skills for the common good. New staff receive induction which includes RE and collective worship and all staff receive the same level of training and development, so all pupils receive consistently high-quality teaching.

Pupils' contribution to the leadership of the school is innovative. They are empowered to contribute to all aspects including collective worship. This increases their confidence and self-esteem.

The curriculum is creatively designed to enable pupils to enjoy learning and achieve their best. Consequently, pupils love to come to school. Because monitoring is rigorous, including for RE, standards remain high. It is undertaken by all members of the school community including pupils. Pupils who are curriculum ambassadors evaluate work alongside staff and provide a pupil perspective. More learning resources were purchased as a result of a comment from a curriculum ambassador, for example. Governors review church school distinctiveness against the SIAMS schedule. Governing body meetings routinely include evaluating pupil outcomes in RE.

Commitment to inclusion, equality and excellence are exemplary. Staff are alert to possible issues and work to create a culture where prejudicial behaviour all kinds will be prevented. Advice and guidance from the Church of England's 'Valuing all God's Children' underpins all practice. Becoming a 'Stonewall Champion' has enabled issues around sexuality to be sensitively addressed. Pupils chose books for the library bus to support their understanding of different kinds of families, relationship and different ways of living.

There is a clear, shared understanding of spiritual development. The spiritual development policy is an operational blueprint which provides advice on planning and delivering provision. As a result, the curriculum is rich in opportunities for pupils to reflect and explore the spiritual and ethical dimensions of all subjects. The emphasis on developing a common vocabulary around spirituality means that even the youngest pupils can talk about philosophical ideas and theological concepts exceptionally well. Reflection areas around the school are key to supporting spiritual development. Indoor and outside spaces have been carefully created for pupils to think and pray. Pupils understand why they are important, special places which are linked to their church school ethos. They use them often as places to be 'calm and still' especially if they are sad. Purposefully chosen artefacts such as mood stones help develop emotional and spiritual literacy. One pupil said they had spent time in the reflection area praying when they were angry after a friend had upset them. They chose to forgive them as a result.

Collective worship is seen as central to the life of the school. Because it is led by Anglican clergy and leaders of other denominations, pupils enjoy a range of different worship styles. They are routinely chosen randomly to say liturgy or lead singing and also to plan and evaluate. When pupil monitoring identified that there were not enough pictures used to tell Bible stories, for example, changes were made to improve practice. Opportunities for prayer and reflection are powerful. These are replicated throughout the curriculum so that pupils are able to see spiritual dimensions in their everyday life.

Partnerships with local churches are strong. Each takes a full part in the life of the other which deepens relationships. Clergy are also involved in delivering the curriculum and church buildings are used as a teaching resource. This adds to pupils' knowledge of Christianity. Visits from people of different faiths broadens their understanding of religious diversity and traditions. Pupils compare and contrast other world religions, for example, a recent visit by a practising Buddhist sparked a discussion on why prayer is important. Partnerships with the diocese are excellent and ensure practice is supported and shared.

First-hand experiences contribute to pupils' moral and social awareness for example helping in a charity shop and contributing to the food bank. Charities supported are local and important. Although there is evidence of involvement with global and environmental issues these are not as well established.

Pupils enjoy RE. The curriculum is exceptionally broad and rich. Developed collegiately by staff, pupils and governors, it is designed around pupils' needs. The emphasis on first-hand experiences enables pupils who may struggle academically to take part fully. The Understanding Christianity resources are incorporated, and statutory requirements are met. The focus on developing theological vocabulary and spiritual literacy enables pupils to express their thoughts, feelings and ideas articulately often beyond what is age appropriate. The impact of the RE curriculum ambassador is authentic. They produce resources and help staff plan provision.



The effectiveness of RE is excellent

RE is rigorously monitored by leaders including governors and pupils. This ensures that teaching is never less than good and the quality of work, as recorded in pupils' learning journeys, is consistently excellent.

RE is robustly assessed against age related expectations. Pupils make at least expected progress, including those with SEND because the curriculum enables them to access learning through music, art and drama. Higher achieving pupils are provided with additional challenges. The school has strong internal moderation procedures but has recently set up systems for external moderation with other schools. This process confirmed that assessment judgements are robust.

Headteacher	Amy Futers
Inspector's name and number	Rachel Beeson 952