

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Great Witchingham Church of England Primary Academy

The Street Lenwade Norwich NR9 5SD

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Norwich
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	March 2016
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust/ Trinity Federation
Date of inspection	6 February 2017
Date of last inspection	25 January 2008
Type of school and unique reference number	VA Primary 142588
Executive Headteacher	Rebecca Newman
Inspector's name and number	Stephen Green 809

School context

This small academy is situated in a rural location west of Norwich. The academy converted in March 2016 and is part of the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust (DNEAT). The academy works closely with the two other academies in the Trinity Federation and shares an executive headteacher and her deputy, and subject co-ordinators with them. There has been no incumbent for three years. Although the headteacher has been in post for under a year, she had previously been deputy headteacher at the school before it converted to an academy.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Great Witchingham as a Church of England academy are outstanding

- The academy has a strong and clear Christian vision which influences all aspects of the curriculum and school life.
- The system of senior leadership allows the three schools in the federation to benefit from very strong leadership at all levels which is both sustainable and flexible to meet foreseeable future developments.
- By linking with other academies in the federation and multi-academy trust (MAT), staff are able to benefit from high-quality training and advice. This provides excellent opportunities for school leaders at all levels to demonstrate their strong Christian commitment to support others.
- Pupils' behaviour is of the highest standard and they are well motivated and enjoy their time at school. They have a good understanding of the academy's values and reflect these in their relationships and actions.

Areas to improve

- To improve the quality of teaching in religious education (RE) by embedding the use of the Understanding Christianity resources across the academy.
- To continue to embed the use of the new assessment system in order to provide teachers and school leaders with an increasingly accurate understanding of pupils' progress.
- To develop pupils' understanding of and respect for other faith communities by enhancing the programme of visitors from other faith groups and visits to their places of worship.

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

learners

The academy has a clear vision based upon distinctively Christian values which are displayed prominently around the school and in all classrooms. The academy's Christian commitment is evident in its vision statement, on its website and to all visitors and pupils. There is a high-quality display in the entrance (You are the light of the world) which includes all members of staff and the names of each child on a candle. It shows that every child is valued and a crucial part of the whole academy, a philosophy greatly appreciated and valued by the children's parents. The values follow the Values for Life scheme and are focused upon in rotation. Pupils and parents were very clear about both the value currently being focussed upon and previous ones. Many of the parents spoken to were keen to state that they brought their children to the academy specifically because it had such strong Christian values. As one said, "I think it is important that children get an education with strong Christian values. They are important to their later life and are the key to effective learning." The children were able to demonstrate considerable understanding of the meaning of these Christian values, and parents and teachers provided many examples of how pupils adopt these in their wider lives. Areas have been set aside in each classroom and in shared areas for quiet reflection, and pupils generally liked these and said they made use of them when they needed to.

Pupils behave very well and are highly motivated. They enthusiastically support the school's buddy system and appreciate the many opportunities they are given to express their opinions. Parents spoke of how much they appreciate the way older children take care of younger ones, and two parents gave an example of seeing a child seeing another alone at break time and going to get them to integrate them into their game so they wouldn't be alone. When mentioning it to the child, she attributed it directly to a previous assembly on compassion. There is an active school council and pupil and parent perception surveys are held annually to help inform school leaders in their strategic planning. Following a visit by a member of staff to Ghana, which the school supported, a programme of sponsorship has been developed whereby a child is given financial support to attend school there. The pupils have a good understanding of their needs and the value of their support, and benefit from occasional visits by a representative of the Ghanaian school to their academy to talk to them. The school council also leads the academy in supporting charities closer to home, and spoke enthusiastically of recent fund raising events including a cake stall and non-uniform day for Children in Need. RE and collective worship (CW) make a significant contribution to school life, and to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, particularly by developing higher order thinking skills and respect for those who hold different opinions to their own, and by detailed consideration of what the school values mean in real life. They are actively monitored by senior staff and governors.

The quality of teaching across the school is always at least good and frequently outstanding. Consequently academic results are strong, with most pupils making better than expected progress and a strong system of support in place for the children who need additional help. Results are generally above the national expectation. The academy has been used by the diocese to trial assessment and teaching resources, and there has been a strong relationship with its board of education and advisory staff over many years.

Although there have been visitors from other faith groups, including the Soul Church and Hope Community church, the school is aware that the programme of visitors could be enhanced and visits arranged to see places of worship used by other faith groups, in order to further improve pupils' understanding of other faiths.

The impact of collective worship on the academy community is outstanding

CW is a much-valued part of the academy day, and involves all members of the school teaching and support staff. Pupils are having an increasing role, and frequently read their own poems and prayers, as well as supporting whoever is leading the act of worship by working projectors or the music system. Older pupils have a significant and developing role in planning and leading worship themselves, and the school is gradually expanding this to include younger children. CW is monitored by the governors' ethos committee, and pupils and parents have many opportunities to express their opinions. The ethos committee helps the headteacher (as worship co-ordinator) to plan the yearly programme of work, and both pupils and parents are happy that any comments they provide are listened to and, where appropriate, acted upon.

Personal prayer and reflection are an important part of the lives of many pupils, and some prayers have been written out and shared in class compilations and on a prayer tree. The school has several areas set aside to encourage quiet reflection and peace. CW has a strong emphasis upon the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, and this is frequently supported by wider biblical material. Visitors have helped pupils to extend their understanding of other cultures and denominations within the Christian faith.

Links with the local church are strong, despite there being no incumbent at the time of the inspection. Due to the position of the school and church, it is not possible to walk pupils safely to the village church. However, the school uses coaches to ensure pupils mark major festivals in the church year in the churches of Great Witchingham and Weston Longville. Pupils also benefit from the opportunity to visit Norwich cathedral for study days. Members of the local church run 'Open the Book' assemblies every fortnight, which are appreciated and valued by parents and pupils. Pupils speak of the enthusiasm and dynamism of the volunteers who lead it. The volunteers themselves said that they had 'seen great progress in pupils-especially those with special needs- in their attention, listening skills and

willingness (since) the last inspection. The school is so patient, gentle but firm.'

The school hall provides the venue for worship, and has been decorated with inspirational posters relating to the school's Christian values, and a large wall painting entitled 'God keeps his promises.' Pupils generally behave very well in worship, and obviously enjoyed the opportunities they are given to take leading roles. In written feedback records they have said that they particularly 'enjoy singing and acting, especially when teachers join in as well.'

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Pupils enjoy RE and respond positively and enthusiastically. There is evidence of much higher-level thinking in their work. Teaching is at least good and frequently outstanding, and as a result pupils make better than expected progress and by the time they leave the academy standards of attainment frequently exceed national expectations. In the summer of 2016 the academy received a gold level Quality Mark for RE 'for embedding excellent, creative and innovative RE practice throughout the school and for recognition as outstanding by the wider community'. The school makes use of the Understanding Christianity resources, and all teaching staff have been provided with appropriate training to deliver it. The RE co-ordinator, who is based at one of the other academies in the federation, has worked closely with the diocese to develop this, and to introduce a system for assessment across the federation. With diocesan support, they trialed the use of Better Together, which has since been rolled out to most Anglican schools, and a system for assessment in RE. They are now being used by the diocese to advise and support other schools introducing the resources. Both Understanding Christianity and the new assessment scheme require continued support to become fully embedded. However, early signs are that they are popular with pupils and staff, and make a valuable contribution to providing teachers with information about pupils' progress and achievements.

The RE co-ordinator leads teachers and monitors lessons and the quality of work. She moderates work across the federation and with other schools in DNEAT, and provides valued training and support for teaching staff in the federation. She is considered to be a crucial member of the senior leadership team and is given resources to match those of literacy and numeracy. With the headteacher she produces an annual action plan which is shared with governors and contributes to the academy's 'Single Change Plan' which outlines planned academy improvement each year. The school's justification for the high status of RE was summarized by a governor's observation that "you nurture the enthusiasm of the less confident (which) impacts upon the whole curriculum.'

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

Leadership and management are extremely strong at all levels. The academy is effectively supported by DNEAT and able to support others as part of its Christian mission. All leaders have a strong Christian commitment and ensure the whole curriculum reflects their shared Christian vision. The relationships between the academy and the church and wider community are strong, and there is a strong tradition of working closely with the diocese. The parish did not have an incumbent at the time of the inspection, but other church leaders have stepped in to support the academy both at diocesan and local level. This has been much appreciated and valued by the school.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher both hold executive roles, working effectively to support and lead all three academies in the federation. Great Withingham also benefits from an assistant headteacher who is based at the academy. Teaching staff train together and hold curricular responsibilities which usually stretch across all three academies. School leaders believe this enables them to access more resources, and to make better use of their expertise and training. There is also a joint governing body with an ethos committee which has a considerable influence on RE and CW within the school. Parent, staffs and governors support the leadership structure and believe it benefits the school by providing flexibility to meet change and address the specific needs of a small church academy.

Staff training and development are given a high priority, and succession planning is built into the structure. A newly qualified teacher is provided with much valuable and appreciated support from senior staff and the diocese; teachers have been encouraged to complete higher degrees and the assistant headteachers and deputy headteacher are given many leadership opportunities within the federation. The RE co-ordinator is able to work closely with the diocese and MAT to improve teaching within the federation.

As one of the stronger schools within DNEAT, the trust values the contributions it can make to the development of other schools, and have used it as an exemplar academy to trial new approaches and resources. Their representative was able to say that the management structure is very strong, enabling them to use creative approaches to solving problems which others can sometimes learn from.