

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

### Horsford Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Horsford, Norwich NR10 3ES

**Current SIAMS inspection grade**

**Satisfactory**

**Diocese**

**Norwich**

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Not applicable

Local authority

Norfolk

Date of inspection

5 May 2017

Date of last inspection

Not applicable

Type of school and unique reference number

VA Primary 141991

Headteacher

Ashley Best-White

Inspector's name and number

Graham Lancaster 713

#### School context

Horsford Primary opened as a new school in September 2015 following the closure of the previous infant and junior schools. It is of an average size with the majority of the 297 pupils in mixed-age classes. The school is a member of the Nebula Schools Partnership, which comprises 6 local schools, including 4 church schools. The partnership is led by an executive headteacher. Each of the 2 Horsford sites has a head of school, both of whom are new in post since the school opened. The school has experienced significant staff turnover since opening. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average, as is the proportion of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The majority of pupils are White British. A new rector was recently appointed following a lengthy vacancy period.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Horsford as a Church of England school are satisfactory**

- Highly committed and focussed leadership has led to significant improvements in the overall effectiveness of the school. Senior leaders have fostered a culture in which staff and pupils are reflective and appreciate both 'where they are' and 'where they need to be'.
- Core Christian values of confidence, respect and integrity impact on teaching and learning so that both the enjoyment and the importance of learning are promoted. This results in pupils having very positive approaches to their learning as well as their making good progress across the curriculum, thereby increasing their future opportunities for success.

#### Areas to improve

- Fulfil school leaders' plans to revisit the school's core values, in partnership with all stakeholders, ensuring that the biblical root of these values and their relevance to life today are understood

throughout the school community.

- Develop opportunities for pupils to plan and lead worship and, with other members of the school community, to contribute to its evaluation and further development.
- Ensure that the considerable resources being poured into RE, including staff training and dedicated leadership time for the subject leader, have an impact on outcomes for pupils.

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

Both of the Horsford school buildings support Christian distinctiveness well. From the entrance foyers through to shared areas and into the classrooms it is evident that this is a Church school. The halls contain striking artwork depicting the creation and thought-provoking displays relating to the collective worship theme of 'forgiveness'. Every classroom has a designated prayer space and there is also an additional quiet reflection area on each site. Pupils can articulate the circumstances in which they might make use of these. When planning a prayer space one pupil included a Bible 'because it will remind us of what Jesus accomplished for us' and a mirror 'because we should be reflecting on our sins and trying to improve ourselves'. However the spaces themselves vary considerably in their scope for encouraging and supporting pupils to engage in prayer and reflection. Therefore, their effectiveness in supporting pupils' spiritual development is inconsistent. The school's core values of respect, confidence and integrity are well-established and are recognised and understood throughout the school community. Opportunities are taken to explain and re-inforce them. However, they are not currently underpinned by biblical teaching and pupils do not readily relate them to the Christian values which form the framework for collective worship.

Improvements in the quality of teaching and learning have resulted in standards rising across all curriculum areas since the school opened. Pupil outcomes in 2016 were broadly in line with national averages. School leaders have set ambitious targets for 2017 and pupils' books indicate that good progress is being made towards meeting these. School leaders actively demonstrate Christian values in action as they strive for the highest quality provision for vulnerable pupils and those with additional needs.

The introduction of a consistent positive behaviour strategy is described by leaders as 'having a profound effect on the attitudes of the pupils'. The school's behaviour policy makes reference to the values of trust, justice, compassion, forgiveness and friendship but these are not overtly recognised by pupils as having a Christian foundation. There is a calm, purposeful atmosphere in classrooms, with pupils able to work both independently and collaboratively with their peers. The school demonstrated love and compassion for those few pupils whose behaviour falls short of expectations or whose attendance is low. As a result attendance is in line with the national average and no pupils have been excluded. Effective strategies have been employed to grow pupils' confidence and self-belief, their sense of belonging and respect for one another. The school's core value of respect is lived out in positive and supportive relationships between staff and pupils. This extends beyond the school in the care shown by staff to parents who may be experiencing a period of particular need or require some additional support. Pupil representatives on the School Council actively contribute to determining the choice of local, national and international charities the school supports. Charitable giving is clearly recognised as important in expressing the school's Christian ethos. Links with a primary school in Malawi serve to enrich pupils' understanding of Christianity as a world faith. Discussions prompted by the study of Christianity in religious education (RE) expand pupils' understanding of Christian concepts and this, together with opportunities to explore the school's values as part of the RE curriculum, means that RE is beginning to make a contribution to the school's Christian character.

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

The importance of collective worship is recognised by the whole school community and contributes well to the school's Christian ethos. It has an appropriate focus on how values from the Bible are relevant today. Worship is structured on a gospel value each half term and pupils are encouraged to apply the key themes to their own lives, for example, using the context of the parable of the prodigal son to reflect on how hard it is to

ask for forgiveness as well as to forgive. Themes are reflected in the class prayer spaces. There is an emphasis on teaching from the Bible and on the person of Jesus. Pupils listen attentively, are keen to answer questions and contribute through drama and sharing their own prayers but they do not have opportunities to plan or lead worship. There are focal points for worship in each hall, but the importance placed on these is not immediately apparent. Anglican traditions of including responsive phrases for gathering and sending pupils have been introduced but these are not as yet firmly established. All staff lead worship and actively draw on their creativity and imagination so that pupils are fully engaged. However, it has been some time since training was provided for them. Pupils particularly value the "Open the Book" sessions, which are provided by members of an adjoining parish. Since her recent arrival, the new rector has begun to contribute to the leadership of worship on a regular basis, planning in line with the school's themes, thereby strengthening the growing partnership between church and school. The split site makes bringing the whole school together for worship very difficult, but this is accomplished for special Christian festivals. These are also very well attended by parents. Governors have begun to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of worship, but as yet there is no systematic process for capturing and responding to the evaluation of worship by all members of the school community.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory**

There has been significant investment in RE since the school opened. All staff have received training in using the Understanding Christianity resource with the result that their planning for the teaching of Christianity shows good subject knowledge as well as creativity in approach. New methods of learning through exploration and enquiry are being utilised to good effect. This means that in many classes effective and imaginative teaching excites and engages pupils well. Pupils participate actively in discussion and debate. They collaborate very well, sharing their ideas and thoughts with confidence and trust in one another. One parent described the way in which her daughter brings up the 'big questions' at home which are being discussed in class. Pupil workbooks, including the scrapbooks currently being trialled, indicate that the current curriculum, based on the locally agreed syllabus, is being covered thoroughly. However, assessment procedures are not yet secure and as a result it is difficult to judge standards and consistency of progress. There is very little evidence at present of teachers providing feedback for pupils which extends their thinking or encourages their personal response to the areas they are exploring. Consequently all pupils do not consistently make the best progress possible. Growing links with the parish church are beginning to support the teaching of RE. A recent visit by Key Stage 1 pupils to the church included acting out parts of the Easter story, developing understanding.

The current RE subject leader has been in post for only a short time. He has prioritised a timely review of the RE curriculum and a thorough assessment of current practices and standards across the school.

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

The executive headteacher has built a highly effective leadership team who have brought about significant improvements since the school opened and who live out the school's values in their daily work. Although evidence of impact is recent, the rate of improvement demonstrates the commitment of the team. Their aim is to provide challenging and engaging learning opportunities for all pupils within a Christian context. Although the Christian ethos of the school has not been overtly expressed, either through the core values or recent school improvement priorities, leaders have been driven by the Christian imperative to equip every pupil with the qualities, key skills and values for their future lives. Senior leaders, both within the school and across the Nebula Partnership, have a wide range of complementary skills which they readily bring to bear for the benefit of staff, parents and all pupils. There is additional capacity for the leadership of RE within the partnership, sharing ideas, strategies and resources. The extended senior leadership team across partnership also provides extended opportunities for the development of future leaders of church schools. Advice and training from the diocese has been utilised, particularly in respect of the Understanding Christianity resource, resulting in marked improvements in teaching of this aspect of RE. The prominence of the subject within the school curriculum is beginning to increase. The school's SIAMS self-evaluation is detailed and accurate, recognising

emerging strengths, correctly identifying priorities for improvement and taking appropriate action. Governors know their school well. This enables them to contribute to improvement planning. Their monitoring visits are beginning to be more clearly focussed, providing critical feedback as well as support and recognition of success. The rector and a foundation governor from a partnership school have increased the capacity and experience of foundation governors following a period with significant vacancies. A SIAMS committee has recently been formed, but has been in place insufficient time to assess its impact. With the strong leadership team, a more permanent teaching team, a growing partnership with the church and with pupils who are proud of their school and keen to learn, Horsford is well placed to continue the current trajectory of improvement.

SIAMS report (May 2017) Horsford CE (VA) Primary School, NR10 3ES