

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Tacolneston Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

Norwich Road, Tacolneston, Norfolk, NR16 1AL	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Norwich
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Norfolk
Name of federation	Tacolneston & Morley CE VA Primary Schools Federation
Date of inspection	19 June 2017
Date of last inspection	5 July 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary aided primary I21060
Executive Headteacher	Laura Green
Inspector's name and number	Stephen Green 809

School context

This small school has 92 pupils currently on role. The school has links with the parish churches of Tacolneston and Fundenhall, and the local Baptist Church. The Tacolneston and Morley Federation came into being in June 2014 and shares one governing body and one executive headteacher. There has been a high level of staff change since the last inspection. The headteacher was appointed initially on an interim basis in September 2016, which has since been made permanent. The school has changed status from voluntary controlled to voluntary aided. The incumbent is leaving the parish shortly after the inspection.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Tacolneston as a Church of England school are good

- The school has a strong Christian ethos and distinctive Christian values which underpin all aspects of school life. They have a direct impact upon behaviour, relationships and pupils' attitudes to learning.
- Teaching in religious education (RE) is always good and increasingly outstanding.
- Pupils have many opportunities to learn about other faiths and to develop their understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world religion.
- Federation with Morley Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is providing opportunities to enhance pupils' learning and the opportunities available to them for extra-curricular activities. It also makes a positive contribution to the effectiveness and sustainability of school leadership, and provides additional opportunities for professional development for all staff.

Areas to improve

- Continue to work with the diocese to develop procedures for assessing RE, relating these to the Understanding Christianity resource and recording them on Pupil Asset.
- Cultivate closer links with the parish church, including a greater involvement by the new incumbent, when appointed, in leading collective worship (CW) and supporting school staff. Ensure that there are more opportunities for pupils to visit the parish church in order to improve their understanding of Anglican traditions and services.

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

Distinctively Christian values are displayed in all classrooms and many other areas around the school. There is a clear Christian ethos which is effectively communicated to parents and visitors through regular newsletters and on the school's website. The school's Christian ethos and values underpin all aspects of school life and have a significant impact on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC). As a result, pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. Pupils make at least good progress and attainment is better than expected. Values (based upon the Values for Life scheme), are explored in CW and developed by individual classes, each of which has a reflections book where pupils' thoughts are collated. There is a display in each classroom about the value being focussed upon in that half term, and several more in corridors, the entrance foyer and the hall.

Pupils enjoy their RE and frequently have meaningful discussions around big questions and the school's Christian values. It makes a strong contribution to the Christian character of the school. Attendance is good and there have been no exclusions since the headteacher was appointed. School staff value higher order skills, with pupils regularly being given opportunities to think about what they are learning, to discuss and question it, and to express their opinions. Pupils listen carefully, valuing the opinions of others, and express their own ideas confidently and succinctly. They are encouraged to ask searching questions, particularly in the oldest class. One child asked God why he created the tree of good and evil if 'You didn't want anyone eating from it?' Another observed that 'it is OK having money, but we should use it to do good things,' while another wrote on a reflections poster that 'I love... the new ethos. It is epic!' There is an ethos committee which allows pupils a voice in interpreting the school's Christian distinctiveness and ethos.

Pupils have a good record of putting their Christian values into practice by caring for other people. They have links to schools in Papua New Guinea and Dedza in Malawi, where they offer financial support to enable a child to attend school. The school has supported many charities including the Samaritans sugar appeal, and Nelson's journey. As a result, pupils are becoming increasingly aware of Christianity as a multi-cultural world religion. As a key part of their studies, pupils gain a good knowledge of other religions and respect for those who follow them. This is recognised by the parents, one of whom said that 'the school is open to other faiths but is not diverse due to the make-up of the local population.' Nevertheless, the children 'embrace different faiths and traditions enthusiastically.'

The school has provided all pupils and their parents with a Going for Gold worksheet, which suggests activities parents and their children might wish to do to enhance their cultural awareness. One example from the list is to visit the cathedral together. These are popular with many people, as they provide a focus for shared activities which enhance what the school is able to offer.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

There is a strong biblical focus to CW and the life and teaching of Jesus Christ are given a high profile. All classroom staff participate in regular worship with the pupils, and the programme ensures that the school's Christian values and ethos are explored and embedded. Teachers therefore have an excellent understanding of both the school's values and current focuses, and provide opportunities for pupils to reflect and further explore these in their classes. By regularly relating biblical material and the school's Christian values to the pupils' lives, and encouraging them to reflect upon what these mean to them and the way they relate to each other, CW has a strong impact upon pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Parents spoke about their children's growing spirituality and the value that many children are placing upon reflection and prayer in their wider lives. The hall is used for almost all worship, and includes many displays which reinforce the school's Christian distinctiveness. Pupils are given reflection opportunities and are invited to add comments to some of the displays. Some of these demonstrate deep thinking and spiritual development and are in themselves signs of the impact of the school's commitment to raising pupils' spirituality and confidence. Since the last inspection, pupils have a more active role in CW. Most acts of worship now include contributions from pupils, e.g. prayers, role play, or providing technical support. Older pupils enjoy the opportunities they are given to plan and lead worship and all pupils regularly provide feedback. These are providing pupils with a sense of ownership of worship which they value.

Pupils' spirituality is important to them, and many spoke confidently about the importance of reflection and prayer in their lives. Following the last inspection, the school has developed a number of reflection spaces for pupils. Pupils spoke of places they like to pray, sometimes at home and sometimes in specific places around the school grounds, as well as together in CW and their classes. Parents spoke of their children taking prayers and hymns home and sharing them with them. They said they enjoy the opportunities they are given to join CW, especially in the parish church, but would like to join in more frequently. Formal monitoring is carried out by staff and governors, and this provides leaders with the information they need to inform their planning.

Pupils have a very good understanding of some parts of Christian belief and worship practices, e.g. the Holy Trinity, but less so about others e.g. the Eucharist. The school has explored ways to provide more opportunities for pupils

to worship in church but access is difficult because there is no footpath beside a busy road. The school is committed to providing a broad experience of Christian worship for pupils. Currently this is provided by a Methodist Pastor and Raise, a Christian youth ministry, and there is an ongoing focus on inviting representatives from other churches.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The effectiveness of the RE is good. RE is valued highly by pupils, staff and parents. Pupils and parents talk about its importance in terms of understanding other faiths and having good relationships. Observations, work scrutinies and records of monitoring show that standards in RE are good. The majority of pupils' achievements are in line with or above the Agreed Syllabus expectations. Pupils' work shows a developing understanding of traditions within the Church year. Pupils visit the cathedral every year, and the school makes good use of members of the local church community to improve their understanding of Christian traditions, belief and practice. A member of the local clergy, a lay minister in the parish, a Methodist pastor and other members of the local church support staff in teaching RE and offer Bible study lessons and after-school clubs. Pupils learn much about the similarities and differences between different faiths, but are less aware of different denominations within Christianity. The school is introducing Understanding Christianity as one way of addressing the issue. The quality of teaching is at least good and sometimes outstanding. Planning demonstrates an approach that emphasises enquiry, discussion, and questioning to help pupils think deeply about their learning. Opportunities for spiritual development are well established. Assessment procedures have been effective, providing staff with a good understanding of the progress pupils are making. The school is currently working with the diocese to review assessment and recording in RE with the new Understanding Christianity materials, and intends to adapt this for the whole RE curriculum. Marking informs pupils of the next steps they need to take to continue progress and to recognise and praise good work. RE is well led. The co-ordinator is based at Morley but works across both schools, sharing planning, resources and expertise. Supported by the governors, she undertakes regular monitoring and evaluation which has led to better understanding of strengths and areas requiring further development in the subject. She attends network meetings and training run by the diocese (e.g. introducing Understanding Christianity), and has led training for her colleagues to prepare them to implement the scheme.

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

The senior leadership team consistently and confidently live out and promote their Christian vision for the school. This is to be seen in the way they inspire and relate to colleagues, parents and pupils, and in their attitudes to attendance and exclusion. They readily articulate the impact of the school's Christian ethos and values upon pupils' learning. This is recognised and valued by parents. One parent praised changes made since the headteacher was appointed, noting the rounded education the children receive and the sense of community the school has created. Another agreed, saying that the headteacher and staff 'fit the school's values well and this works with the children.' Parents appreciate the commitment and effectiveness of staff, and praise them for their approachability. Some parents (mainly of younger pupils) asked for the school to communicate more about the content of RE so that parents would understand the work better and be able to have more meaningful discussions at home, but others disagreed and said that they felt communication was one of the school's strengths.

Governors' meetings usually open with a prayer and reflect the school's Christian ethos. As one governor said, 'even though not everybody ...is Christian, you wouldn't know that from the way meetings are conducted.' Governors looked for a strong commitment to and understanding of faith schools when making the appointment of the headteacher.

The new federation is delivering substantial benefits for pupils and staff, and contributing to the stability and sustainability of the staffing and leadership structure. Staff share their expertise and resources, and pupils meet together to enhance their learning opportunities. Governors monitor carefully, and as a result have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and those areas requiring further development.

The diocese works closely with the school, having offered considerable advice when the school changed to being voluntary aided and when the federation was established. The present incumbent, who was about to leave at the time of the inspection, has not been able to visit the school frequently, although there is a good relationship with local churches as a result of the involvement of a neighbouring rector and a lay minister in the parish. Pupils were recently involved in a Heritage Lottery refurbishment project in a neighbouring parish church.

Whilst the impact of significant change- including to personnel, in RE and as a result of federation- is both positive and beneficial, these have yet to become sufficiently embedded to realise their full potential.