

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Norton Church of England (VC) Primary School

Old Tewkesbury Road, Norton, Gloucestershire GL29LJ

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Gloucester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Date/s of inspection	5 April 2017
Date of last inspection	19 April 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 115642
Headteacher	Jane Farren
Inspector's name and number	David Crunkhurn 884

School context

Norton Church of England VC Primary School is a smaller than average rural primary school with its own pre-school. Pupils have varied socio-economic backgrounds with the majority drawn from the rural communities surrounding Norton. Approximately 20% of pupils come from Gypsy/Roma traveller communities. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is broadly average. A small number of pupils are in receipt of Pupil Premium funding. Since the previous inspection, the school has undergone building work, creating additional space for offices and classrooms to accommodate the increase in the number of pupils on roll.

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

- The headteacher's commitment to creating a harmonious school with Christian values at its heart, is driving improvement as a Church school and particularly in religious education.
- Relationships at all levels are rooted in mutual respect; demonstrating God's love, acceptance and forgiveness for all. This gives strength to the whole school community, as they support and care for each other.
- The shared vision of leaders and governors to make a difference to the lives of pupils in their care, is having a direct impact on standards and pupils' achievement across the school.
- The strong partnership with the local clergy is having a significant impact on pupils' spiritual development and the life of all members of the school community.
- Collective worship is engaging and enables pupils to make connections between messages in Bible stories and their own lives.

Areas to improve

- Strengthen the good work on values so that they are understood to be explicitly Christian by all members of the school community.
- Develop the planning and leading of collective worship by pupils in order to strengthen their leadership skills and understanding of the biblical root of the school's Christian values.
- Strengthen the monitoring and evaluating of the school as a Church school to show depth of impact in all areas.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good

at meeting the needs of all learners

Norton is a caring and inclusive church school, which is built on love and respect for all people in the diverse community it serves. Parents are grateful for the care and support offered to them and their children. They confirmed that the staff have created an environment where parents feel 'part of an extended family.' Children enjoy coming to their school, as one child put it, 'Being part of the Norton family feels like you breathe in happiness, joy and excitement.' They take great pride in the school's Pebble Bowl, which is used to welcome new pupils and send out Y6 pupils as they transition to their secondary schools. Parents also comment on the way in which the Pebble Bowl helps their children feel part of the school and to stay connected when they leave. Strong relationships, which are rooted in six core Christian values, exist between all members of the school. This has created pupils who achieve well academically, thrive and are happy. The headteacher's determination to nurture pupils and inspire achievement is shared by her dedicated team, not least, by her highly competent equality and inclusion leader. Together, they have created an environment where children strive to do their best. As a result, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make good progress.

The school has worked hard to develop its STARS mission statement to include Christian values, which was an area for development from the previous inspection. Children articulate how the values influence their lives and impact on their relationships. However, not all pupils attribute these values to their biblical roots. The recently appointed incumbent is supporting the school in this area and is already making a significant impact, as well as on the spiritual life of the school. The school environment provides many opportunities for children to engage in personal reflection. Classrooms provide spaces for pupils to go for quiet times and to pray if they wish. This enhances pupils' spiritual development. Teachers work hard to connect learning across the curriculum with the school's Christian values. This is making a strong contribution to the Christian character of the school.

Since the previous inspection, school leaders have maintained overseas links with a school in Kenya. This link has helped pupils to understand diverse cultures and some older pupils could talk about the charity work that has come out of this link. To enable pupils to make further connections with the school's Christian values and global issues, the school has begun a project to support refugees from overseas. This demonstrates the ongoing commitment by school leaders, to help pupils understand how the school's Christian values fit into a global context.

Religious Education makes a positive impact on the lives of pupils. Teachers provide pupils with a balance of opportunities to learn about religion and learn from key religious concepts. They create tasks that explore matters of faith and personal spirituality. Teachers make good links with biblical material and school values. As yet, pupils are not secure in their understanding of the multicultural nature of Christianity as a world faith.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship (CW) plays an important part of the life of the school. The headteacher leads this area well and ensures that arrangements for CW meet statutory requirements. Planning for CW is based on the 'Roots and Fruits' material. It is providing an effective framework for exploring the Christian values of the school and has a positive impact on behaviour and relationships. Most children can make links between Bible stories heard in collective worship and how they relate to their lives. For example, some older children explained how God's forgiveness helped them to forgive each other when friendships broke down. Parents value the many and varied opportunities they have to attend acts of worship and place particular value on the weekly celebration service, which acknowledges their children's achievement. They appreciate the way in which values taught in worship support family life. Parents commented that the Christian values explored in worship 'provide valuable life lessons'.

Pupils enjoy CW and take part with enthusiasm and joy. Recent involvement with the diocesan initiative isingpop has had a positive impact on the engagement in worshipful singing of songs, which have Christian values at their heart. Children said that they enjoyed this addition to worship as it helps them to understand God's love for them. There is regular support from the local Open The Book team, who lead worship with the support of the pupils. This is providing pupils with weekly opportunities to hear stories from the Bible. However, not all members of the school community can explicitly link Bible stories explored in CW to the school's core Christian values. Whilst pupils enjoy participating in acts of worship, they do not yet plan and lead worship themselves.

The pupils have benefitted significantly from the support of the local clergy. Their regular visits to the school have increased pupils' knowledge and understanding of the Anglican aspects of worship, as well as God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They have contributed significantly to the prayer life of the school and supported the creation of reflection areas, which are used as a focus for prayer and stillness. Pupils are particularly proud of their prayer book, which has a special place in the entrance area. Pupils enjoy looking at this book and sharing in the prayers within it. They say that they are helpful as starting points for prayer. The development of reflection journals linked

to themes explored in CW is supporting pupils in their own personal reflections of the values explored. Developing new ways to evaluate acts of worship was a development point at the last inspection. The school has made progress in this area. The parish vicar meets regularly with the headteacher to discuss improvements that can be made to the spiritual life of the school and to discuss the evaluations that pupils make about acts of worship. Whilst this is moving worship forward, these visits are not always recorded and therefore the monitoring of the impact that worship makes over time is limited.

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

The headteacher has worked extremely hard in developing the school's vision and mission statement so that it reflects the core Christian values. She is supported well by a capable governing body and leadership team, who are committed to ensuring that the Christian character of the school is at the heart of all it aims to achieve. One significant strength of the school is the strong partnership that exists between the school and the local church. The parish vicar has been instrumental in ensuring that the Christian values are embedded in the school's mission statement. She has supported the headteacher diligently in ensuring that this has been communicated to all members of the school community. Her love for the school has supported the curriculum by ensuring that spirituality is given prominence. As a result, pupils and parents understand that Norton is indeed a church school with a Christian vision. The impact of this is seen in the excellent behaviour of pupils and the strong relationships with their teachers. Pupils can articulate the Christian ethos of the school well.

Governors are very supportive of the school and are regularly involved in its day-to-day life. They support the leadership well and have made decisions to ensure that the inclusive nature of the school remains at its heart. The highly skilled equality governor works enthusiastically with the headteacher to ensure that all pupils are challenged to achieve the best outcomes possible. The creation of an ethos committee further demonstrates the commitment of the governing body to maintaining the Christian distinctiveness of the school. Whilst this committee works hard to oversee the provision for this aspect of the school's work, monitoring and self-evaluation does not demonstrate sufficiently the impact of the work of the school as a church school.

Arrangements for Religious Education (RE) meet statutory requirements. The subject leader, who is also the headteacher, leads the subject well. She is enthusiastic, highly competent, and knowledgeable about both her subject and its relevance to the life of all the members of the school. She has worked with staff to prepare for the implementation of the understanding Christianity project and has created an enthusiasm and excitement for the subject. She is supported in her role by the governing body, especially the foundation governors. However, there is still work to be done by school leaders and governors to regularly evaluate the impact that RE makes over time, on the Christian character of the school.

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