

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Rattlesden Church of England Primary Academy			
Address	School Road, Bury St Edmunds IP30 0SE		
Date of inspection	16 October 2019	Status of school	Academy inspected as Voluntary Controlled Thedwastre Education Trust
Diocese	St Edmundsbury and Ipswich	URN	142554
Overall Judgement	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	Grade	Good
Additional Judgements	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good
School context			
<p>Rattlesden is a primary academy with 117 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. No pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national averages. The school is one of four local schools which formed the Thedwastre Education Trust in 2016.</p>			
The school's Christian vision			
<p>Believe, embrace and shine together (BEST) 'I can do all things through Him who strengthens me'. Philippians 4:13</p>			
Key findings			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's Christian vision and associated values underpin the commitment of leaders for every pupil to flourish. However, the vision is not as yet embedded and does not impact across all areas of school life. • All staff have high expectations of pupils across the curriculum including religious education (RE). Effective leadership and teaching have resulted in significant improvements in pupil achievement. As an expression of its Christian vision, all pupils are welcome regardless of their starting point. Expertise has been developed in enabling pupils who experience barriers to their learning to succeed. • Governors know their school well and contribute effectively to the process of school evaluation. However, current practice in improvement planning in respect of areas covered by this report does not equip them sufficiently to monitor progress against agreed priorities. • Although the importance of prayer and reflection is recognised by all, understanding of spirituality is limited, as is pupil engagement in areas set aside for this purpose. • Collective worship and RE are highly valued by all. Both contribute to the outworking of the school's values but opportunities to reinforce pupils' understanding and appreciation of the vision are not fully utilised. 			
Areas for development			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve systems for governors and other stakeholders to track progress against planned improvements and initiatives within the areas addressed in this report. • Continue the process of embedding the vision so that it becomes central to the life of the school and directly impacts on the flourishing of pupils and adults in mind, body, heart and spirit. • Develop a shared understanding of spirituality, extending opportunities for pupils to explore this dimension of their lives in the context of the school's Christian vision. 			

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

Although the school's vision statement has been introduced relatively recently, it has been drawn from a well-established distinctively Christian ethos. One parent described this as 'God in the background of everything'. Pupils can explain the ways in which the vision is relevant to their lives and future development. The vision and associated values are underpinned with biblical teaching. The selected Bible verse from Philippians reflects the vision well, but pupils' understanding of its meaning and application in their lives is limited. Values supporting the vision are reinforced systematically through collective worship. Pupils can recall stories from the Bible which relate to each value and give examples of the impact on their behaviour, attitudes and relationships within the school. All staff exemplify the school's vision and values in their commitment to the school and their support for and appreciation of one another. The process of governors revisiting key school policies in the context of the vision has just begun, which limits the extent to which the vision can be seen to have had a direct impact on these areas.

In order to equip pupils to flourish academically there is a rich and broad curriculum. This is complemented by a varied range of extra-curricular experiences. The headteacher sees it as her Christian imperative to ensure all pupils succeed to the best of their ability. Highly effective leadership and consistent high-quality teaching have resulted in significant improvements in pupil outcomes. Pupils, including the most vulnerable, make at least good, and often accelerated progress from their various starting points. This leads to attainment that is well above national averages in all measures. Adult and pupil wellbeing, including mental health, is given a high priority. Those encountering difficulties are given every support to enable them to flourish. The importance of prayer and reflection is understood by all. Inclusive and reverent opportunities are firmly established within collective worship. Although there is an attractive space set aside for this purpose in the school entrance, pupils make use of this infrequently. They are able to discuss spirituality with interest and thoughtfulness, but have limited understanding of its application in their daily lives. Leaders are aware of the challenges their rural, predominantly mono-cultural, location presents in developing pupils' appreciation of difference and diversity. They address this well through a programme of visits and visitors to the school and a link with a school in Tanzania. Pupils appreciate that one of the reasons for studying major world religions in RE is to develop understanding and respect for the beliefs of people that they will meet in the future. Visits to a range of places of worship enable pupils to further their understanding of major world religions through first-hand experience.

The school's self-evaluation is detailed and accurate. It results in the identification of priorities for furthering the school's vision in the life of every pupil. The process of addressing these priorities lacks clarity because plans do not currently include details of how stakeholders, and governors in particular, contribute to monitoring and evaluating progress. The RE subject leader is new to this responsibility. She is being ably supported by the retired post holder who has become a governor. Her plans for the future development of the subject are aspirational and based on accurate evaluation.

Partnerships have impact. Rattlesden has provided some support for schools in the academy trust and the local cluster. Staff across the schools have joined together for training provided by the diocese. However, opportunities for sharing expertise have not been fully explored. Advice received from the diocesan link adviser is swiftly acted upon. This has supported the revision and implementation of the school's Christian vision. The school and Church work together in a mutually beneficial partnership. Both are regarded by parents as being at the heart of the local community. They look forward to the regular occasions when collective worship takes place in the church and describe it as 'a spiritual extension of the school'. Volunteers from the church regularly lead worship and run an after-school club. This is very popular and contributes significantly to pupils' Bible knowledge.

Pupils embody the Christian values. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. Older pupils share in the support and care of their younger peers. A range of responsibilities enables them to develop leadership skills and contribute to the school's future development. The headteacher and rector have formed plans for a pupil faith council, with the aim of informing and encouraging pupils to take social action beyond fund raising relating to local, national and international issues. The School Council actively contributes to the selection of the charities the school supports. Pupils and teachers plan the subsequent fundraising together and relate their giving to their Christian values of compassion and generosity. Pupils regularly contribute to the planning and leading of collective worship, but their evaluation and response to worship are not systematically gathered.

A wide variety of leadership leads to differing styles and forms of collective worship which capture pupils' attention and sometimes provoke deep responses. A recent example of this is worship led by a representative of Christian Aid. Having recently returned from Ethiopia, he spoke vividly about the impact of climate change and how this

might be mitigated. He challenged pupils to consider changes in their own lifestyle. His presentation had a demonstrable impact on the pupils and generated much discussion between them. Although they expressed differing views these were expressed with respect for one another. However, there are insufficient opportunities and stimuli for pupils to explore and reflect on such issues beyond formal worship sessions. Staff, parents and pupils testify to the importance of collective worship in the life of the school. Teaching from the Bible and about the person of Jesus is central and is applied by both pupils and staff. Systematic planning serves to reinforce the school's values, but does not contribute effectively to the embedding of the Christian vision.

Effective, practical support is provided for staff in delivering RE. The RE curriculum is very well balanced and meets statutory requirements. Teaching is enriched through a wide range of different approaches and activities, carefully targeted to maintain pupils' enjoyment, interest and engagement. There is a high standard of written work in pupils' workbooks. There are examples of marking and interactive displays which encourage a deeper response from pupils. These challenge pupils' preconceptions and encourage critical thinking and reflection. However, this practice is not consistently employed across the school.

Headteacher	Helen Ballam
Inspector's name and number	Graham Lancaster (713)