

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Faiths' Church of England VC Primary School	
25 Manor Road, Horsham St Faith, Norwich. NR10 3 LF	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Norwich
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Norfolk
Name of federation	Nebula
Date of inspection	24 November 2017
Date of last inspection	28 November 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 121082
Executive Headteacher	Ashley Best - White
Inspector's name and number	Elizabeth Pitcher 448

School context

Following a period of instability in leadership and staffing, this small, rural school joined two others to form the Harnser Federation in April 2015. The following September they joined the Nebula Partnership and staffing was restructured. An executive headteacher and senior team work across all schools and head of school has responsibility for day to day management. In September 2017 the six schools, four church and two community, federated; the new governing body meets for the first time in early December. Most pupils are White British; 20% receive Pupil Premium funding, which is just below national average. The number of pupils with special education needs or disabilities (SEND) is around national average at 11%. There is an established local ecumenical partnership (LEP) and since the interregnum, which began in July 2017, school leaders have initiated a partnership with the Methodist minister who will be involved with the school until the appointment of a new incumbent.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Faiths' as a Church of England school are good

- School leaders uphold a Christian vision for the school as a church school and are well supported by a strong staff team.
- The distinctively Christian character of the school is maintained through the commitment to planning for the school's progress and achievement, as reflected in its inclusive approach.
- Pupils clearly articulate their understanding of Christian values and of how they apply to their behaviour, attitudes and to the wider context.

Areas to improve

- To ensure smooth transitions through the changes to organisational structures and in reviewing the vision, to deepen the school's distinctive Christian character and to ensure links with the Anglican partnership do not diminish.
- To embed the monitoring and evaluation of religious education and collective worship, including the influence on spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.
- To develop pupils' understanding of the meaning of the Trinity, so that they can engage with the theology of God in three persons at an age-appropriate level.

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

St Faiths' captures a strong, family atmosphere which permeates all aspects of the life of this thriving church school. Drawing on its Christian values of respect and justice, the school is rooted in an inclusive and supportive approach towards all learners, by 'celebrating diversity and difference'. This strong foundation for good learning stems from the school's Christian character, creating a purposeful learning environment where pupils understand they can be 'the best you can be', as they proudly talk about their school as a happy, safe place. The strength of this ethos is reflected through its positive contribution to raising self-esteem and well-being, leading to pupils' good progress, whatever their starting points. Consistent nurturing strategies are well-established to ensure that when the behaviour of a small group of pupils becomes challenging, calming and sensitive support is immediately put into place. The perseverance of maintaining such actions has led to sustained improved behaviour and achievement across the school, which is celebrated. The school has attained national standards over the past two years. This is because of the embedding of strong systems and high aspirations for the individual learner.

Christian values were evident in action when pupils talked about how they helped to support those who are less fortunate. For example, pupils showed heart-felt compassion and responsibility when they focused on Children in Need. Led by the school council, pupils worked well together to raise money by organising ideas and orchestrating the talent show. The older pupils 'take care' of the younger members of the school, conveying the message of tolerance and respect, as reflected on display around the school. Notably, pupils from all abilities were able to ascribe personal meaning to these displays.

Religious education planning supports the Christian character of the school, by enabling pupils to discuss and reflect on fundamental issues related to biblical themes. Since receiving diocesan training, the school is in the process of the early implementation of the Understanding Christianity materials and the federation's RE coordinator is in the early stages of monitoring at St Faiths'. The subject leader's evaluation of a small number of observations, so far provides insightful advice to teachers regarding their next steps in teaching. There is less current evidence of how RE supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC).

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

A sense of 'belonging to a Christian family' is promoted by pupils and staff worshipping together. Since the interregnum, head of school has taken responsibility for some of the work previously undertaken by the incumbent. By systematically using biblical themes and Christian values to underpin worship, from the Values for Life programme, she assures a clear pattern of worship remains strong. Despite interregnum, the influence of the previous incumbent has been sustained by pupils' deep knowledge of the Anglican pattern of worship, the good use of liturgy and understanding of Christian festivals. Pupils understand the meaning of Christian symbols. They relate the lit candle to Jesus, as the light of the world and refer to the empty cross, on which Jesus died, 'but came back to life'. Worshipping at the church is valued by pupils and adults, as an important element of the local church partnership. The harvest celebration has taken place in the church this year, led by the Methodist minister, and plans are in place for the minister to visit school for Christmas celebrations. However, there is currently no Anglican presence or partnership from the church in place.

Pupils recognise that worship is a special time and enjoy a range of roles, such as the writing of personal prayers, 'so that we talk to God' and they make regular use of the prayer box for this purpose. They understand other purposes for prayer, including prayers of thanks at lunchtime. Although they take on worship responsibilities, they do not currently plan or lead acts of worship. Reflection spaces are created in school, for when pupils need 'time out' to be quiet or to consider their personal behaviour and relationships. It is not yet clear how well these spaces are used or what impact they have, as formal evaluation has not yet been undertaken. From discussion with pupils, there is limited evidence of the exploration and understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pupils' evaluation of worship has started and this informs future planning. Although the monitoring of worship was established by governors following the previous inspection, due to interim changes to governance, the school recognises that evaluation is an area for further development.

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

The commitment of school leaders to maintaining church school distinctiveness has remained at the centre of the work of St Faiths' throughout organisational changes. Self-evaluation as a church school is accurate and there is good capacity to continue to further embed the school as a church school. Leaders hold a clear vision for St Faiths' which has been well supported, monitored and challenged by a well-informed governing body. Leaders and governors demonstrate a strong commitment to the promotion of the school's Christian distinctiveness, which effectively serves the community and provides clear and sensitive leadership. This has ensured the well-being of staff, pupils and parents. Leaders have established clearly articulated development plans which are focused on improving the educational experiences for all pupils, set within an inclusive and holistic learning ethos. The school's distinctively Christian character is at the centre of decision making and planning, as leaders take St Faiths' through the next stage of development, as part of the Federation. The newly formed Ethos committee, involving the strong lead of the bishop's appointee, is a key element of this planned process, through which the school's ethos is to be reviewed and monitoring and evaluation of RE and CW will be continued.

School leaders have secured a stable staff team. Collectively, they have worked hard to provide a positive learning environment characterised by the Christian values of love, compassion and peace. This has been created by effective behaviour management training which has led to a climate for the improved behaviour of a small group, but significant group of pupils. The strategies implemented have positively influenced behaviour, whilst helping to empower pupils because they can 'wipe the sheet clean' and make a fresh start, reflecting the teachings of Jesus. More recent strategic planning for pupils with SEND clearly maps how key actions are attributed to Christian values and this underpins good provision and outcomes for this vulnerable group of learners. The policy for Behaviour and Anti-Bullying specifically places Christian values at the centre. However, most of the school's policies do not yet make explicit links with Christian distinctiveness.

The focus on raising standards in English and mathematics has been a priority area for the school since 2015. School leaders are now increasing the focus on RE and intend to re-focus more closely on monitoring CW. There is strong engagement with the diocese and strategic leadership training is valued. Although it is too early to fully measure the impact, there are clear indications that the expertise of the RE and CW leaders is developing well and leading to enhanced provision for pupils.

The school's Christian ethos is valued by parents, who indicate that their children experience good opportunities to explore what faith means to them, in an environment where they can do so with confidence and acceptance. They say that the school's core values have positively influenced their children's attitudes and behaviour outside of school and, as parents, they feel listened to and respected because of the school's 'open door' approach.

The areas for development from the previous inspection have been appropriately addressed and the school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report November 2017 St Faiths' Church of England VC Primary School, Horsham St Faith. NR10 3LF