

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Feering Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Coggeshall Road, Feering, Essex CO5 9QB

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Satisfactory

Diocese

Chelmsford

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

Essex

Date of inspection

14 July 2017

Date of last inspection

September 2011

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Controlled Primary 115106

Head of School

Susie Price

Executive Head

Bridgette Gough

Inspector's name and number

Lizzie McWhirter 244

School context

This smaller than average rural primary school works in partnership with St Andrew's Primary School, Halstead. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language is lower than the national average. An Interim Education Board [IEB] was set up in July 2016. There have been significant changes in staffing and leadership. The current head of school is seconded from their partner school and teaches at Feering three days a week. She has been in post since April 2017. A member of the senior leadership team is currently responsible for religious education [RE].

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Feering as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- This is a nurturing and caring Christian family community where each person is valued and known as an individual. Pupils are encouraged to be who they are and grow in confidence and achieve well.
- The partnership with the church, through the priest-in-charge, enriches the worshipping life of this church school as well as pupils' knowledge of the church year.
- The growing importance of prayer and reflection in the life of this church school nurtures the spiritual journeys of the whole community.

Areas to improve

- Establish the strategic direction of this church school, based on a strong Christian vision. Embed the rigorous and regular monitoring of the school as a church school to ensure it is both distinctive and effective. This includes training and support for all those in positions of leadership.
- Extend the programme of visits and visitors to enable pupils to meet people of faith more frequently in order to nurture their spiritual and cultural development.
- Enrich the worshipping experiences of the whole community by developing pupils' roles in leading

worship as well as planning and evaluation.

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

Feering's Christian foundation is rooted in its core values of care, respect, responsibility and perseverance. These were introduced in September 2015. Pupils and adults, including parents can articulate such values in their own words as they have become integral to daily life. This is because the school has worked hard on the core values and embedding learning behaviours. Pupils see the importance of perseverance and not giving up. Attendance is below average. The school is working closely with parents and there have been no exclusions. The school sees it as a priority to remove any barriers to learning, within a spirit of compassion and forgiveness, especially for its needy pupils. An expression of its Christian foundation is that relationships are good, and pupils are encouraged to support one another. Vulnerable pupils are helped to make progress from their starting points because of the pastoral support which is in place. This includes one to one sessions with an emotional first aider. As a result, pupils are greatly benefitting from cookery club and Lego therapy activities. In addition, the head of school teaches three days a week as an important part of serving this community and the senior teacher responsible for RE teaches Year 6. Consequently, pupils have worked hard and have achieved well, and academic attainment is above the national average as pupils leave Key Stage Two. Collective worship and RE are making good contributions to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to the Christian character of the school. For example, worship encourages, inspires and celebrates actions and achievements which make a difference to others. One pupil was awarded a number of RHS garden awards because of the hard work he contributed to the school quiet outdoor reflection area, which is used daily. Christian values are linked to charity fundraising which helps pupils' global awareness and their knowledge and understanding of diverse communities and cultures. Whilst pupils reflect on Christians worshipping in different parts of the world, such as the baptism of believers in the River Jordan, they say they would welcome meeting people of all faiths more frequently. Worship is well led by senior leaders and the parish clergy but there are limited experiences for pupils. They comment that drama in RE helps them to 'visualise Bible stories'. One pupil said, 'RE does challenge me as I don't really know that much. I try to push myself forward.' Another pupil said, 'sometimes RE excites me as I start a topic and want to finish it'. Pupils go on to say they would like to ask 'deep questions' more. Currently, they do not have many such experiences. They can relate the importance of places of worship for Sikhs and Muslims as well as the significance of Holy Week for Christians. They know the Christian story of salvation and go on to explain the significance of Ascension and Pentecost, citing how Jesus rose up to heaven and how he came down again in the form of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. They explain, that 'after Jesus died he showed he always had the Holy Spirit in him'. They also speak with empathy about Jesus' relationship with his mother. The use of new resources, such as 'Understanding Christianity' which focuses on key Christian concepts are therefore beginning to make a positive difference.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils who belong to the newly formed worship committee now open and close daily acts of worship. Classes continue to take it in turns to lead worship on 'Family Fridays', with older pupils especially showcasing what they have been learning. The outdoor quadrangle has been transformed and is now used on a daily basis for quiet reflection and newly introduced reflection areas in classes are well used. Consequently, prayer and reflection are growing in importance and relevance as part of daily life. P also know and say the school prayer and The Lord's Prayer regularly. One pupil said they find it helpful to reflect on the fruits of the spirit display which 'gives hope to the day' when they are having a bad day. For some pupils, praying is the most important aspect of worship as they 'like writing prayers and reading them out loud. It helps us to come closer to everyone and to God'. Pupils respond to national events, with empathetic prayers encapsulating, 'I felt sad when people were hurt in London'. In addition, each class has its own prayer book written by pupils. The parish priest regularly leads school worship and has helped pupils understand The Lord's Prayer. Moreover the partnership with All Saints Church, including the local 'Open The Book' team, has enriched the worshipping life of the whole community. Pupils say they like

going to All Saints Church and some say they, 'find it nice and peaceful so it's nicer to pray there'. They go on to say they feel 'God is listening to you and everyone else' and add that they would like to go to church more regularly. This shows their enjoyment of going to church, which nurtures their spiritual lives. Pupils remember Bible stories they hear in church, such as Daniel, which helps them to 'believe in what we want to believe in and never give up', reflecting their core Christian value of perseverance. They also remember the life of saints such as St Francis, which contributes to their understanding of Christianity. Parents value church services and the work of the parish priest in the community. For example, one pupil asked to be baptised during his class visit to All Saints Church. Consequently, pupils can explain the symbolism of baptism. In addition, pupils and staff have learned much from their parish priest leading worship. For example, pupils use a 'purple sparkly reflection book to say what you enjoyed about collective worship and why'. One pupil recorded what they learned from their parish priest about 'pneuma, which is actually Greek. It means wind, breath and Spirit. Without pneuma we would not be able to have our happy lives and families'. Pupils go on to say they would like their parish priest to help them understand more about The Holy Trinity, which is good. They are growing in their Christian understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For example, lighting three candles in worship to represent the three in one is an integral part of gathering for worship. Pupils go on to explain in detail, saying 'God created the world and all living things in it. The Son, that's Jesus who performs miracles and helps lots of people. Jesus sacrificed himself for everybody. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit came down on the disciples as Jesus has told them to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit. There were bolts of fire above their heads and they spoke in different languages and went to other countries.' The IEB have gathered pupil perceptions in worship and recognise that pupils want to be more involved in leading worship. They have also identified the benefit of having more outdoor worship experiences, such as in the woodland Forest School area and on the school field. Firm plans are in place to develop both areas.

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

Feering's core Christian values underpin all school policy and practice. Church school distinctiveness now has its own section in the school improvement plan. This is because the IEB are experienced in church school leadership and are helping support the school in building a new staff team and vision. The new leadership team are providing a concerted approach to the distinctive and effective ethos of the school as a church school. Whilst areas from the previous inspection have been addressed, the school recognises there is much more to do. St Andrew's and Feering are working closely together in partnership since Easter, learning from good practice, whilst seeking to preserve the uniqueness of each school. The IEB have correctly identified the need for the strategic direction for this school as a church school. They have consulted with parents to lay the long term foundation of improvement. This includes embedding rigorous and regular monitoring to ensure that the school's Christian ethos is both distinctive and effective. Systematic monitoring of RE and worship is under developed but the foundations for it are well in place. Whilst the IEB is rightly pleased with the progress this far, they correctly recognise there is some way to go. Pupil voice is valued through the school council and worship committee. Links with the parish are very good. Links with the diocese are supportive, with the school benefitting from advice and training. This is true for all leaders, including those responsible for RE. No RE lesson observations have taken place this year. However, book scrutinies have been part of the work carried out by the RE subject leader, who has only been responsible for RE since Easter. Both worship and RE meet statutory requirements and are currently being well led, managed and resourced. The IEB and the school's leadership team are committed to the wellbeing of everyone. Above all, they seek to serve the community and show love to all. As a result, parents value the fact that the teachers know everyone's name and pupils know each other. They praise the links with the church and the work of the parish priest and the difference it makes to school life. For example, some pupils sing hymns at home after dinner. Parents speak highly of the very safe environment with very caring teachers in this 'lovely church school' which makes transition easy for their children. They know their children are really encouraged to be who they are, providing so much more than just an academic environment. For example, pupils are given so much confidence, resulting in some pupils playing the piano or violin in worship and they are all best friends. Staff value working in this caring community where all can flourish as there is a renewed impetus to move this school forward as a church school.

