

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

| Denver VC Primary School | |
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| 19, Ryston Road, Denver, Downham Market, Norfolk, PE38 0DP | |
| Current SIAMS inspection grade | Good |
| Diocese | Ely |
| Previous SIAMS inspection grade | Good |
| Local authority | Norfolk |
| Date of inspection | 30 January 2018 |
| Date of last inspection | 25 February 2013 |
| Type of school and unique reference number | Primary 121069 |
| Headteacher | Linda Allison |
| Inspector's name and number | Jean Johnson 608 |

School context

This is a smaller than average rural primary school with 112 pupils on roll. Pupils come from Denver and surrounding villages and are mainly of White British origin. Day to day leadership of the school is shared between the headteacher and assistant head, who has taken on the role of acting head for two days a week. The school is situated close to the parish church.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Denver VC Primary as a Church of England school are good

- The strong and effective partnership between the school, local incumbent and church community consistently promotes and enhances the school's Christian character.
- The school's Christian ethos is celebrated by all, and is clearly evident in behaviour, attitudes and relationships within the school community.
- Pupils thrive within the caring Christian ethos of the school and this is reflected in achievement and attendance data.

Areas to improve

- Provide regular opportunities for pupils to evaluate collective worship and other aspects of the school's Christian character so that all stakeholders' views are gathered and lead to further improvements to the school's Christian distinctiveness.
- Increase pupils' involvement in collective worship by giving them regular responsibility for planning and leading acts of worship.
- Enrich pupils' knowledge of diverse faith communities so that pupils have a deeper understanding both of their place in the wider Christian family as well as how this relates to other faith communities.

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

The school's strong caring ethos is securely underpinned by Christian values for example respect, kindness and love. Pupils suggest and agree a resolution each year. The outcomes of the recent resolution, 'Think of others before ourselves and be kind and helpful to others', based on the Christian teaching to love thy neighbour, are evident in the daily life of the school. Parents comment on how their children respect others and look out for each other. They recognise that the school's Christian character has a positive impact on their children's attitudes and behaviour. A new pupil talked about how easy it was to make friends when she came to the school. Others talk about Bible stories they hear, for example the story of David and Goliath, which they say teaches them to have courage and trust in God. Individual pupil progress is tracked throughout the year and additional support provided for pupils when needed. Pupils are proud of the certificates they receive in the weekly celebration assembly which celebrates their good attitudes to each other and their work as well as academic achievements. As a result of this nurturing approach, most pupils, including vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils, make at least expected progress during their time at the school and attendance is at or above national averages.

Pupils respond thoughtfully in religious education (RE) when they are asked to consider how Jesus would respond to a variety of challenging situations in the world today. Younger pupils suggest ways in which God would want them to care for his creation and say that hearing the story of Noah in RE has shown them that they should respect the world that God has given them. They have a sound understanding of Christianity as a diverse world faith and can make some comparisons between Christianity and other faiths. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is further supported through a range of activities. Older pupils, distinguished by their red jackets, take on a variety of responsibilities, acting as mentors and role models for younger pupils. Individual talents and interests are nurtured through a variety of extra-curricular activities. Pupils show their care and concern for others when they take part in events to raise money for charities, for example Children in Need and Samaritans Purse.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The monthly themes for collective worship reflect the school's Christian values and major festivals in the church's year, for example Christmas, Easter and Harvest. All staff lead and plan collective worship which has a strong focus on biblical teaching. Pupils say that they try to be like Jesus and value everyone and the caring attitudes seen in school show the practical outworking of the messages they hear. They are keen to take part in the weekly act of collective worship led by the local incumbent. Her regular visits also strengthen pupils' understanding of local Anglican traditions and practice. Pupils are responsible for setting up the hall as a worship space. A candle is lit at the start of worship and pupils say that this reminds them that Jesus is the light of the world and that it provides a 'peaceful' focus for worship. Pupils have a sound understanding of the purpose of prayer and say that they sometimes write prayers for use at lunchtime or in collective worship. They talk about using prayer in collective worship to thank God or perhaps share their worries. They are less sure about how they or others might use prayer in their everyday lives. Although pupils do not regularly plan and lead collective worship, they do plan services to celebrate major festivals which take place both in school and in the local church. They have a good understanding of God as Father and Son and a developing understanding of the Holy Spirit. This understanding is supported by the words of the school song which is frequently sung in collective worship. Pupils also relate the three chalices on their school badge to the Trinity. Governor monitoring of collective worship has noted how pupils are encouraged to reflect on what they hear and how this impacts positively on everyday behaviour in school. They also note how the school's Christian values are promoted and rooted in Biblical teaching. Their evaluations have led to further enhancements to the worship space, for example the addition of a representation of an altar frontal to link with local Anglican tradition.

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

Leaders and governors work closely together to ensure that the school's vision, to discover and celebrate what is good in each individual, is underpinned by explicit Christian values and clearly informs and influences all aspects of school life. This vision is promoted and exemplified in the school song, recently written by pupils, based around the words discover, value, celebrate and praise. A large wooden cross in the hall and other displays throughout the school promote the distinctive Christian character of the school. The local incumbent, who is also a school governor, is a regular visitor to the school and members of the local church community come into school to, for example, help pupils prepare posies for the Mothers' Day service as well as Christingles for the Christmas service. Parents talk about attending these services with their children and value the way that the school works in partnership with the local church. The school promotes the local Messy Church and provided the venue for its first session. Pupils from school attend the monthly sessions which are now held in the church. Parents recognise the impact this partnership has on their children's behaviour and attitudes and say for example that the Christian ethos, clearly promoted and evident in the school, encourages their children to respect other people and be kind to each other. The headteacher's strong leadership of collective worship and RE ensures that they make a positive contribution to the school's Christian character. She has attended church school conferences and cascaded information to staff. Staff have attended training in the use of the Understanding Christianity materials and the RE curriculum has been updated to incorporate these materials. Lesson observations show that pupils are being challenged to think more deeply about religion through the resulting enquiry based approach to the teaching of RE. New assessment criteria have been introduced for RE to ensure that children make progress and reach at least expected levels of attainment. These changes have formed part of the school improvement and development plan (SIDP) with their impact being systematically monitored and evaluated by staff and governors. The assistant head has attended training for church school leaders, preparing her for her role as part-time acting head. Governors have attended diocesan training on monitoring and are making use of materials provided to monitor collective worship and other aspects of the SIDP. This has ensured that their monitoring has become more focused on the extent to which messages from collective worship are embedded in the everyday life of the school. Visits to Ely Cathedral give pupils experience of the wider church community.

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