

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Middleton Church of England Primary Academy

School Road Middleton King's Lynn Norfolk PE32 1SA	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Diocese	Norwich
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	March 2015
Name of multi-academy trust	Diocese of Norwich Education & Academies Trust [DNEAT]
Date of inspection	27 February 2017
Date of last inspection	30 April 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary Academy 141662
Headteacher Head of School	Mary Foreman Jo Kerkham
Inspector's name and number	Gill Hipwell 480

School context

This is a 75-pupil village primary, situated a few miles from the large town of King's Lynn. There is a significant amount of specialised intervention covering a broad range of additional needs. The proportion of pupil premium recipients is high. A federation with a VA primary, including a shared executive headteacher, was dissolved in July 2016. The executive headteacher remained in post for a further term, supported by an entirely new teaching staff including a head of school. Two of the four class teachers are newly qualified. The school was placed in special measures following an Ofsted inspection in October 2016. DNEAT appointed an interim executive headteacher for a fixed term from January to July 2017. Post-Ofsted, the governing body was replaced by an interim executive board led by a trustee from DNEAT. The church is situated across the road from the school.

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

- Warm relationships are evidence of the high priority given to respect for others.
- Standards are improving although they remain below expectations in some areas. Progress is generally good with frequent, careful and consistent monitoring leading to timely and appropriate intervention.
- Pupils respond positively to the structure of the consistently applied behaviour management strategy, taking responsibility for their actions.
- Strong Christian leadership has had an immediate impact on the shared understanding of Christian values.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that all staff and potential governors have good quality training for their role as leaders in a Christian community, in order to maintain the strong Christian focus developed during interim leadership.
- Resource the leadership of religious education (RE) so that there is capacity to develop both the subject and its explicit role in supporting the school's Christian character.
- Develop good practice in prayer and reflection so that quiet areas assume a more spiritual dimension.
- Build on the relationship with the local church family so that a partnership can be developed which has positive outcomes for pupils and their families as well as enriching the wider worshipping community.

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

Pupils are very positive about their school. They say that their teachers always make time for them and help them to improve. They enjoy school and therefore attendance is good. Pupils and staff comment on significantly improved behaviour, especially since January, and praise the new strategy that has achieved this. Pupils like the clarity of the new system, describing it as 'fair'. They say that better behaviour in the classroom makes it easier to learn. They quote the new school vision confidently and can give examples of how thinking about the values explored in worship helps them to take responsibility for their actions. They say that there is time each day to do some work based on values and most can name and explain the school's core values.

Relationships between adults and pupils are built on respect, patience and the conviction that every individual is important. Subtle interaction observed during collective worship gave a clear indication of gentle but effective discipline founded on trust. Pupils know that their opinions are valued and are excited by the opportunity to contribute to regular class and school council debates which have tangible outcomes.

Swift and effective action is ensuring that academic progress is improving for all groups, especially the vulnerable who benefit from a range of imaginative interventions designed to help them to reach their potential. Outcomes are not yet consistently at national averages but are improving. However, changes are too recent to make an accurate assessment of how robust they are, although they have been introduced in a way that encourages sustainability. Staff have put a great deal of thought into creating a richly spiritual environment. Displays encourage reflection and there are clearly defined quiet areas in all classrooms as well as outside. Although pupils appreciate these spaces and say that they are frequently used, they, and adults, view them primarily as safe places for taking 'time out' and 'calming down'.

Opportunities to experience diverse cultures are limited but the RE co-ordinator has recently developed a link with a Christian school in Ghana and pupils already talk about this and show interest in the display in the hall. Pupils enjoy their RE lessons, saying that they have time to think and to talk in groups. They identify care and respect for others as the most important values, saying 'we don't have to agree but we respect each other's opinions'. At present, there is no monitoring of where RE has an impact on pupils' personal development or on their understanding of how faith affects the way some people choose to live their lives.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

All pupils spoken to by the inspector were positive about worship and they approach it with respect and reverence. They say that it is 'peaceful' and that they appreciate time to think and to pray. There is a clear structure to whole-school worship which follows the Anglican pattern and always includes opportunities for reflection. A liturgical greeting has just been introduced, said hesitantly on the day of the inspection. Pupils sing with enthusiasm, something that has developed quite recently.

The worship co-ordinator sets the themes which are focused on Christian values and rooted in Bible stories, although at present pupils' biblical literacy is not well developed. Pupils say that they often discuss Christian values in class, where there is sometimes a relevant display to reinforce them, and that these values influence their attitudes and their behaviour. They speak of worship as important because 'you listen, respect the values and do well'.

The school hall has been transformed into a special place for worship. Adults have created thought-provoking displays about the Christian values and these are gradually being replaced by contributions from pupils, who say that they like looking at what their friends have written or drawn. A table dressed in liturgical colours has prominence and pupils know that there is some significance to the changing colour of the cloth. They have an appropriate understanding of the symbolism of the cross and the candle. Pupils have some understanding of God as Father and Son but a more limited grasp of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer is an important part of the school day. Pupils have a good understanding of its place and purpose, talking animatedly about their prayer book and an outside area which commemorates a former pupil. They say that they pray regularly together and are also encouraged to pray individually, giving examples of how they pray for different purposes. They are not, however, familiar with traditional prayers such as the Lord's Prayer.

Although staff lead worship there has been no training for this. However, the diocesan school support officer is working closely with the co-ordinator on developing worship, including training for both staff and pupils in preparing and leading. Pupils and staff have a role in leading classroom worship, for which the co-ordinator provides guidance to ensure that it is rooted in Christianity. Class worship is not currently monitored; whole school worship is sometimes observed by the incumbent but currently there is no formal monitoring. Festivals take place in the church and are led by the school with the incumbent offering a welcome and blessing. Pupils like going to the church because it is a 'special place where you can talk to God' but say they would like to see the incumbent more often and to have the chance to know him better.

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

Firm and focused leadership from the interim headteacher has had an immediate impact on standards. Her newly introduced vision statement 'together we love to learn and learn to love' is prominent around the school as well as in communications with parents and others. As yet, there has not been an opportunity for the school community to explore the vision and take ownership but all those spoken to by the inspector knew, understood and supported it. A new behaviour strategy, 'good to be green' is consistently applied across the school and has led to significantly improved behaviour and relationships which, in their turn, have enabled pupils to make better progress in the classroom. Core Christian values are explored in worship and have prominence in displays across the school. The language of values has become embedded in the vocabulary of the school so that pupils and adults consistently reinforce positive behaviour, attitudes and good choices throughout the day. Support for individuals, staff as well as pupils, is a priority. The school works well with a range of agencies to support specific needs and the head of school speaks passionately about ensuring that everyone is treated fairly.

The pace of change since January has been challenging for staff but they say that initiatives are introduced in a supportive way that ensures consistency and continuity. Leaders monitor behaviour and academic progress regularly and rigorously, identifying where intervention is needed and acting swiftly. The interim executive board ensures that plans and policies are firmly rooted in Christian principles and are already discussing how to effect the transition to a local governing board when the school is stable. They have ensured that all staff have personal development plans which include targets relating to church school leadership, weaving values and qualities into the curriculum, and collective worship. Officers from DNEAT and the diocese are frequent visitors, providing advice and training. Other schools in the DNEAT family also offer support and encouragement. To facilitate a smooth leadership transition the head of school is fully involved in strategy but, as yet, there has been no opportunity for him to access specific training on church school distinctiveness. The RE leader is undertaking the 'Understanding Christianity' training. She is piloting this new approach to learning with the youngest pupils and has begun to look at how the whole school curriculum can be adapted. At present, there is no dedicated time for her to work on revising the curriculum, provide training for teachers or monitor teaching and learning and, as a result, there is no improvement plan for RE and no evidence to show its impact on the Christian character of the school.

The incumbent is warmly welcomed into school and is eager to develop closer links. However, there is no shared expectation of how church and school can work together for mutual benefit. Parents are beginning to find a voice, encouraged by regular drop-in sessions with the headteacher, although this is a very recent development.

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