

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Marshland St James Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

School Road
Marshland St James
Wisbech PE14 8EY

Diocese: Ely

Local authority: Norfolk

Date of inspection: 14th October 2014

Date of last inspection: 9th November 2009

School's unique reference number: 121073

Headteacher: Sarah Durrant

Inspector's name and number: Jenny Daniels 664

School context

This is a smaller than average primary school with 110 pupils, situated in a rural location to the east of Wisbech. The children are taught in four mixed aged classes. There is an additional nursery unit which runs alongside the foundation stage class. The school has a small but significant number of pupils from Traveller families. The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is higher than the national average. The current Headteacher has been in post for one year. There is no Anglican church in the village. The nearest Church is situated three miles away from the school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Marshland St James as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- The integrity and commitment of the headteacher, staff and foundation governors in promoting the distinctive Christian character of the school which is evident on the school's web site, all communications with the parents and the community and in displays across the school.
- The school's very caring, welcoming and supportive environment in which children, staff and parents express how they feel valued.
- Learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported by the school's Christian ethos which is evident in the relationships across the school.

Areas to improve

- To establish a more robust evaluation of collective worship that involves the learners to ensure that it is matched to the pupil's needs.
- To develop the use of reflection throughout the school to allow individuals to be touched and changed by their experiences.
- To develop and build further events with the Church and the community to further strengthen links already established in order to confirm pupils' role as members of

these communities.

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

The school welcomes a wide and diverse range of learners into the school and ensures there is a warm and inclusive atmosphere. Care and support for pupils and staff is good and reflects the school's Christian values of respect and caring for each other. Positive behaviour is promoted in line with the school's core Christian values of respect and tolerance. These are reinforced daily by all staff throughout the day both inside the classroom and at lunchtime. A Christian identity is fostered through the use of Christian artefacts and displays both in the classroom and corridors but the school recognises that there are insufficient opportunities for quiet reflection areas across the school to enable core values to become embedded and promote personal reflection of the Christian faith. The school's robust approach to tackling poor attendance and underachievement is underpinned by Christian love, support and understanding so that pupils and their parents understand that they are valued as well as challenged. The school is currently judged as 'Requires Improvement' by the most recent HMI visit, November 2013. Results at the end of 2014 indicate that whilst Key Stage 1 is improving, Key Stage 2 remains below floor standards. The school is addressing all areas of underperformance through external support and ensuring first quality teaching, but at the same time ensures that hard work and success are celebrated in the weekly 'celebration' assemblies to which parents are welcomed. The behaviour of the children is mostly good and they can articulate the importance of religious education (RE) in their lives and how it has an impact on them. This is evidenced by the children discussing how looking at all faiths makes them more understanding of each other's differences. The school is developing links with the traveller community and through the Christian value of respect, celebrate their diverse culture. The Reception and Nursery children have recently held a 'Traveller Week'. E twinning has recently been set up with an inner city school in Leicester to help children experience children from different faiths and cultures. This is still in early stages of development and yet to demonstrate impact.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Since the headteacher's appointment a much more structured process for the planning of collective worship based around the liturgical calendar has been introduced to ensure key celebrations are not missed. As highlighted as an area for development at the last inspection, there has been some monitoring of collective worship by the governors and the headteacher but this has yet to inform future planning of collective worship by becoming routine and to include the views of the pupils. There has been insufficient evaluation of the impact of collective worship on the school community to ensure it meets the needs of the pupils. However, pupils say they enjoy collective worship and the majority were observed to be attentive during this time. Worship is carefully planned to engage pupils using different styles and approaches. The beginning and end of collective worship is clearly defined by the lighting and extinguishing of a candle which focused the children appropriately. Children and staff are welcomed through the saying of a Christian greeting followed by the appropriate response. The theme of 'caring for each other' was introduced through the use of a puppet to which the children engaged well. A song was followed by a reflection time and the children were led in prayer. Children enter the school hall quietly and behave well, are mostly attentive and respond to the different elements. The children talk positively of those times when they are actively involved in the collective worship. This is mostly at celebratory occasions within the church year mostly held in the church when the Incumbent involves the children in the planning and delivery. This was evidenced by the enthusiasm with which they could recall the recent Harvest service and the involvement they had acting out stories from the Bible and writing their own prayers. These services are well supported by parents and members of the local community. Prayer is a regular part of the school day and there is evidence of prayers written by children which demonstrate the impact of the Christian faith on their personal reflections and experiences. Each class have their own prayer book and prayers are said before

lunch and at the end of the day. The children can recite the Lord's prayer but have a limited understanding of its meaning. The older children set up the hall for collective worship and enjoy being able to choose songs. They do not yet have the opportunity to be involved in the planning or leadership of collective worship. The Incumbent leads collective worship once a month and has made reference to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit but this is yet to be clearly understood by the children.

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

Through the recently developed school web site and through publications such as the Parish News, leaders articulate and promote a clear vision for the school based on distinctive Christian values. They are proud of where the school has come from in the last twelve months but are realistic of the challenges ahead. They have a good understanding of the school's performance and distinctiveness based on the school's self evaluation strategies and key areas for action have been identified in the school's improvement plan. The Incumbent supports the well being and welfare of the whole community through her relationships and provides spiritual support through her leading and input into collective worship. The children talk highly of her. There are clear recruitment and induction procedures in place, which are designed to ensure new employees are sympathetic with the school's values. Governors are able to articulate their role in supporting the school and are aware of the need to introduce more rigorous monitoring procedures to increase its effectiveness as a church school. A strong link between the parish council and school is being developed through joint fund raising events. Members of the Parish council are governors of the school and the school contributes on a regular basis to the parish magazine which demonstrates a growing understanding of the role the school plays in the wider community and helps pupils to experience leadership and responsibility outside of school.

Parents speak well of the school and support the school in many practical and fund raising ventures. One class has recently raised a significant sum of money by making and selling cookies for the RNLI, which was prompted through discussion within a RE lesson on Christian love and compassion for others. Parents welcome the 'open door' policy that exists, are comfortable approaching the school and feel valued. The leadership and management has a clear and strategic view of church school improvement and identifies through self evaluation the key strengths of the leadership and the specific development points such as extending the monitoring of collective worship to further increase its Church school distinctiveness. Recent strengthening of partnerships between the school's leadership team and local church schools as well as the Diocese are evidence of the future capacity for further development.

The recent improvements to the school's web site has links to the Church and incorporates the vision and Christian values of the school in clear statements. The school's vision has been revisited at the beginning of this term with involvement from all stakeholders through questionnaires and discussion. This vision statement is prominently displayed in the main entrance and on all publications and communications which demarks Marshland St James as a Church school based on the core Christian values.

The new home-school agreement is helping to strengthen the link between the school's Christian ethos and positive learning outcomes by stating the aims and values of the school, the responsibilities of both school and parents and the expectations each is entitled to of the other.

SIAMS report 14th October 2014 Marshland St James C of E VC School, Wisbech PE14 8EY

