

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Mary's Church of England Junior School (Academy)

Swan Lane
Long Stratton
Norwich
NR15 2XN

Diocese: Norwich

Local authority: Norfolk
Dates of inspection: 8th November 2012
Date of last inspection: 7th and 10th December 2009
School's unique reference number: 121045
Headteacher: Mrs Alison Cullum
Inspector's name and number: Jean Johnson 608

School context

Saint Mary's Church of England Junior School is a two-form entry Academy with 205 pupils on roll. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. Most transfer from the nearby infant school which serves Long Stratton and the surrounding villages. The school has an above average percentage of pupils identified as having Special Educational Needs and a significant number of Looked After Children. The school takes its name from the parish church with which it has close links.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Saint Mary's Junior School as a Church of England school are good

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school as a church school. There is a strong sense of ownership of Christian values by all stakeholders and, because of this, they are central to the life of the school. Strong and fruitful links with the local church strengthen the Christian ethos of the school and ensure that the school's Church of England foundation is recognised within the wider community.

Established strengths

- Christian values lived out in all aspects of school life.
- The strong support from the incumbent and local church members both acting as role models and reinforcing the status of the school as a church school in the community.
- The drive and enthusiasm of the headteacher in establishing the school as a Church of England Academy.

Focus for development

- Governors to systematically monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school as a church school.
- Pupils to be able to articulate what makes the school's values distinctively Christian.
- More explicit support for spiritual development, particularly in classrooms.

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

The school places a strong emphasis on Christian values which underpin all aspects of school life. Pupils talk about how these values positively influence their attitudes and behaviour and that of their peers, and show this in the way they care for each other and play together. They say that the school 'works as a team' and explain how living the values helps to support this. A 'gold card' reward system, linked to key values, provides positive reinforcement for good behaviour. The R.E. (Religious Education) subject leader ensures that the themes and values explored in R.E. lessons link to general class topics. The focus on all

stakeholders reinforcing the values and putting them into practice has strengthened the Christian ethos of the school, and this is recognised and celebrated by staff and parents. The school caters well for the needs of all pupils including the high percentage of pupils who have additional needs. A calm room provides a haven for children who are experiencing particular difficulties and care for all pupils is good. Pupils choose which charities the school will support. Staff and pupils have chosen respect, friendship and honesty as key values for the school and these and other values are prominently displayed in the public areas of the school. Work resulting from R.E. lessons is also displayed; however there are few stimuli for spiritual reflection in classrooms.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The weekly themes for collective worship are planned by the head and senior management team to extend and reinforce the school's firm focus on Christian values. Worship leaders use bible stories, for example Daniel in the Lion's Den, to illustrate values such as courage, held by Christians. Pupils recognise the importance of these values to the life of the school and talk about how different worship leaders use assemblies to 'make sure we understand what they (the values) mean' and how they relate practically to everyday life. They are less confident in linking the values to bible stories and Christian teaching. A worship group, made up of volunteer pupils, plans and leads worship on a regular basis. Pupils listen attentively to their peers during collective worship and say that they enjoy watching them using role play to explore themes such as bullying. Members of the local church community played a significant role in planning as well as taking part in a successful 'Prayer Spaces' week in the school. This has encouraged pupils to feel more involved in worship. Pupils say that they pray to think about God and that 'God speaks to us in our heart to do the right thing'. The incumbent leads collective worship in school and major Christian festivals are celebrated both in school and in church. The timing of collective worship has recently been changed to enable all staff to attend. At present, the school does not have a consistent strategy for evaluating collective worship.

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

The headteacher's drive and enthusiasm to establish the school as a Church of England Academy has given the school a renewed confidence in itself as a church school. The newly appointed deputy head is committed to further developing the distinctive Christian nature of the school. The R.E. subject leader has effectively and enthusiastically embraced recent changes to the R.E. syllabus. Strong links with the local church support the school's Christian ethos and reinforce its status as a church school in the community. Social events organised by the church for the community are held at the school. The incumbent, together with members of the church community, leads popular Christian after-school and holiday clubs based in the school. Parent views are regularly sought and key changes are discussed at meetings of the newly set up parent forum. Parents are now more involved in the life of the school through coffee mornings, family learning events, open days and theme weeks. As a result, significantly more parents are attending the school's Christian celebrations both at school and in the church. The school values the support it receives from the diocese. All staff have taken part in professional development which has strengthened their understanding of the school's Christian values. Governors regularly discuss aspects of Christian distinctiveness, but do not yet systematically monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school as a church school.