

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Margaretting Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Penny's Lane , Margaretting, CM4 0HA	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Chelmsford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Essex
Date of inspection	20 th June 2017
Date of last inspection	April 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 115116
Headteacher	Mairie O' Regan
Inspector's name and number	Rosemary Privett 321

School context

Margaretting C of E VC school is a smaller than average village school with 77 pupils currently on roll. All pupils apart from those in Reception are taught in mixed age classes. The school has strong links with the local and wider community. The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding and free school meals is below the national average. This is also the case for the proportion pupils who have special educational needs and disabilities. There has been a stable staff for some years. The new headteacher took up her post in September 2016.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Margaretting as a Church of England school are good

- The strong leadership of the headteacher articulates and promotes a vision for the school rooted in Christian values.
- The strong leadership of religious education [RE] and collective worship has improved provision so that they enrich the school's distinctive character.
- High quality strategies to support vulnerable pupils and their families are driven by Christian love and compassion.
- The work of the RE focus group enables pupils and adults to plan future developments in RE and collective worship.

Areas to improve

- Develop ways in which pupils can have greater ownership of planning and leading worship.
- Develop the visual environment worship to support pupils' understanding of the symbolism associated with the Trinity and the cycle of the church year.
- Develop the 'sacred spaces' to give pupils more ways through which they can offer personal reflections and prayers outside the daily act of worship.

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

Margaretting is an inclusive with school with a distinctive Christian ethos. Its core Christian values are clear from the moment you enter the building. Photographs of pupils displaying the values of perseverance, forgiveness, kindness, respect and responsibility are prominently displayed. Pupils see these as a constant reminder of what is important in their school. They readily articulate the impact of the values on their attitudes and behaviour. They say they 'help us get on with each other and make better choices'. They are, however, only just beginning to link the values with their biblical roots. The school demonstrates its Christian values in the way it treats the whole school community as a family. This means that pupils and colleagues feel supported, motivated and respected. Relationships between all members of the community are excellent. Consequently pupils love coming to school and learn in a safe and secure Christian environment. As a result, attendance is very good and exclusions are rare. The values of respect and responsibility underpin the approaches in the behaviour policy. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and show respect for others. This means they learn how to support one another and develop a good understanding of right and wrong. As a result, behaviour is of a high standard. Staff are good role models, seeking to live out the core values. The school's values are shared explicitly through worship and RE. Pupils also experience Christian values in action when the school community raises money for charities chosen by pupils. Parents value the close attention given to the achievement and wellbeing of each individual. Extremely well planned interventions, including a nurture group are providing very effective support to more vulnerable pupils. These strategies are underpinned by the values of perseverance respect and kindness. They are carefully tailored to build confidence and ensure success. The progress of these pupils is testimony to the high quality pastoral care and compassion given to all. In this way the school's Christian character is lived out through its actions. Over the past year the school has embraced the Church of England's vision of 'life in its fullness', through developing its programme of extra curricular provision. This provision gives pupils experiences that broaden horizons and raise aspirations and confidence. It also supports their social and cultural development. The spiritual development of pupils is well supported through RE and collective worship and a 'Question board'. This provokes thoughtful responses from pupils such as, 'If God created everything, who created God!' Age appropriate 'sacred spaces' in each classroom are a recent addition. Pupils, value these as a place to be quiet and think, particularly when things are troubling them. The headteacher has correctly identified the need to embed a whole school approach to developing spirituality across the whole curriculum. Training this term has promoted discussion and raised staff awareness.

Since the headteacher took over leadership of RE she has worked tirelessly to raise its profile. It is now strength of the school, making a valuable contribution to its Christian character. Pupils enjoy it because teaching strategies are engaging and cross some curriculum boundaries. It also gives good support to their spiritual, moral and cultural development. A typical comment from pupils was: 'Our teacher makes it fun but she also makes us think a lot!' Teaching approaches are often creative using dance and drama to help support pupils' thinking. Many pupils remember participating in dance work to exploring the concept of The Fall and the idea of temptation. Through RE, pupils learn about other faiths and explore similarity and difference. This means they have a good understanding of diversity. They also understand the importance of respecting the beliefs of others. The school recognizes that pupils' understanding of Christianity, as a multi-cultural worldwide faith is less clear.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship has a place of importance in the daily life of the school. Pupils express positive views of worship. They enjoy it because themes are interesting and relevant. Staff see it as a time that unites the school as a community. A recent focus on supporting pupils' reflective thinking in worship is having an impact. Many pupils now have the confidence to share thoughtful responses and make meaning for themselves. In this way it supports their spiritual development. In response to an area for development, worship now offers more ways for pupils to be actively involved. They particularly enjoy being involved in drama, writing prayers and singing. Worship is lead by a variety of leaders, which enriches provision. It is carefully planned to include time to gather, time for praise and time for prayer and quiet reflection. Themes are based on a different Christian value each half term. This enables pupils to hear about them in a biblical context. They also include biblical material and stories of the life and teaching of Jesus, so that pupils understand his importance to Christians. Singing assemblies give time for pupils to explore the messages in the hymns and songs they sing. All members of the school community, value the weekly celebration assembly. This is a time when the school community gathers to reward successes and reflects on how pupils are living out the values. It is an extension of the school's core purpose, which is focused on the development of the whole child.

An RE display, along with a table with a cross and candles give pupils a focal point during worship. However, the school recognises that the visual environment for worship is underdeveloped. It does not support pupils' understanding of the symbolism and language associated with The Trinity or the colours of the church year.

Although they learn about the idea of the Trinity in RE, they are not always clear about its significance in worship. Prayer a strong feature of daily worship. The Lord's Prayer and school prayer are used regularly so pupils are familiar with them. Prayers are also shared at lunchtime. Pupils own prayers based on the school's values, are often shared with the whole school. There are also times of quiet reflection. This means pupils have an understanding of its purpose in formal settings. The occasions when pupils can offer prayers in more informal settings are currently limited.

The vicar and curate regularly support the worshipping life of the school. They are welcome visitors. The school attends the church for services at key times in the church year such as Easter, Christmas and Harvest. Pupils are now involved in planning and leading aspects of these services. As a result, they have a good understanding of the meaning behind these festivals. The occasions when they can plan and lead worship in other settings are, however, currently limited. The ways in which the impact of worship is monitored and evaluated has developed considerably since the last inspection. It is now strength of the school. Through a focus group, pupils play an important part in the monitoring process. Regular meetings with the coordinator and clergy, enable them to share their opinions on worship and discuss improvements. A collective worship comments book has also been introduced. This gives parents, staff members, governors and other visitors the chance to share their views .It provides the coordinator with insights into how worship affects the school community. As a result of this, worship remains relevant and fresh,

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

The headteacher and her staff clearly articulate a vision for the school as a Church school that is shared widely. This vision clearly underpins work in RE and collective worship. However, the way in which it informs the whole curriculum is not yet embedded. The headteacher's expectations for the best possible education for all pupils within a caring Christian environment are, however, passionately expressed. Through a nurturing ethos, underpinned by Christian values, the school effectively promotes both pupils' spiritual development and their academic achievement. Since September 2016, the headteacher has led a robust drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning and raise standards. She has worked closely with the SIB and diocesan advisors. The development plan identifies appropriate priorities to improve pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. Whole-school strategies have led to improvements. The attainment and progress of all pupils is now above national standards in English and Reading. This year's Key Stage 1 results are also above national standards.

Members of the governing body are committed to the school's on-going development. Effective strategies are in place for them to monitor its overall effectiveness. They now have a clearer understanding of the schools overall strengths and areas for development. Training from the diocesan advisor has given them a better understanding of the school's distinctive character. The monitoring of the effectiveness of the school as a church school has been formalised since the last inspection. The vicar, who is a foundation governor, monitors collective worship and RE. Through weekly meetings with the headteacher and a variety of monitoring activities, he checks on the effectiveness of these aspects. His findings are shared with the rest of the governing body. With the support of diocesan advisors, the headteacher has developed the school's Christian distinctiveness. From her appointment in September 2016, she took over the leadership of collective worship and RE. Her focused action planning, drive and subject knowledge has enriched provision for pupils. She has also developed teacher's expertise by modelling good practice. Many of the initiatives are relatively recent. Her focus means, however, that they are already beginning to, have a positive impact on pupils. This is seen in their increased engagement with RE and collective worship. Both areas meet statutory requirements.

The school is working to develop future church school leaders. Visits to observe outstanding practice, support teachers' on-going professional development. Through in-house training, staff are beginning to have a clearer understanding of their role in leading quality collective worship. Pupils are developing as leaders through their roles as school councillors, house captains and members of the RE focus group. The headteacher says that the enthusiasm and creative ideas of the RE focus group have been inspiring to her. Through this group, pupils understanding of RE and worship grows along with their confidence to share ideas and opinions. As a result, they are influencing future developments. The headteacher is committed to maintaining and growing a variety of professional partnerships. A good example of this is her work with other church school leaders in an 'RE Hub'. Through this link, she keeps abreast of current developments and shares good practice. The school sits at the heart of its community. Its participation in local events such as carol singing in church and the Remembrance service, is greatly valued by the wider community. The Bishop of Chelmsford is a friend of the school as he lives in the village. This close link along with visits to the cathedral, help pupils understand they are part of a wider diocese. Links with the local church are also strong. Services in church to celebrate major festivals are well supported. These links make church accessible to all, whilst at the same time developing an understanding of Christian worship and practice.

