

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### William de Yaxley Church of England Academy

Landsdowne Road, Yaxley, Peterborough, PE7 3JL

**Current SIAMS inspection grade**

**Good**

**Diocese**

**Ely**

Previous SIAS inspection grade

Outstanding

Date of academy conversion

November 2014

Name of multi-academy trust / federation [delete as appropriate]

Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Trust (DEMAT)

Date of inspection

05 May 2017

Date of last inspection

02 May 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

VA Primary Academy | 41211

Executive Headteacher / Head of School

Kay Corley / Daniel Doud

Inspector's name and number

Judith Ruff 528

#### School context

This is a two form entry junior school with 217 pupils on roll. Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes to staff, including a new headteacher appointed in January 2014, initially for an interim period. This person is now the executive headteacher across two church junior schools. The current head of school is the previous deputy headteacher. The school joined DEMAT in November 2014. The majority of pupils are from a White British heritage. Numbers of free school meal pupils are broadly in line with national averages. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are above national averages.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of William de Yaxley as a Church of England school are good

- High aspirations, exemplary levels of care and nurture of each individual, both adult and child, and the recognition that each is a precious child of God with their own set of talents and ambitions, result in all feeling valued and cherished.
- Good quality, well thought through opportunities for pupils to consider the needs of others less fortunate are developed very successfully through responses such as the Bishop's Lent Challenge. These enable pupils to contribute through messages, prayers and donations to the needy and the destitute across the world.
- The strong and effective partnership with the local church community and Methodist minister have upheld the school through the most challenging times by steadfast prayer and committed, stable support through involvement in both governance and worship activities at the school.

#### Areas to improve

- Develop current implicit Christian values to become more explicit and embedded within the life of the school and ensure that these are communicated effectively to all stakeholders through the website, newsletters and displays around the school. In this way all can be well-informed about how the school uses these values to develop and enrich its Christian foundation and distinctiveness.
- Raise standards in RE by agreeing assessment, tracking and differentiation procedures and increasing mentoring and support for teachers through issues identified in rigorous monitoring and evaluation.
- Increase the ability of the whole local governing body (LGB) to understand and discuss the outcomes from formal recorded monitoring visits made through receiving and discussing these at regular, discrete times on LGB agendas and ensuring that training for church school distinctiveness is accessed by all.

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

This is a school that deeply values and cherishes its Christian foundation. The trust and faith that this has engendered and embedded over a significant period of time has provided a deep well of sustenance for all members of the school community as they have passed through hugely challenging and turbulent times. Distinctively Christian values form part of the fabric of the school, shaping lives and actions. However, these are not currently explicit or sufficiently clearly expressed, which means that stakeholders do not have the range of vocabulary to express how pupils' academic development, in particular, is shaped by the core values of the school. It is clear that exceptionally high levels of care, nurture and support are provided for every child, resulting in rapidly rising levels of attainment and accelerated progress rates. Disadvantaged pupils and their families are very well supported through a wide range of interventions involving external agencies and internal programmes such as 'Thrive', aimed at supporting children with a range of social and emotional issues. Attendance is currently just below national averages, but a significant amount of work and time goes into addressing those pupils who fall into the persistent absentee category. Exclusions are only used in exceptional circumstances, resulting in three fixed term exclusions in this academic year. Pupils are proud of the additional responsibilities that they are given. They see this as a way of giving back to the community and serving others. 'It teaches us to be more independent and to respect people across the school. We have grown in confidence and we work as a team listening to other people's ideas and building relationships'. Playground buddies, head boy and girl, prefects and school councillors all wear their badges with pride. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) is good. For example, the recently formed worship leaders' group has spent time discussing areas around the school where pupils can go to be quiet and reflect. They have recently completed a 'reflective garden' and are immensely proud of their fundraising efforts to provide such a sunny sanctuary for their peers. Relationships throughout the school are based on mutual respect and concern for the well-being of others. This is exemplified very well by the recently completed Bishop's Lent Challenge. One child wrote her message of hope to a refugee family and said, 'I hope that you have love in your heart, confidence in your mind and that you find a lovely country where you can be at peace'. Effective, collaborative relationships have been built across the school, where a strong mentoring culture supports all who require additional assistance. This is particularly appreciated by newcomers to the school, who find ready support, friendship and a loving and caring Christian community into which to integrate. Pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith is strengthened through the local church's links with a school in Rwanda. This resulted in a visit to the school by Bishop Nathan from a Rwandan diocese to lead worship. Links with the local Methodist community are good, with the Methodist minister taking his turn on the rota to deliver the weekly clergy led worship. RE makes a good contribution to pupils' knowledge and understanding of the impact of religion and belief on people's lives and how it shapes their actions and concerns. It provides them with first hand experiences of how Christians, in particular, worship and practise their faith.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Newcomers to the school confirm that collective worship has a significant and central part in the life of the school. The recent development of worship leaders has demonstrated how well pupils can rise to the challenge of planning and leading worship. Not only this, but they can use these occasions to explore the purposes and impact of worship and develop their thinking and understanding of communicating a clear message to inspire and inform others. The work that the leaders have completed on the Bishop's Lent Challenge is very high quality. It demonstrates the deep levels of compassion and empathy that can be aroused, leading into positive actions to help relieve the suffering of those most needy in our society, both locally and internationally. Collective worship is currently planned using diocesan materials. Planning is not currently themed around explicit Christian values, nor does it fully utilise the expertise of the local clergy team. Weekly clergy led worship is popular with pupils. 'When the vicar comes in we learn more about the Bible in a fun way. It makes it easy to understand and if we enjoy it we are more likely to remember it.' Staff speak about collective worship bringing a sense of cohesiveness, the sharing of a common experience, bringing emotions at times ranging from spiritually moving to happy and celebratory. Pupils' singing, boosted by a large number who form part of the school choir, is very beautiful. They sing with feeling for the words and produce a wonderful act of praise and reflection. The use of prayer enhances both worship and the life of the school. The school prayer was thoughtfully written by pupils under the guidance of the vicar and incorporates the school strapline 'Toto Corde Meo' (With All Our Hearts). Further opportunities for prayer are provided through the 'Prayer Board' in the school reception area and during the school day before lunch and at the end of the day. Evidence of prayers written shows good levels of understanding of the purposes of prayer and pupils regularly use these in acts of collective worship. Pupils have an age appropriate understanding of the Trinity and can speak about the festival of Pentecost. The church is used well for the main Christian festivals and the leavers' service. Parents are encouraged to join in worship. Governors participate and monitor collective worship regularly. However, as these monitoring visits are not currently written up into reports that can be shared and discussed at LGB meetings, there is little evidence to show that they have impacted on improving worship provision.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory**

Careful scrutiny of a variety of RE outcomes across a range of age groups and ability levels within the school show that standards of attainment for the more able pupils are in line with national expectations. However, lack of differentiation of tasks results in those pupils of lower ability or other disabilities frequently being unable to complete responses within the given time and presentation of work is often less good. Progress rates are difficult to judge looking through pupils' work outcomes. This is because of too few examples of written outcomes in some classes and lack of tasks matched to pupils' ability levels. There is evidence of RE enquiry questioning stimulating good quality responses amongst the more able pupils. Teacher marking is currently too variable across classes to consistently support and guide pupils to improve their work against the lesson objectives. Links with literacy at times results in tasks being better suited to an English lesson, such as writing a precis of the Noah's Ark story. Marking, at times, tends to focus on secretarial elements of the writing outcomes. Teaching observed during the inspection is judged as satisfactory. However, some books show that pupils are exposed to good teaching and opportunities to discuss and debate their thoughts. Assessment procedures are in transition, but at present there is no system for assessing attainment and tracking progress against the taught units. This means that the school is unable to confidently and accurately report on these aspects to either parents or governors. Pupils enjoy opportunities to learn first-hand through visiting faith buildings. They were surprised on visiting a nearby mosque to discover how warmly they were welcomed. 'If we go to another country we don't want to say anything offensive. We need to learn about the rituals and respect the different religions.' Opportunities to see first-hand places such as Ely and Westminster cathedrals gives pupils' valuable opportunities to appreciate how feelings of awe and wonder can inspire worship. Some monitoring of both RE teaching and book scrutinies has taken place. However, this is not sufficiently detailed or explicit enough to guide those staff who would benefit from additional support to improve the quality of their RE teaching. RE is regarded as an important curriculum subject, being taught discretely. The RE leader is on a temporary year's contract, covering the maternity leave of the substantive RE leader. She has attended the 'Understanding Christianity' training and fed this back to staff. Some work has been undertaken by staff on the 'Incarnation' concept, although this was not seen during the inspection. Through her leadership, she has raised the profile of RE displays within classrooms. The half termly RE days are also successfully raising the profile of RE. Pupils are particularly keen to talk about their Easter stained glass windows displayed around the school. Their attitudes to RE are mainly positive. 'You learn about different religions and cultures and how to respect them. I like the time for reflection'. Good quality IT resources enable pupils to learn about other faiths and ask questions, such as during the video of the Jewish Passover meal.

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

Strong leadership is demonstrated by the senior leaders and governors to promote the Christian vision and mission statement of the school, 'May our love of God, of each other and of learning, make this school a happy, safe place, full of faith, hope and high expectations'. Leaders have risen resolutely to the challenge of raising attainment and accelerating progress, using strategies based on valuing of individuals and high expectations, coupled with appropriate support and intervention. Disadvantaged pupils flourish in an ethos of care and time allocated to meet each one's need as a precious child of God. Leaders celebrate success extremely well and pupils' self-esteem is lifted through regular praise and encouragement. Self-evaluation of SIAMS areas is broadly accurate. An action plan addressing areas for development does not currently form part of the main school improvement plan, reducing its profile. Governors have supported both the self-evaluation process and the formulation of the action plan within a small working group. However, outcomes from the group's discussions are not presented or discussed at LGB meetings. The amount of discussion on any SIAMS related issue is very limited, which restricts all LGB members being fully informed of evaluation outcomes and subsequent future plans. Governors willingly give up their time to attend collective worship, either at school or within the church building. They are very supportive of the school and actively involved with informal discussions on how to improve provision. However, there is insufficient recorded evidence of formal monitoring of either collective worship or RE. Parents interviewed were very positive about the school's church foundation. 'This school is very nurturing. Children are taught respect for right and wrong. There is a calm, inclusive feel about the school'. However, parents also said that they would like to learn more about the school values and how they could develop these further at home. The partnership with the local church community is a considerable strength. The vicar has proved a steadfast supporter and upholder of the school community through difficult times. Prayer, pastoral support and wise guidance are a few of the ways in which the school has been cherished and valued at these times. DEMAT and the diocesan team have also provided good support for the school, particularly around raising attainment and improving the quality of provision. An RE support visit and training has helped the school to see where it needs to develop its practice further. The school has a successful record of 'growing its own leaders'. This is particularly true of the higher level teaching assistant who is currently nurturing and developing the worship leaders extremely successfully.