

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

<b>The Rackham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School</b>			
<b>Address</b>	Main Street, Witchford, Ely. CB6 2HQ		
<b>Date of inspection</b>	18/June/2019	<b>Status of school</b>	VC Primary
<b>Diocese</b>	Ely	<b>URN</b>	110807

<b>Overall Judgement</b>	<b>How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Additional Judgements</b>	<b>The impact of collective worship</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Good</b>

### School context

Rackham is a primary school with 305 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below the national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national averages. Significant changes to the school's vision have been implemented since the last inspection, and a new headteacher and chair of governors have been appointed.

### The school's Christian vision

Together, with a sense of worth and a genuine concern for others, we aim to give every child the opportunity to develop and enjoy his or her maximum potential academically, socially, emotionally, physically and spiritually. Learning to love God, one another and ourselves.

### Key findings

- Leaders have developed a Christian vision and set of distinctively Christian values that are understood and supported by pupils and parents. They have begun to have an impact upon the lives of pupils and staff.
- Collective worship (CW) focuses upon the school's values. It is led by teaching staff, the headteacher and the rector, supported by pupils. However, pupils do not regularly plan or lead whole-school worship themselves.
- Good links with the local church have been established through the foundation governors and weekly involvement of the rector; however, these posts are currently vacant.
- Since the last inspection, school leaders have been developing the curriculum in order to make it more child-led and less prescriptive. Understanding Christianity has been introduced in religious education (RE), and pupils are encouraged to consider 'big' questions, to take risks and to offer their opinions in an environment of mutual respect.
- Parents see the school's teachers and leaders as being approachable and dedicated, and speak very positively about the changes they are seeing. There is a strong emphasis upon pupil and staff wellbeing which is recognised and appreciated by parents and governors.

### Areas for development

- To continue to develop a close working relationship with the local church and the diocese following the appointment of foundation governors and a new rector.
- To give pupils greater ownership of CW by providing more opportunities for them to plan and lead worship at all levels.
- To improve pupils' understanding of Christianity in the wider world, for example by building links with a school in a developing country and learning how Christians worship in other cultures and denominations.

## **How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?**

### **Inspection findings**

The leadership team and chair of governors, all appointed since the last inspection, have taken steps to deepen the Christian ethos of the school. The '5 Rs' learning values of resilience; relationships; reflectiveness; resourcefulness and risk-taking already promoted Christian values. Additional core values were introduced at the start of 2019 after consultation with the school community. Governors and leaders root these core values - faith, hope and love – in the New Testament. Although they are not yet securely embedded, the core values are reinforced and expanded on in class and in worship. The process of reviewing the curriculum, putting the values at its core, has begun. Pupils speak confidently of the impact values have on their lives. Leaves on the 'celebration tree' are added weekly by staff, praising pupils who exemplify the values. Parents say that the values promote 'a sense of grounding', help their children to feel secure and develop self-confidence.

The school is proud of its Christian foundation. Displays, newsletters and the website promote the 'distinctive Christian character' and the 'care and respect shown to everyone'. Attention is paid to spiritual development. All classrooms have Christian symbols, displays reinforcing the values and reflection areas. Diocesan funding has provided role play churches for younger pupils. Pupils sit quietly and reflect in the peace garden. Care is taken to make the hall into a special place for worship. Pupils understand personal and shared prayer. Each class has written a prayer for its own use. The rector collects class prayer boxes and shares their contents in collective worship or in Church.

In line with the vision leaders encourage growth and aspiration. Wellbeing is a priority. A family support worker advises and supports families on a range of issues. Parents who 'couldn't have been listened to more' praise staff approachability. Staff feel valued because their opinions matter. Teaching staff are involved in school self-evaluation and improvement planning. A focus on training and professional development builds self-esteem. School leaders are familiar with current thinking and key documents, liaising closely with local clergy and the diocese, and regularly attend school leaders' training and church school leaders' conferences.

Learning opportunities are highly valued. A broad and balanced curriculum is shaped by the Christian vision and all the school values. Pupils and staff work with pride and confidence. This is seen in teaching which often shows initiative and flexibility as well as in pupil-led learning. As noted by OFSTED in March 2019, all pupils make better than expected progress and achieve well.

Behaviour is generally very good. A revised behaviour code reflecting the Christian ethos is understood and followed by all. Any issues are addressed promptly, consistently and effectively. Its impact is already apparent; pupil exclusions have fallen to below the national norm and active steps are in place to reduce them still further.

Pupils have a good understanding of social and moral responsibility. They are encouraged to challenge inequality and injustice. They help and respect each other, and choose causes to support including The Down's Syndrome Association, Little People UK, Save the Children and Christian Aid. Links with a school in Gambia are being developed as a way of enhancing pupils' sense of global-awareness and cultural understanding.

Working with partners brings mutual benefits. 36 parents and members of staff recently completed a level 2 course in young people's mental health. Parents appreciate newsletters and social media which keep them well informed about their children's learning and the values they are being taught. This partnership is a significant factor in the positive attitudes, good relationships and attendance figures well above the national average, which are a feature of this school. Since the last inspection the school, diocese and local church have worked closely together to develop deeper relationships. Newly appointed foundation governors, including the rector, became, 'actively involved, they represented the Christian foundation in the school, and kept faith high profile.' They shared leadership with the headteacher on the development of the new values, supported by the diocese. These governors are moving on and the diocese is working closely with the school to replace them. Church/school liaison is seen in events such as 'tea and toast' for parents, and an after-school creative church for pupils, run weekly by one of the foundation governors.

In keeping with the vision, worship provides spiritual nourishment and opportunities to develop a relationship with God. Deliberately minimal planning ensures that themes and values are covered and that the focus is appropriately biblical and upon the life of Jesus, whilst allowing leaders to reflect their own interests and

backgrounds. Creative and inclusive approaches include reflection, singing and drama, as well as prayer and the opportunity for pupils to share their views and feelings. Staff and local clergy lead whole-school worship, with pupils in support and reading their own prayers. Class worship gives pupils some opportunities to lead. Worship at Church, and occasionally in the cathedral, develops pupils' understanding of Anglican worship and traditions; however, their understanding of the sacraments, such as the Eucharist, is insecure. Pupils have limited experience of other denominational worship styles. Worship content is monitored by the headteacher, as worship coordinator, to ensure that it is balanced, appropriate and in line with the school's policy. Governors also monitor and, in order to assess the impact of worship and give a wider sense of ownership, monitoring is currently being extended to include the views of pupils and staff.

Effective curriculum planning makes meaningful links between RE and other subjects and reinforces the vision and values. Displays following a recent RE and Art day include pupils' writing explaining why their paintings demonstrate the school values. The RE curriculum follows the Cambridgeshire Agreed Syllabus, covering Christianity and other world faiths. Standards in RE are comparable to other subjects, and moderation suggests that they are at least in line with those of other similar schools, and pupils in vulnerable groups make similar progress to their peers. Diocesan training has supported staff in their implementation of the Understanding Christianity resource. The impact can be seen in how pupils increasingly consider 'big' questions, take measured risks, and offer their opinions in an atmosphere of safety and mutual respect. Discussions are often continued at home. The RE coordinator regularly monitors standards. Support and training are offered as appropriate.

Headteacher	Bridget Harrison
Inspector's name and number	Stephen Green 809