

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Thriplow Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Address	School Lane, Thriplow, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 7RH		
Date of inspection	1 July 2019	Status of school	Academy inspected as VA. Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust
Diocese	Ely	URN	145246

Overall Judgement	Grade
How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	Good
Additional Judgement	Grade
The impact of collective worship	Good
The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Excellent

School context

Thriplow is a growing primary school with 142 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national averages. The school has been a member of the Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust (DEMAT) since December 2017. Senior leaders and the rector have been in post for more than three years, although the school is currently appointing a new assistant headteacher.

The school's Christian vision

The school aims to "shine our light before others". It aspires to be a school filled with love, demonstrating God's love by clothing themselves with kindness and striving for excellence. Pupils are encouraged to make a difference in their own lives, their families and the communities they serve.

Key findings

- The new vision is grounded in clear theology and firmly rooted in Christian narrative.
- The school works increasingly to support other schools in areas where it has a particular expertise.
- Leaders ensure the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils. As a result, academic achievement for all pupils, including those in vulnerable groups, is frequently better than in similar schools.
- The school is generally well thought of by parents and the community and has a strongly rising roll.
- A high value is placed on RE and worship. They are seen as crucial ways of developing and reinforcing the Christian vision. RE standards of teaching and learning are consistently high; pupils are inspired by it and see it as a safe place to explore their own and others' views.

Areas for development

- For RE (religious education) and other senior leaders to begin to lead innovation through close partnerships with local schools, DEMAT and the diocese.
- Enable pupils to develop a personal understanding of prayer and reflection by providing guidance, encouragement and opportunities.
- To improve pupils' understanding of the breadth of Christian tradition by providing more opportunities for them to visit the places of worship and speak to the leaders of other Christian denominations.

Wide consultation has resulted in a vision which is recognised, understood and valued by all. Although it was adopted only recently, pupils and parents speak of its impact. The focus on 'kindness' and 'making a difference' promotes respect for diversity and inclusion. Parents 'value the fact that the school has strong links with the Christian faith' whilst also teaching 'respect for other religions.' One, recently arrived from a country where education is completely secular, said 'We highly value the Christian ethos at Thriplow, and the way they teach and care for our students.' The vision and ethos are consistently reinforced via referenced quotes around the building, newsletters and the website. Classrooms have Christian symbols, displays and areas for reflection encouraging pupils' spiritual development but there is no evidence that pupils have had guidance in their use and no evidence of impact.

Wellbeing for the whole school community is a priority. In keeping with the 'school filled with love' that is part of the vision, parents describe tangible ways that the school has supported their whole families when they have needed it, and the impact that senior leaders' Christian convictions have upon the school and the wider community. Staff speak of being part of a staff family. They feel valued and supported. Their views matter and they share leadership. They were consulted over the vision and have important roles in monitoring and development. The RE/collective worship coordinator makes a substantial contribution to the SIAMS SEF. Kindness, growth and aspiration are promoted, leading to respectful relationships. Any incidents of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with quickly, fairly and appropriately, whilst ensuring that pupils are aware that they will always be given opportunities for forgiveness and reconciliation. Pupils thrive under high expectations. They are encouraged to make a difference, and are recognised and praised when they do. They help and respect each other and have a good understanding of social and moral responsibility. They challenge inequality and injustice. Through choosing charitable causes to support, such as Children in Need and toilet twinning to provide a latrine in Pakistan, they develop a sense of wider responsibility and a global perspective.

Leaders, including governors, the RE/worship coordinator and the rector, are well informed about the impact of collective worship, RE and the vision. They seek and share information, ensuring that there are good procedures in place to secure improvement. They are familiar with current Church of England thinking and regularly attend training and conferences. Diocesan support is sought, for example in implementing the 'Understanding Christianity' resource. Those with a particular expertise are beginning to lead training sessions for the academy trust. Under the headteacher, the capacity for others to lead has grown. Confidence in the team and effective succession planning has been a key part of the decision to develop the headteacher's role by allowing her to work in multiple schools from September 2019.

Partnerships are important and focused on striving for excellence. A strong relationship between the school and the local church ensures that pupils have a good understanding of Anglican traditions and sacraments. The rector has a long-standing commitment to working in school, and regularly organises a school Eucharist. Parents are partners in their children's education. They are regularly consulted through, for example, a termly question time. They praise the approachability of staff and the headteacher, who meets them regularly at the school gate. Large numbers of parents take up the invitation to share worship in school and church. Pupils' opinions are valued. They have leadership roles and model the vision. They contribute to school improvement by, for example, monitoring worship. Participation in village events, including a high-profile fund-raising daffodil weekend, develops a sense of community. This presence in the wider community is a significant factor in the growth in pupil numbers from 82 to 142 since the last inspection.

Curriculum planning reflects the vision to 'strive for excellence' and supports pupils' spiritual development. It is shaped to meet the needs of all pupils; consequently, standards of achievement and progress are high for all groups. Specific 'awe and wonder' experiences explore both the natural and created environments. These include regular use of the wild space and visits to both King's College, Cambridge, and Saint Paul's cathedral.

Worship provides spiritual nourishment and opportunities to develop a relationship with God. It is truly collective; all staff attend and no pupils are withdrawn. The focus is appropriately biblical. It plays a role in embedding the vision and Christian values, seen in pupil behaviour and relationships. Leadership is varied but does not include non-Anglican Christian denominations. Pupils have had opportunities to try planning and

leading CW but the school has decided these were not particularly effective; the lack of these leadership roles means that pupils do not have shared ownership of worship.

Provision is made for prayer throughout the day. There are prayers on display in each class for pupils to read aloud. The rector collects contributions from the prayer box in the entrance and uses them in weekly services in the church. However, there is little evidence that this encourages pupils to practice personal prayer or reflection. Pupils did not say that these were particularly important to them.

Pupils are inspired by RE and work to a high standard. The curriculum encourages pupils to 'strive for excellence', using the locally agreed syllabus which encourages enquiring minds. Pupils think deeply to address 'big' questions, and the skills they develop can be seen to impact the wider curriculum. Studies on Christianity are based upon the Understanding Christianity resources, which provides pupils with a sound understanding of Christian concepts and core beliefs. Pupils have an excellent understanding of world faiths including how faith has an impact on personal responsibility and making a difference. RE supports the Christian character of the school by giving pupils a sound understanding of Anglican sacraments, traditions and terminology, although knowledge of wider Christian traditions is limited .



The effectiveness of RE is excellent.

Monitoring records demonstrate that teaching and learning in RE is always at least good and usually excellent. Lessons and work seen during the inspection support this. Pupils have a very positive attitude towards their RE and make excellent progress. Standards are in line with and contribute to the very high academic standards found elsewhere in the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs and from vulnerable groups are given additional support when they need it, and consequently make similar progress to the rest of their peers. The most able have many opportunities to work at an advanced level, and their work reflects their interest and enthusiasm.

Headteacher

Victoria Penty

Inspector's name and number

Stephen Green 809