

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

### Roxton VA Church of England Primary School

School Lane, Roxton, Bedfordshire, MK44 3DR	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>St Albans</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Bedford
Date/s of inspection	11 January 2018
Date of last inspection	26 - 27 March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 109625
Interim headteacher	Gill Peck
Inspector's name and number	Rachel Peddie 934

#### School context

Roxton CE Primary School is a small rural school in the borough of Bedford. Previously a lower school, it is currently in transition to a full primary and since September 2017 has Year 5 pupils on roll for the first time. The school has 83 pupils on roll, which includes children in the nursery class. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion with English as an additional language, special educational needs and those for whom the school receives the pupil premium grant are all below national averages.

The school was inspected by Ofsted in October 2017 and an interim headteacher has been in post since November 2017. There is currently an interim executive board in place of the governing body and the position of vicar at the local church is vacant.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Roxton as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- Following the disappointing assessment of the school by Ofsted and recent leadership changes, the interim headteacher and interim executive board have an energy that convinces they have the capacity and commitment to move the school forward rapidly.
- The dedication of the staff to the wellbeing of all pupils means that the children feel cared for and enjoy coming to school.
- The school's Christian character and values result in children's good behaviour and positive relationships between all members of the school community.

#### Areas to improve

- Ensure the future leadership of the school establishes, articulates and embeds a clear Christian vision to underpin the school's work to improve its effectiveness, through robust and accurate self-evaluation, action planning and monitoring.
- Introduce and embed a clear process of planning, monitoring and evaluation for collective worship to place it central to the lives of the school community.
- Provide opportunities to involve pupils in the planning and delivery of collective worship so that they understand the place and relevance of worship in a faith community.
- Develop effective subject leadership in religious education (RE) to include robust processes for monitoring and evaluation to improve standards of teaching and learning.

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

There is a clear sense of community at Roxton school with a genuine warmth between staff and pupils. The Christian character and chosen values underpin the school ethos and children, staff and parents recognise the impact these have on their daily lives. These values are evident in some areas of the school through display and artefacts, such as the tree in the main entrance on which children's achievements are celebrated. Pupils can name the school's values such as courage, generosity and compassion and can talk about these in general terms, for example 'honesty means not lying' and 'respect means being kind'. Pupils can describe how the values affect their lives; one child explained 'they teach us to treat others as we want to be treated'. However, they are not yet able to articulate these as distinctively Christian or make clear links to biblical teachings or with reference to Jesus.

Values-inspired good behaviour and enjoyment of school mean attendance is above average. The children feel well cared for and speak positively about their friendships and about the way the adults 'help them sort out any problems'. As one child described 'everyone here is like in one big bundle together – we stick up for each other'. Relationships between staff and children are strong and parents are very supportive of the school's Christian foundation. They describe how the school's ethos and 'family feel' mean that their children are happy and how they as parents are made to feel welcome in the school community.

The Christian character and school values contribute to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils, particularly the moral and social elements which are evident in the way pupils can talk about behaviour, choices and relationships in school. At present provision for pupils' spiritual understanding and cultural awareness are underdeveloped.

Pupils' academic achievement has been variable over a period of time and is currently well below national expectations with a significant proportion of pupils not making sufficient progress in their learning. The school staff and very recently appointed leadership structure are committed to ensuring that standards are raised for all pupils, led by a clear Christian vision for the school's future development. Despite a period of turbulence since the recent Ofsted inspection, there is a strong sense of resilience and shared commitment to moving the school forwards. As one member of staff explained, 'we will be united as a team and I am excited for the journey ahead'.

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

Pupils behave well in collective worship and listen respectfully to stories and discussions. They participate willingly in the different elements of worship, especially the singing. Currently the use of distinctive features of Christian traditions and Anglican practice in worship is underdeveloped although the children have responded positively towards the recent introduction of a lit candle as a focal point. This has created a greater sense of worship with children saying things like 'when the candle is lit it means that God is with us'. At present collective worship is referred to as 'assembly' which is limiting the children's recognition of it as an act of Christian worship. Whilst they appreciate it as an important part of the school day for all the school to be together, their involvement is generally passive. Planning for collective worship provides a basic overview of themes and values. Statutory requirements are met but there is no system to gather and utilise any feedback about the impact of worship. The very recently appointed and able collective worship leader has a very clear understanding of how to improve and develop worship so that it becomes more central to the lives of the children. Worship includes Bible stories and links to the school's values. The children can identify some well-known Bible stories and the message they give but can not yet make the link between biblical teaching and their own lives. Pupils have some understanding of the life of Jesus but their knowledge of the Christian understanding of God as three in one is weak.

Close links with the parish church next door means that the school has been able to hold services for the main Christian festivals such as harvest, Christmas and Easter. Pupils talk positively about these occasions showing some understanding of church worship. As the church currently does not have a vicar in post, it is difficult for strong links to be built. However, the children and parents spoke with enthusiasm about the recent Christingle service and the churchwarden is committed to maintaining links with the school during this period of instability.

Pupils' spiritual development is supported through the use of prayer in collective worship and at lunchtimes. Some classrooms have well-planned reflection areas which enhance this further, enabling pupils to express their own thoughts and prayers. The inconsistency of this provision means not all children benefit from the same opportunities.

All teaching staff are confident to lead collective worship and until recently, a regular worship was held in the church. At times, pupils have the opportunity to be actively involved in collective worship and they particularly enjoy the fortnightly 'Open The Book' session where they can take part in the drama. They enjoy helping and volunteering during worship but have not yet been involved in planning and delivering independent pupil-led worship.

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

Whilst some aspects of RE are good in some classes, this is not yet consistent across the school. Over their time in the school most children make satisfactory progress in RE though and generally achieve in line with expectations. However, there is a lack of challenge for the most able pupils meaning that these children do not attain as highly as they could. The work in children's books does not consistently show clear evidence of work being matched to the abilities of different children with, in many cases, all children completing the same tasks. Pupils carry out their tasks diligently in RE lessons but do not show enthusiasm towards the subject consistently across the school. Pupils' books show that there is some overlap between RE and personal, social & health education (PSHE) and the religious elements are not always explicit. As a result, children's understanding of some religious concepts are underdeveloped and the extent to which RE lessons enhance their SMSC development is limited.

Whilst pupils' work in books is marked by teachers, this is of an inconsistent quality across the school and some pupils do not receive sufficient feedback relating to their understanding in RE. Whilst some procedures for teacher assessment are in place, the outcomes are not used systematically to inform future planning. Monitoring and evaluation of RE through lesson observations and book scrutiny has not been sufficiently rigorous to identify areas for improvement. In lessons, children behave respectfully and engage with the learning well. However, insufficient use of open-ended tasks with enquiry and reflection skills means pupils are not always able to demonstrate the full depth of their understanding. Pupils have a basic understanding of Christianity and know the key times of the Christian calendar of Christmas and Easter. Older pupils can also explain the season of Lent. Teaching staff have recently trained to use the new 'Understanding Christianity' units and these have been incorporated into the planning overview, but it is too early to evaluate the impact of this. Pupils also have some understanding of other world faiths, particularly Judaism and can recall some key facts about Islam. However, teaching does not yet ensure that pupils have sufficient understanding of different faith communities. There have been opportunities to enhance RE with a '3 faiths tour' trip in the past and, more recently, 'wow days' but the impact of these has not been evaluated.

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

New arrangements for leadership and management of Roxton School are in the very early stages following the school's Ofsted inspection in October 2017. The interim headteacher and interim executive board, formed to replace the governing body, have been in post for half a term. Consequently, there has been a very short time in which to address the issues identified. This means that the judgement of inadequate leadership and management reflects its effectiveness during the period since the last SIAMS inspection in 2013. However, despite the short time available in which to establish effective leadership, there is very convincing evidence that the new leadership structure has the capacity and commitment to drive the school forwards rapidly. Those involved have quickly identified the school's strengths and weaknesses and have a strategic plan for improvement in place with some key actions already addressed in full.

Whilst self-evaluation and school development planning were carried out, these processes have not been rigorous enough, nor founded on a secure evidence base. As a result, the self-evaluation available is inaccurate and does not identify any of the areas for development required to improve pupil-achievement, well-being or SMSC development. Areas for development raised at the last SIAMS inspection have not been addressed and the interim leadership is very aware of the need to action these.

Previous leadership arrangements have not secured or articulated a clear vision for the effectiveness of the school as a church school. Governors have not been involved in the planning, monitoring or evaluation of the school's vision, Christian distinctiveness, collective worship or RE. As a result, they have been unable to hold school leaders to account effectively. Whilst a Christian ethos and values have been recognised as important to the school, the clear Christian vision underpinning this has not been fully developed or understood.

Parents, the church and the wider community are supportive of the school's work and contribute to the life of the school where possible. However, this is not yet regular or sustained enough to enable pupils to fully understand diversity in local, national and global communities. Leadership in collective worship and RE has not been sufficiently effective to identify development areas and bring about improvements. However, the staff responsible for these areas have a clear understanding of the areas to address and have the capacity and drive to do this successfully. The school has engaged with the diocese through staff training and support, including a SIAMS health check in the early part of the school year. Whilst the issues raised at the health check were not addressed in self-evaluation or development plans, the new leadership is very aware of the need to incorporate this information into their future action plans. The diocese is providing effective support for the school during this period of instability through its representation on the interim executive board. The support and understanding this brings is fundamental to establishing a clear Christian vision to underpin the school's future as it embarks on this next phase in its journey.