

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

### **Kessingland Church of England Primary Academy**

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| Field Lane, Kessingland, Lowestoft NR33 7QA |  |
| <b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>       | <b>Good</b>                                      |
| <b>Diocese</b>                              | <b>Norwich</b>                                   |
| Previous SIAMS inspection grade             | None   |
| Date of academy conversion                  | September 2016                                   |
| Name of multi-academy trust                 | Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust |
| Date of inspection                          | 1 December 2016                                  |
| Type of school and unique reference number  | Primary Academy 141172                           |
| Headteacher                                 | Adrian Crossland                                 |
| Inspector's name and number                 | Stephen Green 809                                |

#### **School context**

The academy came into being in September 2014. Although the previous school's last SIAS inspection was outstanding, it was judged inadequate by OFSTED in 2013, prompting the change to academy status within the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust (DNEAT). Both the headteacher and incumbent were appointed in 2015. Since the school became an academy it has had a very high staff turnover with 22 new staff members. The academy is in a coastal location near Lowestoft that includes several pockets of high deprivation. 40% of pupils attract pupil premium funding and 21% have special educational needs.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Kessingland as a Church of England academy are good**

- The academy has worked hard to improve relationships with parents and the community, and this is now beginning to make a noticeable impact.
- The academy's commitment to its Christian values is very strong, and has led to significant improvements in pupils' attitudes and behaviour.
- Senior leaders have worked hard to develop a strong staff team. This work has had a strong impact upon developing staff morale and wellbeing, and maintaining the staff's commitment to enthusiastically support further school improvement.

#### **Areas to improve**

- To increase pupils' understanding of and respect for other faiths, cultures and denominations by arranging a variety of visitors from different backgrounds, and by providing pupils with the opportunity to visit different places of worship.
- To involve parents more, by encouraging them to join pupils in collective worship more regularly (both in school and when they visit the church), and by establishing a formal system for collecting their views on worship and the school ethos.
- To increase pupils' ownership of collective worship by providing opportunities for them to plan and lead it themselves.

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

The academy's Christian commitment is immediately evident to visitors to the school. Its values are displayed prominently in shared areas and individual classrooms. They are recognised and understood by pupils and parents, and consistently developed across the whole academy.

The academy draws pupils from a community which has many pockets of special need, including a site for Travellers. In the past, this has had a strong effect upon behaviour and achievement. The formation of the academy and the appointment of a new senior leadership team prompted a review of its values and the way it encourages pupils to behave. New and distinctively Christian values were arrived at by consensus following discussions with staff, parents, students and governors. Displays maintain the high profile of these and include biblical references to link the values to Christian teaching. Pupils explore these in collective worship (CW) and religious education (RE), and express their thoughts about them in reflective journals. Exploration of the academy's Christian values in collective worship and RE allows pupils to make connections with their own experiences as well as with reference to the Bible, and has a significant impact upon pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. This has led to the improving standards of behaviour which parents and staff have noted.

Pupils come from a variety of backgrounds, many of which are very challenging. The academy is very proud of its student and family support group, (SaFS), and parents and governors speak very highly of its work. A family support lead meets parents every morning and liaises with other members of staff as appropriate. Pupils who are unable to access education full time within a class situation have a dedicated room to work in and their own staff. In keeping with the academy's inclusive ethos, the aim is always to reintegrate pupils as soon as is practical and possible. Young carers have been identified, and they are supported and encouraged by a delegated member of staff. The academy has an area ('called The Ark as it is a place of safety') where pupils can go during breaks and lunchtimes for additional support, or for quiet reflection.

The headteacher and his staff have made a sustained and concerted attempt to build relationships with parents and pupils, and the effects of this are to be seen in improved pupil attitudes and behaviour, and a greater willingness by parents to become involved in the academy. The Christian commitment of the staff is particularly evident in the way they approach misbehaviour in a consistent yet forgiving manner, and this is recognised and appreciated by the parents. One parent said that 'you can see the school changing now. It is really welcoming and friendly, and there is more communication.' Another stated that the staff 'want to help you. They have time for you.'

Pupils recognise the importance of RE, and senior staff speak of the important role it has in extending pupils' understanding of the academy's core values and reinforcing its ethos. The academy recently held a multi-faith day as a first step in developing pupils' understanding of other faiths and denominations, and has begun to make links with leaders from different faith groups. There are plans in place to continue these valuable developments by arranging opportunities for pupils to visit other places of worship, and to invite representatives of different faiths and denominations to speak and lead worship. This aims to develop the richness of worship experiences as well as giving pupils a better empathy and respect for those who have different beliefs and come from different cultures.

The academy encourages pupils to pray and to be reflective, and each child has a reflective journal where they can develop their responses to the academy's values, and can reflect upon the themes being developed in collective worship and RE. Each classroom has a prayer corner where individual thoughts and prayers are displayed, alongside posters, Bibles and candles. This has a direct impact upon pupils' understanding of the academy's values, and is a significant contributor to improving pupil behaviour.

The academy has good links with the local church and visits it termly to celebrate major festivals in the Christian calendar. The incumbent visits the academy every week to lead collective worship, and says that 'the school is very effective at enabling the children to express themselves in prayerful and spiritual ways.' Church elders have a workshop every week to listen to pupils reading. The church has a display area linked to the academy, and regularly includes it in its prayers. A joint church and academy project called FISH has recently been established to provide food and companionship for members of the community during the holidays.

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

Collective worship is inclusive and well supported by academy staff. Signing when they sing is an example of their desire to include all pupils in worship, and some parents say they are particularly appreciative of this. Pupils are enthusiastic and attentive in worship, and enjoy the opportunities they are given to take minor roles in leading it. Those pupils spoken to had a positive view of worship. 'Collective worship' one pupil wrote, 'is where everyone comes together and shares ideas and prayers. (It is) where we can say thank you and ask God for help.' Another said worship was where 'all the school meet as a family.' Members of the teaching staff all lead worship, and are joined on a weekly basis by the incumbent. Planning is built around the academy's Christian values and the traditions and festivals from the Christian calendar, and has an appropriate biblical core and focus upon the life of Jesus Christ.

Parents are encouraged to join collective worship on Fridays, when there is also a celebration of pupils' achievements during the week. These are becoming increasingly popular and are evidence of the developing relationship between the academy, parents and the community. Pupils visit the village church approximately once a term to celebrate major festivals in the church year. However, parents do not join them and with the exception of a visit to the cathedral by older children, pupils do not yet have the opportunity to visit other places of worship. Senior leaders have identified the need to arrange a wider variety of leaders for CW, so that worship better reflects the different cultures and denominations within the Christian faith. The Multi-faith day was a valuable start in this process, with, amongst representatives of other faiths, Roman Catholics and Quakers talking to the pupils. Parents speak very positively about the importance of prayer and reflection to their children, and some said their children have started to pray at home. Pupils have an appropriate understanding of the Holy Trinity. Parents are asked annually for their views on a wide variety of issues including feeling safe and whether the academy is approachable and listens to their concerns. Outcomes of this consultation are displayed in the foyer and are very positive. However, although staff and visitors monitor worship, there is no formal system to record their views, and there is at present no monitoring by parents. Pupils provide feedback in their reflective journals which contributes to the accurate picture senior staff have of the elements of worship that pupils find to be most engaging.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the academy as a church academy is outstanding**

All leaders share a very strong commitment to develop the opportunities pupils have whilst at the academy. Leaders are determined that their very strong Christian vision should be seen and should impact upon the sort of academy Kessingland is. Consequently, pupils know they are loved, understood and will, when necessary be forgiven and supported. Governors and all members of staff are fully committed to this Christian vision, and it is recognised and highly valued by parents. The academy's core Christian values are understood by all and underpin policies and planning across the whole curriculum. They can be recognised in the way the school is run and in the way staff and pupils relate to each other. Behaviour is improving as a result of the academy's core values, and as it does so this is having a positive impact upon academic results and the pride pupils now have in their academy. Parents and governors speak enthusiastically about the strong vision that senior leaders have, rooted in their Christian values. This is clearly demonstrated by the way they relate to pupils and their very real desire to improve relationships with parents. One member of staff pointed out that they 'refuse to give up on hard to reach parents simply because they are hard to reach'. Leaders fully recognise the particular challenges involved in teaching many of the children in their care and have established a wellbeing committee to support staff when necessary. A large part of this role is determining the timing of further school improvements so that the pace of change is manageable and sustainable. Staff morale is good, and the incumbent described the staff as 'a family within the family.' The incumbent speaks of her developing role leading worship, and values her strong and mutually supportive relationship with senior leaders. Governors are kept well informed by the headteacher, and have a strong role in monitoring and evaluation as well as strategic planning. DNEAT has ensured there have been many training opportunities available for staff and governors, and has provided opportunities for co-ordinators to network with colleagues in other trust schools. The chair of governors was recently appointed by the trust. DNEAT monitor standards of attainment and a representative of the trust stated that they recognise that 'the quality of teaching and learning in the academy has moved on apace.' They arranged for the academy to join the Edison school leadership project and spoke of the considerable progress the academy made as a result of participation.

The senior leadership team has a strong focus upon teaching skills, pupil attainment and behaviour, and can demonstrate strong and continuing improvements in each area since the formation of the academy. Pupil attitudes and behaviour are now generally good. Where they are not, instances are dealt with fairly and consistently, and pupils know that, in keeping with the academy's Christian ethos, there will be opportunities to be forgiven and to make a fresh start. The number of short-term exclusions has fallen significantly since the present headteacher was appointed. The governors greatly appreciate the dedication and Christian commitment of the headteacher and his team, and ascribe much of the academy's growing success to their consistency and vision. One governor described the 'warm, woolly blanket (that the staff) put around needy children. They work with the whole family from day one.' They also spoke about the way academy leaders have encouraged community cohesion, with every group having value. They pointed to strenuous and successful efforts that have been made to integrate all children into the school and to build relationships with their parents.

All groups have the opportunity to contribute to the process of self-evaluation and planning for further academy development, including parents, teachers, DNEAT and the governors. Planning accurately recognises the academy's strengths and pupil performance. It sets realistic targets for development and draws in support when appropriate.