



Castle Acre Primary Academy	Back Lane, Castle Acre, Kings Lynn PE32 2AR
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Norwich
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Good
Date of academy conversion	1 March 2016
Name of multi-academy trust	Diocese of Norwich Education Academies Trust
Date of inspection	7 October 2016
Date of last inspection	8 July 2011
School's unique reference number	121030
Executive Headteacher	Kelly Scott
Inspector's name and number	Richard Liddington 816

School context

This is a small primary school serving the village of Castle Acre and the surrounding area of Norfolk. The school's leadership team has seen significant change in recent years. The current headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in September 2015 and September 2014 respectively. To further improve its effectiveness the school joined the Nar Valley Federation in 2013 and converted to an academy in March 2016. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors hold responsibility for leading and managing all three schools within the federation.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Castle Acre Primary Academy as a Church of England school are good:

- The Christian vision of the leadership team is evident for all to see. The ability to fulfil this vision has been significantly improved through their recent affiliation into The Nar Valley Federation.
- Christian values underpin all aspects of school life and this results in a highly inclusive and caring community, where pupils' attitudes and behaviour and the relationships between all members of the school community are exemplary.
- The personal and spiritual development of pupils has a very high priority in the life of the school. This leads to pupils feeling secure, confident and able to articulate their thoughts and feelings in a mature manner.

Areas to improve

- Further embed the school's Christian values by developing more structured, cross curricular links between these values and the wider curriculum.
- Improve the children's awareness of Anglican tradition by developing their knowledge and understanding of the seasons of the church year.
- Further utilise professional development opportunities to improve staff confidence and skills in the delivery of collective worship and religious education (RE).

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

Castle Acre's distinctive Christian character is obvious to all visitors and pupils. A range of displays, the school website, and the children all clearly express a genuine pride in being part of a church school. The Christian ethos is based on a recently revised set of core Christian values of being; respectful, responsible, courageous, thankful and hopeful. These values underpin all aspects of school practice, particularly adult / pupil relationships, and lead to an extremely positive, inclusive and effective learning environment. The school's distinctive Christian character also drives a deep desire to ensure the highest possible levels of academic achievement whilst ensuring the personal development and wellbeing of every child in the school. Although small cohort sizes makes the interpretation of achievement data difficult, outcomes for pupils have been below national expectations. Recent work with the academy trust and federation has led to an improvement in the quality of teaching and progress among the children. Careful modelling by staff helps ensure children are able to articulate their thoughts and feelings in a confident and expressive manner and therefore feel secure at school. The school demonstrates a deep commitment to pupil voice and also works very closely with parents, the church and other organisations to ensure a bespoke response is given to the needs of pupils and their families. As a result, pupils and families feel loved, needs are addressed and attendance and behaviour are both very good. Relationships among pupils are also exemplary. Of particular significance is the blurring of the age related boundaries normally associated with children's peer groups, with children happily and voluntarily supporting each other in a wide range of settings. Pupils' commitment to the value of responsibility is also reflected in their excellent support for a number of different charities, many of which they identify through an annual ballot and both collectively and individually fundraise for. RE has a high priority in the life of the school and makes a good contribution to the Christian character of the school by giving pupils opportunities to explore the Christian faith and to compare it to other world faiths. Pupils state that this is important in helping to "understand and appreciate" pupils and other members of the community who are not Christians. A range of cross curricular learning opportunities, ensure children's RE and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) are well developed. Links between the curriculum and the school's Christian values are, however, not sufficiently explicit.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.

Worship is an integral part of the life of Castle Acre school and children demonstrate a very good understanding of its religious and spiritual significance. Many younger children for example describe the hall as "church" and they also talk enthusiastically about how worship enables them to "think about God, to thank him and to say sorry for the things that we've done wrong". Acts of worship are wholly Christian in nature and planned using the Values for Life as well as other Christian material. This helps ensure the children have a very good understanding of the relationship between the Bible, the teachings of Jesus and their own behaviour and relationships. Pupils provide numerous examples of how the exploration of values has helped them to "make better decisions and become better people". They talk confidently for example about how stories such as David's slaying of Goliath, helped them to be courageous in different situations and how stories relating to responsibility and honesty helped them to face up to mistakes that they had made. A clearly defined programme and structure to acts of worship helps ensure the children develop good levels of knowledge and understanding of Christian traditions and they are able to talk in depth and maturity about their significance to the lives of Christians. They do not, however, demonstrate any real understanding of the Church calendar, its significance to Christian festivals or the lives of saints. Acts of worship are delivered by different members of staff, several visiting denominational groups and most significantly groups of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 children. Pupils demonstrate significant confidence and ability in their weekly planning and delivery of collective worship and this helps to ensure high levels of engagement and enjoyment of a range of different styles of worship. Pupils confidently utilise opportunities within both collective worship and their general school day to pray and reflect. Quiet areas within each classroom are regularly used by pupils to consider their work, behaviour and personal emotions. An outdoor reflection area has also been established in memory of an ex member of staff and

flowers had been independently placed in this area by children at the time of the inspection. Children talk enthusiastically about how and why they use this area during break times. One child stated that "God is near you when you pray" and that praying helps him to "calm down when he is angry." Focused monitoring of collective worship is undertaken each half term and involves staff, governors and pupils. This has led to improvements to the central attributes of worship, increasing, in particular, the children's understanding of the Holy Trinity. Special arrangements have been put in place to ensure the inclusion of a child with SEN for the main part of the worship. No parents currently withdraw their children from collective worship.

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

Leaders have a strong Christian vision for the further improvement of the school. This is summarised in their vision statement that "Through our Christian values we are an inclusive federation which strives to; build lasting memories, increase life opportunities, forge harmony not just happiness, promote and develop the importance of relationships, embrace failure as well as success and develop resilience to support our pupils to face an ever changing future." The revised set of values has resulted in improved consistency of character across the federation and increased the opportunity to effectively embed these values. A clear policy and timetable is in place to monitor the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school and this involves a wide range of staff and governors. A recent governors' surgery, for example, helped to identify a number of relevant priorities on the school improvement plan. These include the need to improve the technology used for leading collective worship and further developing staff leadership skills. Financial and practical support has been agreed to implement these improvements. Ill health has led to the limited involvement of the incumbent in recent months. He is missed by everyone connected with the school. All governors have undertaken to uphold the school's Christian foundation however and their recent decision to federate with two other church schools and convert to a Diocese of Norwich Educational Academy reflects their ambition for the continuing improvement of the school, whilst enhancing its Christian foundation. This development has already significantly increased the school's capacity to improve, and also resulted in more widely distributed and effective leadership. Parents are highly complementary of the inclusive nature of the school. They talk particularly positively about the advocacy and support for vulnerable children and their families and the "little things" that the school does that are beyond those they would normally expect of a school. They are aware of the revised core values and appreciate the fact that they are inclusive of people of different faith and no faith backgrounds. They also talk enthusiastically about the impact that collective worship and RE have had on their children outside of school. One child for example recently described to her grandfather how she was having "private collective worship" when reading her Bible in her bedroom. The school is seen as a central part of the ministry of the local church. Acts of worship and major festivals are all regularly celebrated within the church and pupils regularly contribute to church displays and events, including the annual Remembrance Day service. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the wider church is successfully developed through the RE curriculum and a range of both curricular and extra-curricular activities, including their regular participation in Cathedral days. RE and collective worship are effectively led across the federation by an identified teacher who is well resourced and supported. Diocesan led training has equipped her with the knowledge and skills both to monitor the effectiveness and plan for improved provision and outcomes within these areas. Staff and children have benefited from recent training on the 'Understanding Christianity' programme. Leaders have identified the need to further develop staff confidence in the delivery of collective worship and their skills in the use of enquiry based learning in RE. Arrangements are already in place for diocesan led training to achieve this. Provision for both RE and collective worship meets the National Society Statement of Entitlement.

SIAMS report October 2016. Castle Acre Primary Academy. Castle Acre PE32 2A