

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Bickerton Holy Trinity Church of England (VC) Primary School

Long Lane, Bickerton, Malpas, Cheshire SY14 8AP

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Chester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Cheshire East
Name of multi-academy trust / federation [delete as appropriate]	N/A
Date/s of inspection	29 September 2017
Date of last inspection	7 December 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 111268
Headteacher	Paul Sweetnam
Inspector's name and number	Joanne Abram NumberTBC

School context

The school serves a wide rural catchment area in East Chester. There are currently 147 pupils on roll which is considerably less than the national average of 210 in a one form entry school. The children are taught in five mixed aged classes across the key stages. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs is below the national average. There have been no significant changes since the last SIAS inspection. The school is linked to the neighbouring Holy Trinity church.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bickerton Holy Trinity C E Primary as a Church of England school are good

- The headteacher provides strong Christian leadership supported by the deputy headteacher, staff and governors who live and breathe the school's mission statement which extends beyond the school into the local community.
- Every child has a developing understanding of God's love as well as the understanding that they are valued and respected as a member of the school family and the wider community that the school serves.
- The school's Christian values influence its approach to inclusion, resulting in significant impact on the lives and achievements of all pupils, regardless of ability or background.
- The school's culture of enquiry based learning, reflection, and celebration of diversity enables the pupils to become responsible citizens who are increasingly confident and self-aware.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that the school's Christian values are more explicit so that all members of the school community can articulate them and relate them directly to the teachings of Christ.
- To formalise the way that collective worship is evaluated to inform governors and lead to further improvement.
- Improve the strategic development of collective worship by involving pupils in the planning and evaluation to give them greater ownership and support their leadership skills and spiritual development.

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

The school's mission statement, 'Respect for oneself and others is central to our mission of giving every child in our school the highest standard of education and care within a Christian community' informs everything the school does. The Christian ethos is pertinent to the exceptionally strong relationships within this close-knit school. Everyone is treated as an individual and yet is an integral part of the community. The staff and governors share common beliefs of how the pupils should be treated and valued. The happiness and wellbeing of all stakeholders are paramount and the ethos explicitly contributes to pupils' achievement, progress and wellbeing. The distinctively Christian values of caring, respect, truthfulness, love and forgiveness underpin the school's practices and policies and foster a sense of community that reaches beyond the school gates. They can be expressed by most members of the school community although not directly attributed to the teachings of Christ.

There is an implicit understanding of spirituality amongst the leaders and opportunities are being developed for all learners to explore their own spirituality. The teachers actively encourage children to develop their understanding of God through enquiry based learning in religious education lessons where big questions are posed, leading onto further smaller questions where children explore their own faith and beliefs. This supports the pupils' development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding and a respect for diversity and difference. The pupils have the confidence to express alternative viewpoints and can articulate why they might not believe a particular doctrine. Pupils recognise the importance of religious education in their lives and understand that prayer is powerful and meaningful. They are developing an understanding that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith.

The school actively promotes good attendance. There have been no exclusions since the last inspection as the pupils' behaviour is a strength of the school. The behaviour policy is designed to support the way that all members of the school can live and work together in a way that reflects the school's mission statement. They support a number of charities such as Red Nose Day and Water Aid, and have a good understanding of their responsibilities towards local, national and global communities. A wide range of additional activities and strong links with Holy Trinity church impacts positively on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils and their families are well known to the staff and teachers enjoy working in such a tight-knit community where they feel valued.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship has a high profile and the pupils can communicate how it is important in the life of the school. It is engaging and relevant and the pupils' response to it is very positive. Children gain a good understanding of Christian teaching because Christian values, the life of Jesus, Bible stories, religious festivals and the church calendar regularly feature in worship. Social and moral issues arising within school are also addressed through collective worship and linked to Christian values. Good use is made of prayer, Bible readings, Christian symbols, reflection and music to nurture pupils' spiritual development and sense of community. The children are aware of some Anglican readings and responses which are used occasionally, and are being developed along with other Christian traditions.

The evaluation of collective worship is informal, as children's views are currently sought only through discussion. There are examples of how the teachers have acted on the children's views, such as the introduction of more modern songs in worship. High quality resources are used as a basis for collective worship planning which is carried out by the staff and clergy. However this provides pupils with few opportunities to contribute. Pupil involvement in the planning, delivery and evaluation of collective worship is identified in the worship action plan as an area for development for the future.

The acts of worship create an atmosphere of spiritual depth whilst still being relevant to the full age range of the school. The centrality of prayer is evident in worship and beyond as pupils talked of writing prayers for a member of staff who had gone through personal trauma. Pupils have a good understanding of prayer being used personally as well as collectively throughout the school day with class prayers being said and prayer boxes used in classrooms. The pupils have an awareness of the Trinitarian nature of God and can talk about it with some level of understanding but this is still in its infancy. Confirmation classes delivered to all of year six pupils within school facilitates an encouraging number of pupils to be confirmed. The school and church's commitment to supporting the pupils' Christian faith and personal spirituality is so profound, that the pupils attend Holy Trinity church for all major Christian festivals and an increasing number of other services for example, Mothering Sunday and Ash Wednesday. The vicar leads collective worship on a weekly basis which reflects his commitment to celebrate and further develop the strong links between the church and school.

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

The headteacher's strong Christian leadership and promotion of self and mutual respect based on Christian values is very effectively supported by the deputy headteacher, staff and school governors. There is a clear commitment to providing all pupils, regardless of their background and ability, with the very best education firmly rooted in a Christian ethos. All pupil groups are given equal focus and priority, and as such, the school performs very well and achievement is good or better by the end of Key Stage 2. The strengths of the school are attributed to the strong Christian ethos where all stakeholders are genuinely valued and cared for. Relationships are key to the success of this small, close-knit community where all staff seem to go that extra mile to ensure that their pupils are happy and developing well.

RE is driven by a very passionate and knowledgeable subject leader who is in a very strong position to support the teachers with planning and delivery of the RE curriculum. Working in partnership with the senior leaders, governors and the clergy, the RE and collective worship leader has a key role. She ensures that RE, collective worship and the wider curriculum are central to the school's teaching of SMSC and Christian values and contribute to the pupils' attitudes and behaviour. These values also influence key policies and practices. The headteacher is leading the whole school on a personal journey of self-awareness where independent thought and expression are actively encouraged. Staff openly stated how working at this school has had an impact on their attitudes and actions. One teacher shared how she was compelled to provide food and money for a homeless person in response to an act of collective worship on the theme of generosity.

The headteacher spoke passionately about how the school goes above and beyond to support families in any way they can. Parents are listened to and time is taken to allay any concerns they may have. This was strongly reinforced by parents who stated that 'nothing was too much trouble' for the headteacher and his staff. Parents speak of their profound respect for the headteacher in particular, and all teachers and support staff who make their children feel valued and cared for. Speaking about the headteacher, one parent said, 'He doesn't look for the faults, but he looks for what is good about our children.' Some parents spoke of the marked transformation in their children's happiness and wellbeing as they moved them to the school because of its positive reputation. Parents do not overtly attribute the support provided to the school's Christian ethos but they do express how the links between church and school help children to develop good morals and a desire to care for each other. The school's 'open-door' policy enables parents to feel valued and welcomed.

The governors take their role very seriously, recruiting staff who fully support the school's Christian vision and ethos. The governing body and senior leaders have clear areas of focus in the school development plan and they use self-evaluation to drive forward school improvement. Governors are kept informed of the school's performance and distinctively Christian character through the headteacher's termly report. They receive an annual verbal report from the RE and collective worship leader who works closely with the senior leaders and clergy to ensure the Christian character of the school is continually developing. Although governors are kept informed of action plans, their involvement in the self-evaluation for RE and collective worship is limited. Procedures for holding the school to account for the quality of teaching and learning in RE and the impact of collective worship are very informal.

Outcomes for pupils in RE are not recorded and reported to governors. However, governors are well equipped to hold the school to account through questioning and in providing appropriate challenge during governors' and subject leaders' meetings. In addition, they offer their full support to the senior leadership team and teaching staff. The chair of governors actively gets involved in the day to day life of the school, meeting with the headteacher on a weekly basis. All governors invest in the wellbeing of the staff and pupils. There is mutual benefit in the links between the church and school through prayerful support and church attendance, both being the hub of the surrounding community.