

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Bridgemere Church of England Primary School	
Bridgemere Lane, Bridgemere, Nantwich, CW5 7PX	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Diocese	Chester
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Local authority	Cheshire East
Date of inspection	1st February 2018
Date of last inspection	April 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 111343
Executive Headteacher Head of School	Beverley Dolman Kate Appleby
Inspector's name and number	Stephen Burrow 622

School context

Bridgemere CE Primary School is a smaller than average primary school. The majority of pupils are White British with few from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium is lower than the national average as is the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. A National Leader of Education provided interim leadership when the previous headteacher left and is currently supporting a new head of school, who has recently been appointed. The school is also receiving additional support through collaboration with an Academy Trust.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bridgemere CofE as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- The executive headteacher and head of school, together with a reformed governing body, have brought stability to the school after a time of uncertainty. Together they demonstrate a determination and capacity for improvement, giving clear Christian direction to its work.
- A strong sense of community and belonging pervades the school, where explicit Christian values drive an ethos of care and nurture, ensuring that pupils are valued, listened to and treated as individuals.
- The school has a strong commitment to work in partnership with the local church and enjoys many positive links with other church schools and the wider community. The vicar, curate and church members are important and valued members of the wider school team.
- Supportive relationships between all members of the school community have generated resilience during recent periods of change and uncertainty.

Areas to improve

- To ensure that monitoring and evaluation of religious education (RE) are part of the school's self-evaluation process. This will enable an accurate understanding of the impact of developments and contribute effectively to strategic planning.
- To develop the use of a consistent assessment system to support learning and teaching in RE. This is so that accurate assessment information is used to inform planning and support pupil progress.
- Improve opportunities for spiritual development across the curriculum, especially through the further enhancement of classroom RE and reflection areas and the planned creation of an outdoor quiet area.
- Extend the pupils' involvement in collective worship, giving them appropriate independence in planning, presentation and evaluation, thereby enhancing their leadership skills.

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

The school's Christian character results in a happy and caring learning environment where there is a strong sense of community and belonging. The school motto, 'A small rural school with a big Christian heart,' is lived out. The development and potential of the whole child is rooted in the belief that each person is special in God's eyes. One pupil said, 'Our school is a church school where we like to learn about God.' The caring Christian ethos enables and encourages the secure partnership that exists between pupils, staff, parents, the church and the wider community. God's love is demonstrated through strong relationships based on genuine care and compassion for pupils and their families. These relationships play an important part in pupils' personal development with adults providing good role models in displaying the school's Christian values. One teacher said, 'Our close relationships got us through the difficult times.'

The school is working hard to improve attainment. As a result, pupils are becoming more responsible learners who are actively involved in their learning. This is helping them to make improved progress as a result of their increased confidence. Pupils' efforts and achievements are acknowledged and celebrated. The school's focus on a different value each half term is effective in ensuring pupils have a sound understanding of Christian values. A range of worship themes based on Christian values and the RE curriculum support pupils' understanding of and respect for other world faiths. The RE curriculum, worship and whole school ethos have a positive influence on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC.) The school recognises, however, that opportunities for spiritual development are under-developed.

Pupils understand the need to help others less fortunate than themselves through their Christian service, supporting charities such as Macmillan Cancer Care. Pupils' views are taken seriously and they have an important role in the decision making process through their involvement in the school council and ethos group. Pupils enjoy coming to school, they feel special, safe, well cared for and valued. Feedback from pupils and parents is positive. They say that when issues arise, they are dealt with quickly, sensitively and with compassion. One parent said that the reason they chose the school was because of its friendly and caring approach.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Collective worship is important to the school. It is making an effective contribution to pupil's understanding of Christian values and affects the choices they make about their actions. The key Christian values focused on each half term are a key part of collective worship. Bible stories, different seasons of the Church's year and Christian festivals are celebrated throughout the year. Pupils have a growing knowledge of Jesus and His central place in the Christian faith. One pupil talking about worship said, 'Worship is a nice quiet time when we can think and talk about God.' Pupils, however, have a limited understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Collective worship makes a limited contribution to spiritual development. Areas have been created in each classroom for RE and reflection but these are not yet being used by pupils for quiet time or prayer. Evaluation of worship is not well developed and therefore leaders do not have a clear understanding of the impact this has on pupils. As a result, the collective worship leader has recently created an action plan identifying steps to be taken to develop pupils' independence in planning, presentation and evaluation of worship. Governors are involved in monitoring these developments. The pupil ethos group meet weekly with the curate and one of the governors. They discuss how Christian values can be shared more effectively throughout the school, with a focus on, 'What God would want us to do.' Pupils involved in this group are very enthusiastic about worship and are currently involved in writing a new school prayer.

The vicar and curate are regular and valued contributors to collective worship, in addition to providing the school with much appreciated pastoral support. The partnership with other churches and local Christian organisations ensures that pupils experience diverse worship styles. A good example is the delivery of worship by the 'Open Book Team.' This group present Bible stories in a lively and inclusive way. Pupils spoken to said they especially enjoy these acts of worship as drama brings the stories to life and helps their understanding. Pupils enter worship respectfully to reflective music. They are reminded that God and His light are always with us by the lighting of a candle and the sharing of a Christian greeting and response. Prayer is a key feature of all acts of worship and pupils are familiar with a range of traditional prayers. A member of the school council said that prayer is, 'A time to speak to God, when he is helping us to make our lives better.'

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

RE makes a sound contribution to the Christian character of the school. Use of the diocesan syllabus ensures a broad and balanced curriculum. An enquiry based approach to learning in RE is also developing across the school. Consequently, opportunities are provided for pupils to use their skills and ideas to explore and draw upon their own beliefs to consider some of the big issues of life. It also provides opportunities for reflection on Christian values and promotes respect for diversity through the study of other faiths. The curriculum is well planned and resourced. Pupils have a good understanding of Christianity, supported by 'Open the Book' worship, led by members of the church.

Pupils are developing their enquiry skills in RE by, for example, exploring the concept of the Kingdom of Heaven and what it might be like. Pupils in both key stages and early years are encouraged and challenged to think deeply and through careful questioning they successfully produce many thoughtful ideas. Pupils are happy to share these in the knowledge that there is no single correct answer. One pupil said, 'It's all about your own ideas, there is no right or wrong. We get a chance to discuss with each other and we enjoy that.'

Attainment and progress are in line with national expectations at the end of early years and KSI but below by the time pupils leave the school at the end of KS2, this is reflected in standards seen in RE books. One of the targets from the previous SIAS inspection was to embed an effective system of assessment and tracking of pupils in RE. The school recognises that this remains an area for development. Teachers and pupils are not yet familiar enough with the diocesan end of stage statements which they have chosen to use for assessment. Monitoring and evaluation of RE has been limited in recent years. Although informal observations of RE take place, there are no records of lesson observations. Marking and feedback in pupils' books does not always help them move on in their learning or provide them with opportunities to reflect. The RE co-ordinator is currently working with the RE leader from a nearby Academy. Together they have created a comprehensive RE action plan to address the issues of monitoring, assessment and the continued effective implementation of the diocesan scheme.

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

The executive headteacher, head of school and governors confidently articulate and encourage a vision for the school, firmly based on Christian values. These values are at the centre of everything the school does. The school's vision can be summarised as enabling pupils to experience the realities of life as a Christian, within the security of a Christian family where everyone is valued. The leadership team, supported enthusiastically by the staff, is committed to the ongoing development of Christian values and the well-being and learning of all pupils in the school. Staff live out this Christian vision, providing a supporting and caring environment, underpinned by a strong Christian ethos. This informs everyone of how lives should be lived both at school and in the wider community. Senior leaders work extremely well with governors demonstrating a determination to ensure that the future of the school's Christian ethos is distinct and secure and given an increasingly high profile. The leadership of the school is supported by the strong links with the vicar, curate and members of the church, who are very actively involved in the life of the school. As a result, prayer and pastoral links between church and school are effectively interwoven.

Following a re-structuring of the governors, they now have a clear understanding of their role and provide a healthy challenge whilst maintaining a supportive relationship. Governors are well informed and involved in the school self-evaluation process, recognising the importance of church school issues. They have a strong commitment to the school's Christian foundation. Leaders place great importance on supporting pupils to achieve their best within a nurturing environment based on Christian values. As a result, they are very clear about the strengths of the school and have effective plans in place to address areas for development. The school is now working hard to fully address the issues from the previous inspection. The chair of governors articulated this by saying, 'Everyone knows what has to be done and what actions are to be taken.'

Staff are encouraged to contribute to develop their leadership skills. Their ideas are listened to and valued. They are kept up to date through training and professional development opportunities and support from other church schools in an Academy Trust. Staff are valued and aware of what is expected of them in relation to the Christian ethos of the school. One member of staff said, 'The children are at the heart of everything we do.' Pupils take their responsibilities seriously, confident that their voice is heard, especially through the ethos group. Staff have built strong trusting relationships with parents, who are very supportive of the school, saying that their children are happy and nurtured within a distinctly Christian environment. Parents say the school demonstrates respect, compassion, tolerance and patience and that any issues are dealt with quickly and effectively in line with the school's Christian values. There is an active Friends of Bridgemere association. A Parent Council also provides an opportunity to discuss new ideas and general school issues with senior leaders.