

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

### Barnham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Mill Lane, Barnham, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2NG

**Current SIAMS inspection grade**

**Outstanding**

**Diocese**

**St Edmundsbury & Ipswich**

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

Suffolk

Date of inspection

05 December 2016

Date of last inspection

21 September 2011

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Controlled Primary 124688

Headteacher

Amy Arnold

Inspector's name and number

Judith Ruff 528

#### School context

Barnham is a smaller than average primary school with 158 pupils on roll. It serves the village and the surrounding areas, including those travelling from the nearby town of Thetford. 17% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, below the national average, and 13% receive special educational needs support, just above the national average. Pupils are predominantly from a White British heritage. Since the previous inspection there has been a change of headteacher. The school has also moved from pupils leaving at the end of Year 4 to an all through primary range. The church of St. Gregory's is a short walking distance from the school.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Barnham as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Christian values are deeply embedded within a framework of a loving, self-giving and compassionate response to every child's needs, based on the unwavering belief that each one is a unique child of God, made in his image and precious in his sight.
- The excellent opportunities for spiritual development offered through prayer, reflection and discussion enable pupils to debate keenly their beliefs with each other and adults within the school, leading to thoughtful, articulate arguments being put forward to address the big questions raised by religions.
- Religious education (RE) makes a hugely significant contribution to the Christian character of the school through the high profile that it is given, but also the excellence of teaching and learning opportunities, which enable pupils to appreciate the importance of faith to believers from different religions and to see first-hand the impact that Christianity has on the life-style and actions of its followers.
- The outstanding commitment of leaders, including governors, to the school's Christian foundation, is worked through in the faithful and conscientious ways in which they support pupils to use the chosen values in their daily lives. Adults model on a daily basis these values, which have a powerful influence on the pupils and their ability to see how living together in a community shaped by love for one another can make a difference.

#### Areas to improve

- Increase opportunities for pupils to plan and lead worship across the school, so they deepen their understanding and appreciation of the importance of worship to Christians.
- Develop pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith, so that the richness of the worship practices in other countries and settings are understood and appreciated.

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

'In this school the Christian ethos envelops everybody' said a parent. This is due to the relentless focus demonstrated by school leaders on explicit Christian values underpinning the school's strapline of 'Inspire, Cherish, Believe'. The chosen values are communicated very effectively through the school website, newsletters and throughout the 'discovery curriculum' which the school has adopted. This enables pupils to follow their own lines of enquiry with many opportunities for developing the awe and wonder of living within a beautiful, rural environment, where the wonder of God's creation is all around. Pupils show thankfulness for this bounty through their appreciation of what they have in terms of their families and their school. This also leads through to generous acts of self-giving, to each other providing support when times are hard, but in addition a willingness to raise money for a range of charities, such as the 'Shoebox appeal' and the 'Children's Society'. As one pupil said, 'This school shows us how to make our lives better. You don't have to feel afraid, they help you out.' Importantly, this school conveys the message that it is alright to be yourself, 'We learn that God loves everybody, you can be different and quirky, but you are still accepted and loved,' said another pupil. Pupils learn to take responsibility through being on the 'Eco-Council, worship leaders and buddies within the school. The spiritual development of pupils is a strength of the school. Opportunities for prayer, reflection, discussion and times to just stand back and wonder are woven through each school day. Pupils interviewed spoke about the calmness that the school engenders, that they didn't feel rushed; help and support were there when needed. 'There is more space here to make friends' said a pupil recently transferred in from another school. The focus on the 'fruits of the Spirit' in the form of 'love, joy and peace' have shaped the ethos and workings of the school, with new staff all saying how this has helped them to settle in quickly and feel a genuine sense of belonging. Behaviour of pupils is very good, supported by a policy document which clearly states the Christian values of forgiveness and reconciliation. Pupils' outcomes are high and the school has invested considerable resources in staff such as a learning mentor, a counsellor and a child and family support worker to work in close partnership with vulnerable families and their children. The gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers are closing, through well focused support and intervention. Attendance rates are rising and there has been only one half day exclusion in the past two years. Pupils enjoy learning about other faiths and express a respect and an interest in how these religions are similar to and different from Christianity. Their understanding of Christianity as a global world faith is raised through the diocesan 'Kagera' day and through their study of how Christmas is celebrated across the world. RE makes a hugely significant contribution to the Christian character of the school through its high profile and the excellence of teaching and learning quality, enabling and capturing pupils' interests in why faith and religions play such an important part in the lives of believers.

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

Collective worship is seen as central to the life and work of the school. It is inspirational and inclusive, a time when the whole school community comes together to praise, pray and reflect on the chosen value, both from a biblical perspective, but also to challenge in terms of its application in the daily lives of all present. Pupils interviewed have a clear understanding of the biblical sources for each of the values that they are focusing on. Worship has a clear structure. Setting the atmosphere for worship is given due importance, through the year groups bringing in their own class candle to place on the altar, to the Year 6 'worship leaders' laying the altar with the cross, candles and Bible. Pupils enter singing a worship song, so the aspect of praise is emphasised. Pupils sing beautifully, they are joyful and enthusiastic in their musical contributions. Anglican liturgical phrases are used by the worship leaders to commence worship and the whole school responds to these. On the inspection day, the school's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) mentor, an ordained Anglican priest, led the worship on the theme of the lighting of the second Advent candle to remember the prophets. This was introduced in a creative and interactive way, using pupils to show how God's world had been spoiled by the actions of men, but that a saviour would be born to bring salvation. Pupils and adults present were invited to pray and reflect and think about the opportunity that Advent gives Christians to prepare themselves for Christ's birth. Pupils were invited to carry on their thinking and discussions about why the birth of Jesus is so important for Christians and the impact that his life has on their beliefs, values and actions today, at playtime. This could be done through using the 'pop up prayer' station or by writing their thoughts and ideas on coloured paper outside in the reflection area. This they did and there was some good evidence of following through the discussion themes. Pupils are taught about the Trinity and they can talk about this in an age-appropriate way, using imagery such as an apple, when it is cut into two, 'You can see a heart shape, which reminds us that Jesus came to love us'. They know that prayer is about connecting with God, that Christians use these opportunities to give thanks, say sorry and to ask for help. Their prayers underpin the life of the school, being used at lunchtimes, during worship and for special church services at Easter and Harvest. The fortnightly visits of 'Open the Book' are very popular and offer pupils an opportunity to become involved in re-telling Bible stories through role play activities. There are a good variety of worship leaders, including all teaching staff, local clergy representatives and senior leaders. The church is used very regularly for worship at key festivals, including this year a community remembrance service in November. Year 5 and 6 pupils are given opportunities to

plan and lead worship in the spring and summer terms, but this opportunity has not yet been offered to other pupils within the school. The monitoring and evaluation of collective worship has been thorough and is leading to good levels of discussion about how the provision can be further improved. The appointment of a part-time SMSC mentor has further raised the quality of worship provision across the school. She has supported staff by modelling the leading of worship, particularly within classrooms, where the use of Christian symbols as a focal point for worship is now more embedded, along with an increase of Anglican liturgical phrases. The altar frontals used in whole school worship are beautifully designed and made by pupils in the different year groups across the school to celebrate the different church seasons. Parents are welcomed to the shared worship each Friday, where they appreciate the opportunity to celebrate achievements together and to reflect on a 'thought for the weekend'.

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

School leaders demonstrate an outstanding commitment to 'living out the Gospel values by walking alongside families and loving them back to health'. This vision is encapsulated by the vicar, who also chairs the school's governing body. A relentless focus is shown on living out the Christian values and the reality of this shines through in every aspect of the work and decision making of the school's leadership team. Pupils and parents are enabled to feel safe and secure within this non-judgemental loving partnership, where they can share worries and concerns. They know that the school will do everything in its power to support and counsel them to help bring about improvements in their situation. As one staff member simply said, 'This is a loving place'. The thorough understanding of every child's performance enables bespoke interventions to be put into place. Additional resources are allocated to meet the range of social and emotional well-being needs of some pupils, before effective learning can begin to take place. On a daily basis, staff demonstrate their care, compassion and nurturing of these pupils, who are able to 'belong' fully to the loving, inclusive family environment that the school provides. Staff well-being is of paramount importance for senior leaders and regular planned staff activities create space and time for staff to experience peace, joy and a sense of belonging to a committed team. Stakeholders' views are encouraged and valued and used effectively in developing an accurate self-evaluation of the school's performance and a clear direction for further improvements to be made. As one parent commented, 'The Christian values have instantly given a warmth and security to my child'. The appointment of the part time SMSC mentor has very successfully raised the profile of these aspects across the school. The recent development of an ethos committee is further raising awareness of the school's distinct Christian character by surveying stakeholder views and leading on discussions of outcomes from monitoring activities in order to recommend changes to the full governing body. The decision to include the pupil worship leaders on this group helps to give pupil voice a clear endorsement. Links with the diocese are very beneficial and the school is proactive in calling on their expertise in supporting church school distinctiveness. In particular the visits of the diocesan RE adviser, have had an inspirational input into this curriculum area. Visits to the 'Discovery Centre' at the cathedral have been greatly enjoyed and the school effectiveness officer has supported the school through encouragement, advice and in the development of leaders who may be aspiring into church school headship in future years. Opportunities for leadership development within the school have been fully utilised to build on the church school distinctiveness. For example, the assistant headteacher recently wrote a study on how the Christian values were being fully embedded across the school. Leadership of both RE and collective worship are given high priority within the school, with good supportive policy documents for both areas and effective monitoring and evaluation by leaders and external advisers enabling practice to move forward rapidly to demonstrate outstanding provision.

SIAMS report December 2016 Barnham C of E (VC) Primary School, Mill Lane, Barnham, Thetford. IP24 2NG