The village school has 97 pupils who mainly come from outside the catchment area. The school is organised into 4 mixed age classes. An additional classroom has been built since the last inspection. This year the school has over-admitted in its reception intake. There are 21 children entitled to pupil premium and 8 children with identified special educational needs. The headteacher has been in post for 2 years. A new rector was appointed in September 2017, after a period of 4 years interregnum. The school is linked to two local churches at Benhall and Sternfield, one of which is accessed by a coach, the other by a 20-minute walk.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Benhall St Mary’s as a Church of England school are good

- The well-established ethos of care, support and respect for all underpinned by core Christian values has created a nurturing, creative and supportive community.
- The personalised development of every child means that pupils are unique and treated as individuals, and as a result make good progress.
- Pupils understand how the school’s Christian values impact on their lives and help them to make thoughtful choices.

Areas to improve

- Explicitly articulate the school’s core Christian values across the school community to enable all stakeholders to recognise and acknowledge the difference they make to daily life.
- Develop a self-evaluation document that relates specifically to the SIAMS evaluation schedule to measure the impact of actions put in place to develop the school as a church school.
- In worship develop pupil voice as a form of monitoring to measure impact of changes.
- Develop an area where pupils can reflect quietly in the outdoor environment to broaden the opportunities for prayer in the school day.
The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good at meeting the needs of all learners...
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is good.

The governors of the school were focussed in wanting to secure a headteacher for their school. The appointment of the current headteacher has made a significant difference to the capacity of the school to improve outcomes for pupils. Since her arrival much has been put in place to consolidate achievement for all groups of learners. Christian distinctiveness and ethos have been added to the school's development plan, alongside learning walk opportunities to monitor what difference the actions have made. However, although regular meetings take place with the new rector to evaluate the Christian nature of the school, this has not yet been formalised in the monitoring and evaluation plan that contributes specifically to the evaluation of the school as a Church school. The school is keen to promote its distinctive ethos and the website has been significantly updated and now reflects the Christian values of the school. It informs the school community about the current value that the children are learning about. During the 4 year interregnum there was a lack of capacity from church to provide effective support. The developmental points from the previous inspection have been addressed, but some work is on-going due to the lack of a parish church presence for this significant period since the last inspection. The newly appointed rector has become a member of the school's governing board and is strongly committed to forging links with the school. Her input has already made an impact. The relationship with the Church has been re-established and is very positive. Both the school leadership and the rector demonstrate the vision and drive to move things on further. A productive dialogue has been established and the school is happy to take on suggestions and experiment to make changes. Plans are in place to establish an ethos group with strong input from foundation governors; its remit is to focus on the development of the school as a church school. The rector and chair understand that the pace of change will rely on strong governance and are focusing on having the right personnel in place. The school's leadership has been proactive in thinking about future partnerships and is considering a range of options. Their key priority was to appoint a headteacher for their school, and to preserve the school's ethos. They are currently exploring the benefits of deepening working relationships with other local church schools, but this has not yet been formalised further.

The school makes good use of diocesan resources. Diocesan advisory support for RE has been valued. The school is using the Emmanuel Project materials to plan good quality RE and now uses scrapbooks for learning journeys to record the pupils' progress in RE. Pupils enjoy RE and its diversity of teaching approaches. The pupils' books showed a range of good quality reflective work across all age groups. The arrangements for RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements. Pupils attend events in Bury Cathedral each year and enjoy meeting other pupils from church schools in the area as well as developing their understanding of Christianity in a special place. The RE leader attends training and the headteacher and chair of Governors attend diocesan conferences which has enabled them to access resources and new approaches to RE teaching. Parents feel their children are happily settled in school and they appreciate the holistic view of education where more than just academic progress is valued and nurtured. Parents feel the school is approachable and proactive. Excellent relationships underpin the school's supportive and warm ethos. “Everybody knows everybody!”