



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Bentley Church of England VC Primary School

Church Road
Bentley
Ipswich
IP9 2BT

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Local authority: Suffolk

Dates of inspection: 28th September 2015

Date of last inspection: 14th October 2010

School's unique reference number: 124754

Headteacher: Joanne Austin

Inspector's name and number: Jenny Daniels 664

School context

Bentley school is a smaller than average school and serves the village of Bentley on the outskirts of Ipswich. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is below average. The school is very well respected within the community and benefits greatly through the close connection and support it receives from both the parish church and local Baptist Church. The school federated with a nearby outstanding primary school in September 2014, sharing an executive headteacher. The most recent Ofsted inspection awarded the school a judgement of good (March 2015).

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bentley as a Church of England school are good

- The extent to which leaders of the school articulate an explicit Christian vision has an impact on the well-being of the whole community.
- Relationships between all members of the school community are a key strength and conflicts are always dealt with speedily, compassionately and fairly.
- Children enjoy contributing within collective worship (CW) and are increasingly taking responsibility for particular aspects enabling them to identify clearly the distinctive features of different Christian traditions in worship.

Areas to improve

- Increase the overtly Christian signage with a focus on the school's website to celebrate the school's identity and make its public face more overtly and distinctively Christian.
- To develop prayer in the life of the school so the children understand the part prayer can play in their lives, the purpose of prayer and enable them to contribute their own

prayers to CW.

- To widen engagement in the monitoring and evaluation of CW to establish the extent to which it makes an important contribution to the overall spiritual development on all children and members of the school community.

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

The core values of love and respect are prominent around the school and underpin all activities. They promote and support a culture of inclusion where every individual is valued with a special role to play in school. This has a positive impact on the whole school community as the children talk of how they feel valued and have a special role to play in the school. All groups of children make at least good progress. The whole school eat together at lunchtime and children take it in turns to help support the younger children and clear away the chairs. They enjoy this responsibility as evidenced when one pupil said of how they "like it when they take care of the new reception children". School council members talk enthusiastically of the many fund raising events they hold. A recent Bentley Bake Off raised money for Suffolk Age UK and brought donations from across the village. The core values of love and respect are supported by additional Christian values which are reinforced by all staff throughout the day both inside the classroom and at lunchtime and form the basis of the half termly themes covered in CW. A large cartwheel in the school hall illustrates how the core values, the hub, support the Christian values making up the spokes. Children demonstrating these values are celebrated in the awarding of certificates in the Friday celebration assembly to which parents are invited. Behaviour is good as identified in the most recent Ofsted (March 2015). Positive relationships exist between all members of the community. Children say they "feel safe" at school and talk proudly of their school and "how it is a great place to be". The good relationships they have with each other is evidenced when talking to the school council and the way in which they respected each other. The children benefit from the contribution religious education (RE) makes to the Christian values of the school and to the learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as evidenced through their questioning and enquiry when discussing their Easter experience. The environment is rich with opportunities for reflection and contemplation. The wooded area, carefully constructed displays and a chicken rearing project all contribute to an ethos which focus on taking time to think, appreciate and wonder. This is demonstrated as the children proudly show the chickens off to all visitors and talk of their strict regime when caring for them. The school's small allotment is talked of with immense pride by all children

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship (CW) is held daily with all staff leading CW on a rota. There is a structured process for the planning of CW in place led by the headteacher in conjunction with the deputy. Worship is planned systematically so that there is continuity, cohesion, variety and a clear focus on Christian beliefs and festivals. CW is distinctively Christian based on biblical teachings, setting out the core values of the school of love and respect in their Christian context using the Bible and stories of Jesus. Key festivals such as Easter are celebrated at the parish church. The children actively take part in hands on, practical activities to deepen their spiritual awareness as they move around the twelve stations of the cross. "It must have been awful for Jesus" was a comment written by one pupil following this experience. Activity booklets were sent home at Lent to reinforce the key messages and encourage parental involvement and reflection. Children enter the school hall quietly and behave well, are mostly attentive and respond to the different elements. A quiet time of reflection is always included. In response to wanting to involve the children in the planning of CW a Worship Team has recently been established. They take their responsibilities very seriously and talk enthusiastically about their current planning, supported by the deputy headteacher, of the Harvest service to be held at the local Church next week. A fortnightly CW is led by the local Baptist Teaching Elder and the alternate week members from the parish church lead Open the Book assemblies. Children enjoy contributing within CW and

increasingly take responsibility for the setting out of chairs and playing the music. Children recite prayers at lunchtime and during CW. They are able to recite the Lord's Prayer and have some understanding of its value and relevance to everyday life. They currently do not contribute their own prayers to school worship. In recent years the children have planned and led, in conjunction with the church, the Armistice Day Service around the village war memorial which is attended by all sectors of the community and extremely well received. Children make their own poppies to lay at the memorial. The school has identified the need to further the children's involvement in CW by allowing them to plan and lead the end of every half term CW to celebrate the terms' value. The children have some understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit as being "one person" but this remains vague for the majority. There has been some monitoring of CW by the foundation governors but this has yet to inform the future planning of CW by becoming routine and including the views of pupils and staff. Staff attend CW on a regular basis and the school's worship policy sets out the expectations for visitors and staff in leading CW and the key elements to include of gathering, worship and reflection. Parents and families have been invited to CW to share their beliefs and practice at key times in the Christian calendar.

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

Governors, alongside the headteacher, articulate their role in supporting the school as strategic leaders and are fully committed to strengthening the school's strong Christian ethos as evidenced through the recent setting up of an Ethos Committee at Bentley following the federation with a non church of England school. Notes of visits following recent visits to the school capture the school's Christian ethos and how the children "look out for each other", and how there is always such a friendly, caring atmosphere. Governors have a good understanding of the school's performance based on the school's self evaluation strategies. The Assistant Priest and the Teaching Elder from the village Baptist Church support the well-being and welfare of the whole community and provide spiritual support through their regular leading and input into CW. The website does meet statutory requirements but it does not promote the Church School status effectively. There is a hyper-link to the parish church but no direct reference to the involvement of the church with the school. The school regularly contributes and informs parents of forthcoming events at the school via the monthly Bentley Bugle Magazine, a copy of which is always on display in the school entrance for visitors. The church upholds the school in prayer regularly. The school has strong links with the local community who use the school grounds outside of school hours. Recently the school hosted a Safeguarding Awareness session to which all members of the community were invited. This was well supported. Parents on the playground talk of the school being "approachable" and a place where, "Staff take time to nurture the children". Parents articulate how pleased they are with the school and support the school in many practical and fund raising ventures. The school is regularly involved in the Diocese Big Gift exhibitions enabling the children to celebrate their own work and learn from the contributions from others. The RE leader has attended training to improve her subject knowledge to support her own professional development and enable her to support others.

SIAMS report 28th September 2015, Bentley C of E VC Primary, Bentley, Ipswich, IP9 2BT