



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Botolph's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Back Hills
Botesdale
Diss
Norfolk
IP22 1DW

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Local authority: Suffolk

Date of inspection: 24 September 2015

Date of last inspection: 14 October 2010

School's unique reference number: 124758

Headteacher: Mark Cobbold

Inspector's name and number: David Bunkell 815

School context

A new headteacher joined the school in September 2012, and other senior staff have been appointed more recently. The school is on the outskirts of the village, and the majority of pupils live nearby or in surrounding smaller villages. Use is made of an Anglican chapel of ease in the centre of the village, also dedicated to St Botolph.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Botolph's as a Church of England school are good

- The Christian ethos helps shape the character and values of this successful school, where the Christian character pervades all aspects of school life.
- Christian values have a profound impact on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils, who display a mature and caring attitude.
- Religious education (RE) makes a significant contribution to the happiness and success of the pupils.

Areas to improve

- Review the use of prayer in formal and informal contexts to extend pupils' spiritual journeys.
- Develop the character of collective worship (CW), so that pupils benefit more from related readings, prayers, songs and other content, and are more involved in planning and leading CW.
- Ensure that the impact of CW is more closely monitored and evaluated by all in the school community to bring about further improvement for the benefit of all who attend.

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

Pupils attribute much of their success to the Christian character of the school, making parallels between Bible stories and their own lives, for example in sharing with others, recalling Jesus feeding the multitude. A caring, Christian approach with no stigma attached to trying something without success has nurtured confident pupils who have high levels of academic attainment, a healthy team spirit and sense of what was aptly described as 'togetherness'. This is all rooted in the Bible, as acknowledged by staff and pupils. Well-rounded and self-assured pupils result from all this, regardless of their background or ability. In discussion, pupils explained how they respect everybody, regardless of what they look like or what they do. The school's Christian character has a highly visible profile, from a thoughtful display in the entrance porch, to reflection areas and displays throughout the school. Pupils were pleased to talk about the significance of a colourful and dramatic mural that has recently been installed in the main hall, and were able to explain the Christian significance of the inclusion in the mural's design of a rainbow and a dove. The Christian character makes a vital contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils, whether or not they are followers of the Christian faith, other faiths or none. Christian values are shared in collective worship and religious education (RE), along with the wider curriculum, as time is routinely allowed at the end of lessons for pupils to reflect on their own learning. These values are then embedded in everyday life. Pupils were seen to have particularly good social skills, as pupils across a wide age range chat happily together in their free time, and boys and girls cheerfully play football together. Pupils were seen to be particularly patient, always listening to the viewpoint of others in a meeting of the school council during the inspection. As a result, relationships between all in the school community are harmonious, based on true mutual respect. The Christian ethos promotes respect for diversity, and the appreciation of other cultures. Pupils had taken the initiative to raise funds for a malaria epidemic in Africa, and more recently had shown true Christian concern for the plight of refugees attempting to enter Europe. RE is an essential part of the curriculum, and is much appreciated by pupils. Pupils in Year 2 spoke enthusiastically about a recent day when together with those in Year 1, they had learnt about Baptism in school in the morning, then visited the church in the afternoon with the rector to see the font and enact role-play exercises of Baptism. They were aware that water is the significant element, that Baptism can take place in other places, such as a river, and that some Christian traditions require total immersion in Baptism.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective Worship (CW), known commonly as assembly, has a very important place in the life of the school, and is much appreciated by the pupils and also the staff, the vast majority of whom always attend. Concepts are regularly discussed during CW by children and adults together. Pupils are able to explain how their lives are improved as a result of CW, for example saying that it helps them to know right from wrong and to make good choices. CW is centred on Biblical material or makes reference to relevant Bible stories when modern material is used. Themes are related to the school's core values, for example compassion or forgiveness, placing these in a Christian context, but not restricting this to replicate Anglican practice. CW includes the use of prayer, but the choice of prayers may not always be directly linked to the theme of that day's CW. Similarly, the choice of song is not always directly relevant to the theme. Despite this, prayers and singing do provide an effective time for reflection. All those present at CW during the inspection were able to say confidently the Lord's Prayer from memory. The younger pupils say a prayer in their classrooms before lunch. Personal prayer at other times is encouraged, but little provision is made for it. CW helps develop personal spirituality, with times of silence provided to enable further reflection. CW on Fridays is often led either by the rector or by a youth worker from a local nonconformist chapel. From CW pupils have a basic understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, recognising the central place of Jesus. Pupils said that they especially enjoy the occasional CW taken by a local 'Open the Book' group. Pupils are keen to volunteer to play an active role in

drama in CW and sing enthusiastically, but their place in planning and leading is less well developed, limited mainly to preparing regular class assemblies. Pupils are occasionally asked their opinions about CW, but are not regularly involved in evaluating its effectiveness. Governors attend CW for special occasions, but do not often attend routine CW sessions or yet have a first-hand role in its evaluation.

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

Much of the undoubted success of the school may be attributed to the Christian character that permeates all aspects of school life, consistently promoted by senior staff and the foundation governors. During the inspection, the Christian ethos was correctly described as 'the blood flowing through the body of the school.' This has had a great impact on the standards pupils achieve in academic and other work. It has helped maintain the Christian character of the school and the happiness and welfare of all those in the school community. This impact is sustained by careful strategic planning and thorough evaluation, which has identified areas where more work is needed, for example in the more systematic monitoring of CW. This was a recommendation at the last inspection. As a result, governors are now far more involved in the planning of CW and in discussion were very much aware of current long-term themes and the content of individual CW sessions. Foundation governors have attended training sessions along with the headteacher. Further work remains for governors to be more actively involved in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of CW and its impact on all in the school community, but plans are already in place for this to happen. Governors clearly know the school very well, and are thoroughly involved in self-evaluation and ensuring that the Christian ethos is maintained. Leaders prepare very well for the future leadership of church schools, by enabling suitable staff training, and in particularly detailed succession planning for the future staffing and governing body membership of this school. The headteacher coordinates CW, and RE is the responsibility of another member of the senior leadership team. At the time of the inspection, she had only held this position for a fortnight, but had liaised carefully with her predecessor and already had a positive impact, for example by planning a programme of staff training, and in having the time to monitor the quality of teaching in RE throughout the school. Partnerships with the local Anglican church are especially strong. The long-established rector is a foundation governor and a very familiar face in the school, where pupils said how much they enjoy and appreciate his presence and pastoral support. Pupils also benefit from the strong links with the local nonconformist chapel and the wider village community. The headteacher regularly writes about the school in the parish magazine, and prayers are said in church for the school, for example at the time of this inspection. All those on the church electoral roll receive a detailed annual report about the school. In conversation, parents said how important the Christian values of the school are to them, and how this has had a significant positive impact on the development of their children, particularly with regard to them becoming more caring. Parents' views are constantly welcomed, for example in a parent forum that has discussed the school's Christian ethos, leading to greater understanding and support by parents of the school's Christian values. The school's provision of RE and CW amply meets statutory requirements.

SIAMS report September 2015 St Botolph's CEVC Primary Botesdale IP22 IDW