

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

| Bramford Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School | |
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| Duckamere, Bramford, Ipswich, Suffolk. IP8 4AH | |
| Current SIAMS inspection grade | Good |
| Diocese | St Edmundsbury and Ipswich |
| Previous SIAMS inspection grade | Outstanding |
| Local authority | Suffolk |
| Name of federation | Bramford and Somersham Primary School Federation |
| Date of inspection | 21 June 2018 |
| Date of last inspection | 30 January 2013 |
| Type of school and unique reference number | VC Primary 124723 |
| Executive Headteacher Head of School | Emma Burgess Emma Lea |
| Inspector's name and number | Stella Hart 923 |

School context

The school is situated in the village of Bramford on the outskirts of Ipswich and is federated with Somersham Primary School, a community school. Currently, there are 216 children on roll from 4 to 11 years. Over 50% of pupils are out-of-catchment. The school has had two changes in leadership since the previous inspection. Most recently, a new executive headteacher and a new head of school were appointed in September 2017. The percentage of pupils on free school meals [FSM] is below national. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well-below national as is the percentage of pupils with high needs.

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

- This is a welcoming and nurturing church school, whose ethos is underpinned by core values, such as respect, forgiveness and compassion, linking them to systematic biblical teaching.
- Strong leadership at all levels, good governance and a dedicated staff team provide a stimulating and challenging learning environment. As a result, pupils grow in confidence and achieve well.
- Collective worship, both in school and in church, is rich and varied, exemplified by a dedicated pupil-led 'Open the Book' team.

Areas to improve

- Consider how to embed the school's vision statement in biblical teaching, so that it accurately reflects the school's distinctive Christian values.
- Broaden pupils' understanding and experiences of Christianity as a multi-cultural worldwide faith and extend the programme of visits and visitors to enrich their spiritual and cultural development and their understanding of diverse communities.
- Embed the nurture of pupils' personal spirituality to help them in their daily lives, by planning and delivering life-enhancing experiences across the curriculum.
- Create attractive and enjoyable spaces within the physical environment of the school to facilitate regular occasions for quiet reflection for all pupils.

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

Bramford provides a nurturing environment which meets the individual needs of its pupils and families very well. Consequently, pupils grow and flourish in this church school. Relationships within the whole-school community are strong and leaders attribute this to the core values, known as 'PARTICLES', and the eighteen 'Values For Life' rooted in Christian teaching. The staff at Bramford know the children very well. They say that 'everyone is valued' and that they are 'proud of the school and each other'. Parents speak highly of senior leaders saying that pupils are valued and respected. Pupils speak knowledgeably about the distinctive Christian values of truthfulness and forgiveness and respect, which are prominently displayed in every classroom. Pupils value their teachers and pupils interact positively with each other.

The school's strong, caring ethos is securely underpinned by the Christian values of love, compassion, and nurture. These values have been fundamental to pupils' growing confidence as learners. The employment of two family support workers [FSW], has led to increasingly positive mental well-being and academic achievement for all pupils. Furthermore, this has created closer relationships within the school community, so that pupils speak most positively about the pastoral support offered, which really helps them in their lives.

At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2017 pupil progress was generally in line with that nationally. Due to targeted intervention strategies, the school's own current assessment data for 2018 shows that standards have been maintained or raised for all groups of learners. Older pupils appreciate a broad curriculum with exciting opportunities for adventure, such as sailing and a residential trip in Norfolk. Self-evaluation has also led to a much improved structure for daily worship and a clearer articulation by all of the school's distinctive Christian values. This has had an impact on how pupils make decisions about their behaviour and on how they respond to the needs of others.

Pupils behave very well; they are polite and smile and are welcoming to visitors. Parents support the school's core Christian values, which give a 'moral grounding'. Pupils identify clearly with the core values. They feel that: 'Without them, everyone would treat each other disrespectfully.' Service to others is a strength of the school. The 'Tabitha Project', inspired and created by pupils at the school, led to the collection of gifts at harvest time, and the distribution of these as food parcels to older residents in the community at Christmas. The school regularly supports Families in Need, Ipswich, enabling pupils to demonstrate compassion to the most vulnerable.

Religious education [RE] meets statutory requirements. RE is consistently taught through biblical materials, the use of moral dilemmas and moments which inspire awe and wonder. Evidence in the pupils' books demonstrates that the subject has a tangible impact upon learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [SMSC]. Pupils talk knowledgeably about their learning on key Christian topics such as 'salvation', 'incarnation', and 'resurrection', as well as the main Christian celebrations. The majority of learners are enthusiastic about the importance of RE, with pupils recognising that it raises 'awareness' of different faiths and beliefs. Commenting upon RE, one pupil said: 'Now I know a lot more and I understand it.' Parents feel that their children find learning in RE 'quite fun'.

Learners' understanding of Christianity as a world-wide multi-cultural faith is as yet limited. The action plan identifies the opportunity to establish links with schools in diverse communities, but currently this is not in place.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The strong partnership between church and school through the local clergy and the foundation governors enriches the daily life of this school as a worshipping community. Parents love the 'links between church and school' and speak highly of the local clergy. A recent introduction of the '5 o'clock service' in the church has been well-attended by several families from Bramford School.

Older pupils are responsible for setting up worship in school, with a candle and Bibles as the focal point. There are opportunities for both collective and personal prayer and reflection in worship and beyond. The Lord's Prayer and other Christian responses [for example on the Trinity] are well-used and known by pupils. They like the 'prayer box' and contribute to it regularly, by writing their own prayers.

Pupils are mostly responsive and engaged in worship, with those involved in leading worship talking very enthusiastically. Consequently, through leading worship pupils gain a deeper understanding of the connection between Christian teaching and their own experiences. The newly established, child-led 'Open the Book' team is a highlight of worship for many, with pupils listening attentively to the Bible passages re-enacted. In worship, there is regular teaching from the Bible, including the life and teachings of Jesus. Local clergy also ensure that there is balanced material from the Old and New Testament. This has had a transformational effect upon the Christian ethos of the school, and upon pupils' attitudes and relationships with each other. Senior leaders describe worship as the 'hub or heart of all that we do.'

Worship explores the Christian concept of God as three persons. For example, older pupils have recently undertaken a project on the Trinity, designing their own well-chosen symbols to illustrate this central Christian teaching. Worship in church celebrates the key Christian festivals thus developing pupils' understanding of being part of a wider worshipping community. For harvest, Christmas, and Easter and Pentecost pupils are actively

involved in leading and sharing in each service with many parents attending. The relationship between church and school is strong. For example, poppy wreaths were created by pupils in school and left at church for others to use at the community's Remembrance Day service.

Pupils are proud of the ACE certificates they receive in the weekly celebration assembly, which celebrates their positive attitudes towards each other and their work. Parents value these regular weekly occasions offered to join in worship in school, with classes taking turns to share.

Staff and pupil surveys of worship show a mostly positive response to worship. Pupils like the variety of leadership. Staff recognise the importance of worship, saying: 'Prayers are like a promise ... they encourage kindness and reflection.' Monitoring and evaluation of worship is well-established, with staff, clergy and pupils engaged in the process, which has had a positive impact upon provision.

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

The headteacher, governors and clergy are committed to serving the staff, the pupils and their families. Leaders work closely together to ensure that the school's clearly expressed Christian values have a profound influence upon all aspects of school life. Everyone can articulate the current school's vision that 'together we are ACE', and describe the impact that its core values of respect, perseverance, and forgiveness are having in this church school. Pupils talk knowledgeably on foundational Christian teaching, for example, stating: 'When Jesus died upon the cross he gave hope to other people.' However the school's values are not rooted in a clearly distinctive Christian vision, which is focused on knitting these important core values together.

Governors are highly supportive of senior leaders, describing 'good relationships' as 'equal partners', with one foundation governor describing her work with the school as 'an absolute joy'. Parents have a high degree of confidence in senior leaders, with one commenting that the leadership team 'balance each other well' and that 'nothing is too much trouble'. Foundation governors add to the leadership capacity of the school, providing excellent skills and expertise to support the school's distinctive Christian character.

The strong focus on inclusion, and a consistently welcoming and open environment, has a positive impact on attendance and progress for all groups, including the most vulnerable. Leaders show an insightful understanding of the school's performance and the capacity to develop the staff team further. One governor mentioned the executive headteacher's ability to 'empower staff'. A federation action plan for worship has identified key actions, steps to success, and monitoring questions. Consequently, good practice at Bramford as a church school has had a positive impact upon the leadership of worship at Somersham. A great example of this is that both schools now have well-established 'Open the Book' teams.

Since September 2017, worship in school has been systematically planned for on a weekly basis. Thus, worship has a clear structure and intentional focus, which combines biblical teaching together with features of Anglican tradition and practice. 'Values for Life' is the main resource used, with teaching staff, clergy or pupils leading worship each day. The impact upon the distinctive Christian ethos of the school has been described by governors as 'massive'. Planned experiences to develop pupils' spiritual awareness across the curriculum are identified by some staff but these are not yet fully embedded into policy and practice.

The subject leader for RE, who has only taken on the role recently, has ensured that all staff have had up-to-date training on using the 'Emmanuel Project' materials. Staff speak positively about the impact of the materials upon learners and the opportunity for quality professional development. They like the fact that they can easily contact the diocese if they need more support. One example cited, was using advisers as 'a great point of reference' for those 'tough questions' that pupils sometimes ask. RE and worship both meet statutory requirements. The school has addressed all areas from the previous denominational inspection and plans are in place for further improvements based on accurate self-evaluation. The RE subject leader is effective in her monitoring role, for example, recently undertaking surveys with both staff and pupils. Pupils' responses show some great understanding on key Christian beliefs. Evaluation of these responses has identified clear opportunities to deepen pupils' responses to questions about faith and belief.

The wider school community is highly supportive of this church school. The home-school association [HSA] is very actively involved in the life of the school.