

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Bolton-Le-Sands Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Mount Pleasant Lane, Bolton-le-Sands, Carnforth LA5 8DT

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Blackburn
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Lancashire
Date of inspection	15 March 2018
Date of last inspection	April 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided Primary 119521
Headteacher	Tim Cross
Inspector's name and number	Tracy Hallows 831

School context

This larger than average primary school, has increased significantly in size since the time of the previous denominational inspection. This has led to an extra class being formed. The headteacher was in post over this period of expansion but there have been significant changes with other staff, many moving to positions of leadership in other schools. The majority of pupils are White British and the proportion of disadvantaged or pupils with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) are below the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bolton-Le-Sands as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The headteacher provides inspirational spiritual leadership and a clear Christian vision, motivated by his personal faith, to ensure the needs of all are met. This results in the school being a vibrant Christian community that is welcoming and harmonious.
- Relationships throughout the school are modelled on Christ's teaching thus creating an atmosphere where all are valued, loved and accepted as unique children of God.
- Daily worship is central to the life of the school and this permeates every aspect of the curriculum enabling pupils to continue their personal faith journey throughout the day.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that activities in religious education (RE) offer appropriate challenge to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Increase pupils' knowledge and understanding of and respect for diversity and difference within the religions studied, including within Christianity.

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

There is a powerful ethos based on a set of four distinctively Christian values, courage, honour, trust and respect, which pervade the whole fabric of this deeply Christian school. As well as these values there is a four year cycle of values that are introduced through worship. The pupils readily relate their actions to these Christian values and can articulate how they are rooted in the teachings of Jesus. An example of this is a Year 6 pupil saying, 'we might all look different but our values teach us to treat each other equally because God loves us all the same.'

The headteacher helps to ensure that there is a strong spiritual depth to the school. Governors correctly recognise that his deep and active faith is instrumental in inspiring all staff to 'buy into the Christian ethos of the school'. His effective leadership is rightly acknowledged by governors with one saying, 'he really does embody the servant leadership of Christ, the staff and children gain so much from having such a wonderful spiritual leader'. This means that the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils is outstanding and a strength of the school. Its Christian ethos firmly embedded in all areas of school life. The whole school community lives out the school's distinctive Christian values in their actions at a local and national level through the charitable work they do. As a clear expression of their Christian ethos there is an obvious sense of joy and togetherness. Consequently, pupils' enjoy coming to school and as a result of this their attendance is above the national average.

There is a wide range of extra-curricular groups which extend the school's Christian teaching. For example, the 'Loaves and Fishes' lunchtime group engages pupils enthusiastically with Bible stories. From these the pupils involved plan actions both locally and nationally to respond to 'need in the world. Another group, 'Global Learners', meet weekly to discuss how 'better to care for God's creation, our world.' This group were instrumental in the school achieving status as a Fairtrade school. The pupils have an extremely mature understanding that to treat people fairly does not mean to treat them the same, 'some people just need more help than others and for them to be equal they might need more,' said a Year 6 girl.

The provision for pupils to understand and respect difference and diversity within faiths is improving but is not embedded across the school. Their understanding of different religious and cultural practices, including within Christianity is consequently under-developed. However the pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of equality and know that discrimination should not be tolerated. As a result of this relationships throughout the school are good and pupils are eager to show compassion to all. The older pupils have responded positively to their role to help those in the Reception class who found the transition to school difficult

RE makes a positive contribution to the pupils' SMSC development and is an effective influence in supporting the Christian character of the school. An expression of this is that pupils are excited about RE, 'it's phenomenal, there's just so much to learn and the teachers make it interesting,' said a Year 5 pupil.

Attainment is in line with national expectations when pupils enter the school. They make good progress during their time at the school and attainment is often above national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. The learning mentor provides a strong lead in supporting staff to ensure that vulnerable pupils reach their full potential. This includes having the skills they need to 'play their part in God's amazing world.'

Sadly the school has had to deal with the death of both pupils and staff over recent years. However the creation of a learning space dedicated to the memory of a child who died demonstrates how the school has used a tragic situation to give hope for the future.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is cherished as a special time of coming together before God and ensures it has a prominent place in the daily timetable. It is very well planned and gives the whole school community an excellent understanding of the Christian teaching which underpins their values. Pupils not only understand this in theory but are consistent in living out these values in action. 'It's good when I can put my friends name in the compassion jar but it's even better when someone notices that I'm being kind and generous and puts my name in,' commented a Key Stage 2 pupil. Even the youngest pupils describe and identify Christian values and relate these to Bible stories. A Year 1 pupil described how Jesus disciples' had courage when they were told that Jesus was going to be killed. Acts of worship are led by staff, governors, clergy and pupils thereby ensuring a rich and varied experience for all. Rigorous evaluation by pupils, staff, parents and governors which is monitored by the leaders of the school ensures that worship is constantly being adapted to meet the changing needs of the school community. Pupils talk positively about their views being listened to and acted upon. They confidently take part in leading acts of worship and have frequent opportunities to do so. Pupils have a good understanding of Anglican traditions and practices. For example, pupils can explain about the colours of the church seasons and know the stories behind significant Christian festivals. Prayer is an intrinsic part of the school day with each class having a dedicated, well used, area for prayer. As a result, pupil's understanding of prayer is deep and their expression of this articulate. One Year 6 pupil explained how he felt prayer 'switches on the special sat nav in my head, which is God guiding me to make the right choices'. Worship has a strong focus on the Christian belief of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit giving pupils an increasing understanding of this concept. One candle with three flames is lit at the beginning of worship. Pupils are invited to

write their own 'call to worship' and this reflects their understanding of the Trinity; one Year 6 pupil said, 'it's mind-blowing to think that God is three different things but one at the same time'.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The teaching of RE is good, staff create an atmosphere in the classroom which enables most pupils to speak confidently and share their ideas. Activities planned for pupils are exciting and they clearly enjoy their lessons. However, there is sometimes not enough challenge planned for the mixed age nature of the classes and insufficient time is given to pupils working independently. All members of staff are enthusiastic about teaching RE. The subject leader ensures that appropriate training is provided and she regularly monitors and evaluates all aspects of the curriculum. The use of 'Big Questions' help to develop the pupil's thinking and this is most effective when RE is delivered by the class teacher enabling them to make links during other curriculum time. Older pupils recognise that some questions are difficult to answer and sometimes there is no one right answer. The pupils enjoyed taking part in a recent faith week. They visited different places of worship and this first-hand experience helped to bring faith alive for them. Their understanding of Christianity is a strength and they confidently discuss stories from the Bible and some of the practices of the Christian faith. For example, some pupils talked about how they saw Jesus as a role model. 'Jesus was special because he taught Christians how to be good and how to see the good in others,' said a pupil in Year 2. A pupil in Year 6 commented that Bible stories teach Christians how to 'handle life.' Pupils are less confident when discussing other faiths, for example, when trying to explain about Buddhism the pupils could not agree if followers believed in one God, several Gods or no God. There is a robust assessment procedure managed by an effective leader which gives a clear indicator of the progress made by the pupils. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation and effective preparation for a new syllabus are improving teaching standards. The standards achieved in RE are often above national expectations which is in line with other subjects.

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

Since the previous denominational inspection the headteacher has continued to embed the Christian distinctiveness of this church school where the teaching and person of Jesus is a bright beacon of light. He strongly believes that this school should be at the heart of the community they serve and that the love of Christ should shine through their actions. This vision is very well lived out in the school community. It is particularly recognised by parents, some of whom choose to travel many miles to continue their children's education here when they have moved out of the area. The governing body is committed to supporting and challenging the headteacher. As a result of this staff, pupils and their families receive the best possible care and education within this nurturing Christian environment. The headteacher has effectively developed a strong leadership team who share the same vision and determination. This ensures that the distinctively Christian ethos is both sustainable and continually improves to meet the changing needs of the school. Staff recognise and are appreciative of the caring Christian ethos prevalent in the school. For some this has impacted positively by helping them through difficult personal circumstances and others have seen a real growth in their own faith during their time at the school. The school is particularly effective in developing future leaders of church schools and recent deputies have gone on to posts in church school headship. The headteacher and his staff are actively engaged in supporting other schools on their learning journey and are part of a church school cluster in the area. This has enabled good practice and resources to be shared and effective working relationships to be developed for mutual benefit.

Leaders work effectively in meeting the changing needs of their families. Exemplary pastoral care and intervention strategies overcome barriers to learning and enable pupils to realise their potential. There is a robust cycle of monitoring and evaluation and rigorous appraisal. As a consequence of this most teaching is at least good and most groups of pupils are making good progress. However, the most able pupils are sometimes not effectively challenged. Accurate self-evaluation recognises the strengths of the school and has identified appropriate targets for improvement with a comprehensive action plan. The foundation governors know the school well. They are frequent visitors and are confident in asking searching questions. As a result they have a good understanding of what the school is doing well and also its impact and influence as a distinctive Church school. They rightly recognise that the school is effectively bringing the good news of the gospel to the community. The vicar regularly visits school both to lead worship and to provide pastoral support for staff and pupils. The headteacher and other staff are active members of the church. This mutually involvement of the church and school communities helps to strengthen links. The school has addressed issues raised in the previous denominational inspection report. Leadership of worship is strong with a teacher and senior leader sharing the role. The school's RE curriculum fully meets the statement of entitlement for Church of England primary schools giving the pupils a broad and balanced curriculum. Collective worship goes above and beyond the legal requirements and provides a meaningful experience for all to worship and learn more about living out the Christian foundation of the school.