

<b>Barrow 1618 Church of England Free School</b>	Barrow Broseley TF12 5BW
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Hereford</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Outstanding (Previous LA maintained school)
Date of academy conversion	September 2012
Date of inspection	11 October 2016
Date of last inspection	5 December 2011
School's unique reference number	138268
Headteacher	John Newton
Inspector's name and number	Judith Tinsley
Quality assurance	Lyn Field 151

### School context

Barrow 1618 Primary Free School opened in September 2012, following the closure of the previous local authority maintained school on the site. Its numbers have increased significantly since then, to full capacity at 85 pupils. The pupils are taught in mixed age classes. The vast majority of pupils are of a White British background. The number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below average. It was judged to be outstanding in all areas by OFSTED, in June 2016.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Barrow 1618 as a Church of England school are outstanding.

- The school is exceptionally well led by an inspirational Christian leader who ensures that all are valued within the school community. This is strongly supported by the distinctive child-centred curriculum the school has developed.
- The rapid improvements made since the school opened have been driven by the cohesive staff team. They clearly articulate their ambition for this school from its Christian foundation.
- The governing body has worked determinedly to secure their founding vision for the school, which is reflected in the recent successes it has gained.
- The pupils live out the 'Barrow Values' in all that they do and say and clearly understand how these are rooted in biblical teaching.

### Areas to improve

- Seek opportunities to share the good practice developed in religious education (RE), leadership and governance, in order to contribute to the development of Church school leadership more widely.
- Develop active partnerships with schools and communities representing more diverse faiths and cultures, to ensure that learners have a deeper understanding of contemporary society.

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

Barrow 1618 school has a highly developed set of values that are given a distinctively Christian interpretation. They are woven into the fabric of all elements of school life. The values, for example, 'Don't give up' were specifically chosen to be easily understood by all children in the school. These influence and shape the ways in which all members of the school community are supported and shown mutual respect. Pupils are very proud of their school and feel safe and valued as God's children by their peers and the staff that care for them. Strong leadership and teaching have developed a culture for high academic attainment. Therefore, all pupils make or exceed expected progress in reading, writing and maths due to the supportive and caring ethos. The Christian character is evident in creative, interesting displays and artefacts around the school, with no opportunities being missed to inspire and develop the pupils' enquiring minds. Pupils enjoy learning creatively at Barrow 1618. This has contributed to high levels of attendance for all groups of children. The positive relationships across the school community are due to the values that are rooted in Christian teaching. All adults model and support the children's excellent learning behaviours. The courtesy and co-operation shown throughout the school is exemplary. Pupils' outstanding behaviour provides explicit examples of the school's vision to teach 'our children to be generous in heart, mind and soul'. It also impacts on the strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of children's development. The motivating curriculum allows these areas to be specifically planned for. Much of this learning is based in their outdoor learning areas. Exciting and inspiring themed enrichment weeks develop high levels of co-operation and appreciation.

Parents are very clear about the Christian foundations of the school and are overwhelmingly positive about the impact they have on their children. They praise the inclusivity and openness of the school. The 'How can we help? What can we do?' philosophy of the school is appreciated by both parents and members of the local church communities alike. The school works hard to ensure the pupils are fully aware of the multi-cultural nature of the Christian faith. This is delivered through its curriculum and external links with African Christian-based organisations. A visit from a children's choir from Uganda supported this teaching. Pupils are excited by their RE lessons because they challenge them to think about their own faith and the faith of others. The pupils make good use of this space and time to explore their thinking and thus ask questions in a safe and non-judgemental way. The school enables pupils to visit other places of worship, such as the local Sikh Gurdwara and Hindu Mandir. Consequently, the pupils have a high degree of understanding for these faiths. However, within their development plan they have already identified the need for partnerships with more diverse communities. They recognise this needs to be planned for explicitly due to the rural nature of the school.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

The school highly values collective worship as an integral part of the school day. Leaders speak passionately about the way that it gathers the school together as a worshipping community and builds strong relationships. Pupils have a deep understanding of how to make use of Christian teaching in applying the 'Barrow values' to their own lives. This is because worship maintains a strong focus on biblical teaching. Worship is well planned by the school leadership and is led by teachers and pupils. 'Open the Book' volunteers from the local church also visit the school fortnightly and this strengthens the links with the wider worshipping community. Pupils speak about collective worship with enthusiasm and clearly enjoy all of the ways they take an active part. Year 6 pupils, for example, sit with the Reception children to build their confidence in worship activities. Acts of worship mark key events in the Christian calendar, with Anglican traditions being embedded in the daily practice. The symbols and colours of the Christian year, therefore, are used and understood by pupils. The symbolism of lighting a candle at the start of worship can be explained clearly by Year 1 pupils and they are able to talk confidently about Jesus as being the 'light of the world'. Older pupils speak fluently of how they see the Christian doctrine as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Worship includes taking part in 'Experience Easter', 'Experience Pentecost' and Mothering Sunday in local churches. They take part in the services, leading prayers and readings. Although the local parish is without an incumbent at the moment, the school has been active in ensuring that these links with local churches continue and build on the momentum created in recent years. A wide range of achievements are recognised and staff as well as pupils are genuine in their enjoyment of sharing these personal successes. Prayer is a key element of worship both as a whole school community, in small groups or as a personal opportunity to reflect and develop individual spirituality. The reflection spaces in each classroom, which were designed and made during an RE arts week last year, are used regularly by children. The development of the Reflection Garden last year provides pupils with another space in which to develop their own personal prayer and a chance to experience spiritual growth. Consequently, children can talk about prayer confidently as being important to them. Recent questionnaires undertaken by parents and pupils show how much this aspect of school life is appreciated and influences their lives. Governors express pride in the way worship affirms and supports the Christian foundation of the school.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.**

The school meets the needs of all pupils due to the high profile RE has across the school. It provides a stimulating and rich curriculum that challenges all learners. Work is planned in line with the new Herefordshire agreed syllabus. The school has made a very good start in using new assessment procedures with secure baseline information being gathered for all pupils. This has confirmed that attainment and progress in RE are high. Monitoring and assessment of RE has led to high and explicit expectations being developed for all year groups, thus supporting all staff in teaching this subject. The subject is extremely well led by a passionate leader of RE. She is self-motivated and sets aspirational expectations for both herself and the pupils. Due to the strong collaborative nature of the teaching team all staff see the importance of their role in delivering the subject. RE teaching is planned and delivered in a way that inspires and motivates pupils to want to learn more and understand the impact it has on their own lives. Senior leaders show their level of commitment to RE through themed weeks every year including 'Interfaith week' and 'RE through art week'. These investigations and open-ended projects are revisited later in the year and allow for pupils to develop their understanding of faith in a focussed manner in addition to the regular lessons. Pupils, therefore, make very good progress. The pupils talk about these learning experiences with enthusiasm.

The school's values are supported by the strong teaching of RE. Explicit links are made to Christian teaching and those values held by other faiths. Pupils talk with great confidence about examples of Bible stories that link with their 'Barrow values' e.g. 'God needed to use the value of imagination when creating the world'. Through the rich outdoor-based curriculum pupils can experience the beauty and wonder of God's creation. As a result they express their appreciation in original and creative ways through art and poetry. The RE books are well presented and record the depth of children's reflections and knowledge. Therefore, they can apply this to their own lives. Marking is precise and helps pupils improve their work. The importance of this subject can be seen by the way the youngest children are encouraged to consider the key teachings of Jesus from their own perspective. Reception children clearly describe that Jesus was a 'special man who performed miracles'.

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

The headteacher has successfully developed a team that understands and supports the Christian vision of the school. His own personal faith is highly visible because he models and lives this out on a daily basis. All staff have a clear understanding of his leadership values. This is characterised by a clear confident articulation of the Christian moral purpose of the school. The school states that 'all we do is entrenched in our school's Christian ethos'. Pupils can describe what it means to 'share everything they have just as Jesus did' through Bible stories such as the 'Feeding of the five thousand'. Consequently, they understand what this means for their daily actions towards others. The headteacher is ably supported by a caring and harmonious staff team who see themselves as partners in the development of the Christian life of the school. The impact of this is a school that understands its place in the community and how its mission can be carried and lived out more widely. Leaders invest trust in pupils and they in turn willingly accept and enjoy the roles of responsibility. Governors form a seamless and highly supportive partnership with the school leadership. They have helped keep the focus on the church school ethos from the day the new school opened. They provide challenge and support with sensitivity and determination and the positive impact can be seen within this happy and successful school. Numbers on roll have risen steadily due to the outward facing nature of the school in sharing its distinctive and inclusive ethos.

Governors, parents and other church partners appreciate and willingly contribute to the Christian life of the school. All can see the positive impact it has on their own lives and the lives of the pupils. The headteacher and governors have given excellent support for the development of RE and the personal development of the lead teacher. Thus, they have ensured that statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are met. Due to effective self-evaluation the headteacher and RE subject leader proactively search development opportunities for the school as a church school, for example, a link made with another local school to bring the school council groups together to share worship planning. The school has also made maximum use of training provided by the Diocese that it has rapidly implemented. This has supported the positive developments made by the school. It is now well placed to spread this strong practice further. The importance of taking part in local and international charity events gives children a real purpose to both help them understand and see the impact of the values they share at school. They can talk about these events with real enthusiasm and they are clearly an important part of school life. The pupils talked confidently about the annual 'Lent Project'. This allows the children to live out the values of 'Don't give up' and 'Understand others' in a highly effective way. The leadership is successfully preserving and enriching the Christian character of the school and its future life as a church school.