



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Archbishop Benson Church of England Primary School

Bodmin Road
Truro TR1 1BN

Previous SIAS grade: Outstanding

Current SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Truro

Local authority: Cornwall

Dates of inspection: 4 March 2015

Date of last inspection: 19 October 2009

School's unique reference number: 137258

Headteacher: Helen Giblett

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

School context

Archbishop Benson is a much larger than average size primary school with 436 children on roll. It is situated near the city centre and serves the deanery with children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The school is over subscribed. Most children are from a white British heritage. The number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average as is the number entitled to receive the pupil premium. The school converted to academy status in August 2011. Attendance is above the national average. The headteacher was appointed in September 2014.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Archbishop Benson as a Church of England school are outstanding

- An ethos that celebrates the reality of Christ empowers the whole school community to live out a Christian message of love.
- Acts of worship make a significant contribution to the children's spiritual development and impacts on their wellbeing.
- The passion of leaders and managers to the continual development of the Christian ethos ensures that it has meaning and purpose for the whole school community.

Areas to improve

- Develop the school's understanding of spirituality further so that, through a shared language, opportunities to explore spirituality are integral across all areas of the curriculum.
- Raise standards in religious education (RE) by using high quality questioning that challenges children's understanding at even greater depth through enquiry.
- Work with local church communities to develop closer links by exploring a shared approach to understanding spirituality and how it can be lived out.

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

The six core values of love, compassion, tolerance, faith, truth and forgiveness are at the heart of the school's mission to empower children to engage in matters of faith and belief and to reflect on what that might mean to them in their own lives. The school is outstanding because of the exceptional quality of the opportunities it provides for children to explore faith as an aspect of personal spirituality and the extent to which children and adults respond to these opportunities. Children explain, for example, how faith, a core value, means both faith in themselves and others as well as faith in God. Children have a very clear appreciation that as a church school the roots of their core values are in Christian teaching. They naturally refer to Bible stories when explaining the values and how they are lived out in their everyday lives. A significant strength of the school is the extent to which children are empowered to openly discuss their views on faith and belief and the respect shown for the opinions of others. This creates an environment in which exploration of ideas is encouraged which is evident in the quality of the teaching and learning environment. This has a significant effect on the quality of learning and the good progress children make academically to attain standards at least in line with national expectations. A recent emphasis on developing an understanding of spirituality has resulted in a raised awareness leading to greater identification of opportunities for spiritual experiences in the life of the school. Some examples have been identified in the curriculum and through such initiatives as the Arts Goldmark accreditation. The extent, to which there is a shared understanding of spirituality, and a common language to express it, has not been fully developed. Relationships are excellent. All members of the school community treat each other with kindness that reflects a deep respect for another human. The school's links with a wide range of local church communities, the local community, its charity work at home and abroad and excellent social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) programme give children a good understanding of diverse cultures in Britain and further afield.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Acts of worship are outstanding at Archbishop Benson because they are occasions when explicit Christian messages give children and adults the opportunity for their lives to be transformed. Children articulate this openly by giving examples of how something they have heard in an act of worship has resonated with them sufficiently to make them want to do something differently. For example, older children explain that their understanding of prayer has grown through worship and how this makes a difference to the way that they pray and their understanding of the purpose of prayer. Collective worship is vibrant, inspirational as well as transformational. It is firmly rooted in Christian teaching, Bible stories and Anglican tradition and practice whilst, at the same time, being fully inclusive of all faiths and respectful of those who choose not to have religious beliefs. Messages taught through whole school and key stage worship have a direct and discernible impact on behaviour, attitudes, relationships and learning. The collaboration between the collective worship coordinator, the SMSC leader and curriculum enrichment coordinator means that planning for collective worship is extremely effective. As a result, in an atmosphere of trust, the whole community understands the purpose of worship in the school. This inspirational leadership is rooted in a deep understanding of faith, spirituality and belief. Consequently, it is an outstanding and central aspect of life in the school. Through a whole-school emphasis on spiritual and moral reflection children are quickly learning the value of having a thoughtful approach to others and to their own actions. The impact of this is already evident in the respectful relationships which permeate the school. The worship buddies have a high status in the school. Their responsibility for gathering views from other children means that they make a central contribution to worship monitoring. Children aspire to be a part of it, saying that it 'helps you to be closer to God'. The further involvement of the school council and house captains in the regular planning and leading of worship ensures that children have a sense of ownership which contributes to the very positive attitudes towards worship in the school.

The effectiveness of religious education is good

Religious education makes an important contribution to the children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development by promoting the school's Christian values as an integral aspect of teaching and learning. This contributes to the children's wellbeing and understanding of right from wrong as well as developing an appreciation of the contribution that faith makes to diverse cultures in Britain and around the world. Standards in RE are at least in line with national expectations by the time children leave the school at the end of Year 6. Most children make good progress and achievement is broadly similar with other core subjects in the curriculum. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The best teaching challenges children's thinking through the use of skilled questioning that provides time to explore complex concepts in depth. Children rise to these challenges and respond with enthusiasm and a real enjoyment when they struggle to find the words to explain their views and opinions. This is done in an atmosphere of support and a willingness to listen with respect to the views of others. Opportunities to challenge children through rigorous questioning are sometimes missed. Schemes of work have not been effectively adapted to support a more creative and challenging approach to the delivery of the RE syllabus through enquiry and which gives children more involvement in the direction of what they are learning. Specialist teaching of RE from Year 2 upwards, complemented by class based RE focus weeks, ensures that children have a broad range of experiences in RE and a secure knowledge of Christianity and other world faiths. Children use this knowledge well to make links between religions and especially to develop a greater understanding of what they learn from their studies. Assessment procedures have improved since the previous inspection. Data from assessments of children's attainment is now used to identify progress and informs future improvement. For example, evaluation of assessment has led to revised approaches to teaching and learning to meet the needs of groups of children more effectively. This is an example of the excellent quality of leadership of RE through which the joint subject leaders ensure that RE is a vibrant and exciting part of the whole curriculum.

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

The headteacher, fully supported by senior leaders and staff, is committed to the continual development of the school's Christian foundation because she and her staff have a very clear understanding of the difference that a Christian ethos can make to the lives of children. The leadership and management, including governors, articulate this mission very well and it therefore underpins the strategic direction of the school and informs decisions made at every level. An essential element of this commitment to the ongoing promotion of a distinctive Christian ethos is that all actions have the welfare of children at the centre. This is evident in the excellent procedures for gathering evidence of the impact of the school's values, collective worship and RE and how accurate analysis of feedback leads to further improvement. The leadership approaches self-evaluation with rigour and the confidence to look honestly at its provision as a church school. A proactive approach gives leadership its strength. A significant feature of this monitoring and evaluation process is the regard that the leadership takes to latest guidance and expectations of entitlement as a church school from the National Society. The high quality of leadership means that the school is well placed to share successful initiatives with other schools in the diocese. Through its wide links with the deanery; the school has excellent relationships with the local parish church and other Christian churches as well as the cathedral. There is a real sense that all churches contribute to the life of the school working together for the benefit of children. The school, for example, is regularly used by the parish community to hold the fortnightly 'Holy Commotion' for families to celebrate the Christian faith in a more informal setting. These links, even though they are strong and meaningful, still have the potential to be strengthened by exploring them in greater depth. The involvement of senior leaders in monitoring and the role of Appointed Governors in evaluation mean that there are good opportunities to develop future leaders of church schools. The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship and religious education.