

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Bury Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School	
Westburton Lane, Bury, Pulborough, West Sussex RH20 1HB	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Chichester
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	West Sussex
Date of inspection	13 June 2018
Date of last inspection	08 March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	VA Primary 126022
Headteacher	Thomas Moore
Inspector's name and number	Susan Costa 902

School context

Bury is a very small primary school with three mixed age classes. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is lower than the national average and the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is greater than national. Most pupils are from a White British background and there is a very small proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. There have been significant changes in staffing, both teaching and leadership, within the last two years. The current headteacher has been in post since January 2017. The school has close links with St John the Evangelist church in Bury.

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

- A clear vision for the school as a church school has led a journey of improvement, resulting in a warm and welcoming community where staff, governors, pupils and parents are valued and united
- A focus on outdoor learning, and strong partnerships with links such as the South Downs National Park, provide rich experiences which make good contributions to the pupils' personal spiritual development
- Effective links with the local church and community are supportive and ensure that the school is seen as central to Bury village life.

Areas to improve

- Deepen the understanding of the Christian vision by ensuring that pupils can articulate their understanding of how the values which are rooted in biblical teaching impact on their own choices and opinions
- Ensure that the distinctly Christian vision guides leadership decisions when reviewing key policies such as behaviour and attendance
- Improve pupil leadership of collective worship in order to strengthen engagement, give them greater ownership of worship, and provide opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of Jesus Christ
- Embed the effective learning of religious education to deepen pupils' understanding of the impact of faith on believers within Christianity and other religious beliefs

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

The school's vision is centred around nurturing individuals' talents through hope and aspiration for the future. It is taken from chapter 29 verse 11 of Jeremiah which speaks of plans for the future, plans to prosper and not to harm. Staff articulate how this leads their thoughts and actions in how they respect and support each individual both academically and pastorally, and pupils know and appreciate that the staff work to support their success for the future. One pupil expressed the view that 'God has plans for us and the teachers want the best for us.' As a result, a key strength of the school is the sense of community where staff, governors, parents and pupils are united. A values-rich vocabulary has been developed which helps all to reflect on their actions and interactions. However, the ability of adults and pupils to relate this to biblical teaching is at an early stage of development. A clear impact of values is on behaviour, which is positive and respectful of all in the community. As a small school, Bury focuses upon developing the individual, and staff know each child well. The nurturing environment enables staff to find the best in every pupil creating self-belief and confidence, which in turn impacts positively on academic progress and personal development. This results in learners who can articulate how well they are doing along with their next steps in learning. Vulnerable learners are well supported to help them thrive. Parents comment on the family feel of the school and describe it as 'a hopeful and loving community.' Parents agree that the new leadership has led to improvement in standards this year, and appreciate the focus that there has been to 'value outdoor learning and make the most of the surroundings.' The impact of maximising connections with the natural world has a significant impact on pupils. One pupil commented that 'God made our world and so it is our job to look after it.' Pupils talk about feeling a sense of calm and peace when they have space and time to reflect outdoors. These experiences develop the pupils' sense of personal spirituality, and as a result, they have confidence to express their thoughts. Staff describe the time outdoors 'as an opportunity for pupils to look inside themselves to be more aware of the outside.' In addition, RE contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural growth and as a result they understand the impetus for charitable giving and service to others. RE guides them to understand that Christianity is a world-wide faith. The recently revised RE curriculum includes the study of different faiths and this develops pupils' understanding of and respect for other cultures.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship brings the school community together to explore themes that are clearly planned. It is led by a range of staff and the vicar from the Arun Churches which includes St John the Evangelist Church in Bury. The themes support the pupils' developing understanding of the school's Christian values and key Christian festivals. A recent focus on perseverance guided pupils to understand that Noah needed perseverance. They reflected that 'because Noah completed the job he had been asked to do even when others laughed at him, we shouldn't give up when we want to achieve things even if other people don't help us.' Pupils are proud that the prayers they write are used in worship and are kept for the community to reflect upon, guiding personal prayer. During worship pupils are respectful and enjoy singing. They say that worship is 'a time to think of others' and 'to learn about God'. Pupils talk with some understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. However, the pupils do not confidently relate how Jesus is central to Christian teaching nor how learning about him may influence their own choices or actions. Adults feel that worship is a 'time to bring the school family together and reflect.' Services at the church celebrate Christian festivals such as Christmas and Easter and these provide the opportunity for parents to join the school community. Pupils recognise the importance of harvest as a time 'to give thanks for all the food we have and think about those who are suffering'. There has been a recent focus on widening opportunities for pupils to develop their own sense of spirituality through reflection spaces. Although some reflection space is provided in classrooms pupils and staff agree that the most positive opportunities for personal spirituality have been provided outdoors where 'connections with the world God created are real.' The strong links which build understanding of the natural world have guided pupils to appreciate their role in caring for the environment. Pupils are keen to talk about how they have been inspired to help through becoming involved in reducing the use of plastic in the environment, and reusing it to create attractive art collages. Pupils and leaders are involved in monitoring worship. The evaluations have guided recent improvements to provide greater opportunity for pupils to plan and lead worship. Pupils say that they enjoy being involved in aspects such as drama to illustrate stories from the Bible, and by working together as mixed age groups to lead worship they are exploring what the values mean to them. As a result, these opportunities link biblical text with real life, and are guiding pupils to develop their understanding of the Christian values.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards in religious education (RE) have improved following a concerted effort this year to recognise RE as a core subject. Senior leaders and governors identified RE as an area for improvement and prioritised the training of all staff in the 'Understanding Christianity' resource. Furthermore, investment in training the subject leader has ensured that staff expertise and confidence are improving quickly. The subject leader has raised the profile and expectations of RE, and as a result the cycle of teaching, learning and assessment has been strengthened. New approaches to planning RE are thorough and lesson observations, pupil voice and book scrutiny show that pupils have a range of rich opportunities to learn about Christianity and other world faiths which enable them to reflect on their own beliefs and those of others. Book scrutiny and assessment information shows that attainment and progress in RE have improved, and standards compare well with the levels of attainment in literacy. A clear system of assessment supports learning and ensures that expectations in RE match those in other core subjects. This has addressed the area for development following the last inspection. Pupils say that they believe RE is important to help them understand other people. One pupil summed up their thoughts by saying, 'It's good to learn about other faiths because it teaches us to understand and not to judge others.' Pupils are proud of the learning in their books and they talk with confidence, showing secure knowledge of Christianity. Pupils enjoy learning and expressing themselves in creative ways including drama and art. Religious education contributes to pupils' understanding of the school's key values; a Year 4 pupil described how 'Jesus leads us to do the right things,' and when he fell out with a friend he stopped to think and reflected that he 'had hurt God too' so he 'worked to fix it.' Pupils express growing knowledge of other faiths including Hinduism. They are able to talk about the different skills they develop in RE, such as looking at photos in Hinduism to make sense of what they see and ask questions before they research to find out more. Through exploring the festival of Holi in drama they explained that they had learned that good overcomes evil. Although the review of the programme of learning of Christianity and other faiths is at an early stage of implementation, it is clear that the strong leadership of RE has had positive outcomes on the subject this year. A systematic approach to evaluating the impact of actions has led to improvements in the depth of the learning, the standards achieved and the pupils' enthusiasm for the subject. Monitoring captures pupil feedback and helps influence the next steps in the action plan for further improvement.

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

The headteacher, staff team and key governors clearly articulate how the Christian vision gives direction for the whole school community. This has resulted in clear improvements in standards within a short time. The headteacher and governors recognise the progress that has been made, and are aware that the work to establish and embed Christian values is at an early stage of development. There is a robust framework in place to ensure sustainability. One member of staff summed up the feeling that 'the new vision has pulled us together so that there is clear direction and expectations'. During the period of improvement, leaders have welcomed support and challenge from the local authority and diocese. Visits to local schools, recognised for their exemplary practice, have resulted in the introduction of elements that have benefited the learners at Bury. The RE leader has successfully led improvements in RE, and this has been achieved through prioritising the subject for professional development for all staff. Working in partnership, the headteacher and vicar have ensured that collective worship has been central to the improvement of church school distinctiveness, behaviour and relationships. Leaders value both worship and religious education, and consider them to be essential in a Christian school. Statutory requirements regarding their provision are met. Governing board minutes evidence that church school distinctiveness is regularly discussed. Leaders have introduced a systematic programme of monitoring and evaluation. Reports following these visits show that strengths and progress are celebrated, and that areas for improvement are identified for further action. This systematic monitoring has addressed an area for development following the last inspection. The school has established links across the wider community which enrich the life of the school. Set at the foot of the South Downs, the school has created valuable links with groups such as the National Trust and Arts Society South Downs. Pupils gain rich experiences across the curriculum through the outdoor learning offered by the Bury Rangers programme. Pupils are proud of a range of impressive outcomes in art including lino prints of beetles and ceramic houses representing the historic buildings of Bury. The focus on outdoor learning has been recognised widely and the school has received an award from the South Downs National Park Authority for its 'creativity and enthusiasm to connect children with the environment and their community.' Links with local charities enable pupils to gain appreciation of how others live and provide them with a wider understanding of national and global issues. Good links with the local church and the support of the vicar are valued by pupils and parents. The school opens its doors to welcome all in the community during the 'Love Bury' community event where parents play an important part in supporting the life of the school.