

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Bromesberrow St Mary's Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

Albright Lane
Bromesberrow
Ledbury
Herefordshire
HR8 1RT

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Gloucester
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Date of inspection	16 March 2017
Date of last inspection	28 March 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 115675
Headteacher	Laura Hankins
Inspector's name and number	Karen Surrall 842

School context

Bromesberrow St Mary's is a small primary school with 63 pupils on roll taught in three classes. There is an on-site pre-school which is part of the school's early years foundation unit. There are currently more children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) than the national average and there is a high number of children leaving and joining the school in all year groups. The school has a significant Gypsy Roma Traveller community (18%). The school is part of the Leadon Valley benefice, along with 9 other parishes. The current headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection and she has been in post for four years.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bromesberrow St Mary's VA Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- The school has distinctively Christian values which are prized by all members of the school community and these effectively underpin many aspects of the school's work.
- The headteacher and senior leader have a clear vision of the journey for the school as a church school and they have successfully included all stakeholders, with clear benefits for learners.
- There is a fully inclusive ethos within the school where all children and their families are encouraged to thrive and where the school's vision of '*excellence in all and for all*' is lived out within a Christian context.

Areas to improve

- Make more effective use of governor visits so that they focus on the impact of the school's distinctive Christian character on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of learners.
- Explicitly plan experiences and questions across the curriculum, including in religious education (RE), so that the school's Christian values can be related to pupils' own spiritual journeys.
- Ensure that the new spiritual, moral, social and cultural development policy enables pupils to understand the complexity of Britain in the 21st century and Christianity as a multi-cultural, worldwide faith.

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

The school has developed a strong Christian vision based on distinctively Christian values. These permeate many aspects of the school and have shaped its approach to issues of attendance and achievement. The current leadership is passionate about including the disparate groups within the school community so that all feel equally valued and respected. As a result, attendance has improved from 88% four years ago, to 95.5% at present and achievement and progress have improved for all groups of learners. The personal development of all learners is at the heart of the school's mission and learners are encouraged to 'reach for the stars', by living out the school's five core values and by developing a growth mindset. This ensures that the children have a clear understanding of themselves as successful learners and responsible citizens within a Christian context.

The behaviour of learners is exemplary and this is universally attributed to the Christian values of the school. These are prominent in displays across the school and are discussed perceptively by the children. Parents readily acknowledge that the 'values are lived out daily by all members of staff' and how this has an impact on the behaviour of the children. Learners speak highly of their teachers and the way that they use the values to help them learn how to become better people. They can identify how the Christian values make a difference, both at school and at home. The Christian character and values of the school contribute well to the personal wellbeing and daily lives of all learners.

The school has recently created a SMSC development policy where spirituality is defined as 'Life is not about the number of breaths you take but the moments that take your breath away'. Lesson planning does not currently support the policy by enabling experiences to be identified within the curriculum to allow pupils to explore ideas of spirituality. Consequently, teaching does not always sufficiently support pupils' SMSC development or the school's Christian values.

The children enjoy their religious education (RE) lessons and learning about other faiths and communities. They have visited a mosque and Gloucester cathedral and the older children have an impressive knowledge about the tenets of a wide variety of faiths and religions. However, they are not always able to see how these faiths are reflected in Britain today or to see Christianity as a multi-cultural, worldwide faith. This means that RE contributes inconsistently to learners' SMSC development and to the Christian character of the school.

The school has a strong distinctive Christian character which is reflected in the behaviour, attitudes and relationships within the school community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The school has fully embraced the development points from the last inspection so that collective worship is given great value and has significant impact on the lives of all members of the community. Children enter the worship space singing, allowing a peaceful and reflective start to their time together. Worship is enhanced by the beautiful worship table which acts as a focus for this time. Artefacts such as candles and liturgical colours support pupils' understanding of both the Trinity and the church calendar. Children have an impressive knowledge of some of the key elements of the Christian faith such as the Fall and Redemption. This is because teaching is carefully matched to learners' understanding and linked through biblical teachings to both the life of Christ and the school's Christian values. Learners readily explain how worship times have had an impact on their lives. Following a series of worship times focussed around forgiveness a child in Year 2 explained 'I am better at forgiving my brother at home now'. Worship is well led by members of staff and by local clergy although there is at present no involvement with other Christian traditions.

The worship team lead the liturgy at the beginning and end of worship and a time of prayer. Themes are carefully planned and the Bible is seen as a 'self-help manual', from which all members of the community can learn how to make appropriate choices. This results in children who are inspired to treat each other with respect and to take responsibility for charitable actions. They perceive these as following in the footsteps of Jesus, whatever their own personal beliefs are.

There are several reflection areas around the school. Those in the entrance area and in the garden are imaginatively resourced and frequently used at break times. They are valued as places of quiet reflection and sometimes as a way to record thoughts and worries through the prayer leaves and candles. However, those in the classroom lack focus and cohesion so that learners are not always able to use these spaces interactively to support their own prayer life or desire for reflection.

Learners in Class 3 regularly and frequently lead worship in Class 1 through the 'Jack in a Box' resource. The older ones are independent in deciding who will take the lead each week and the elements within the service. Discussions amongst themselves have led to Class 3 becoming much more confident so that this time of worship is greatly appreciated by the younger children.

Although governors regularly attend times of worship their reviews of these times are not sufficiently focussed on

either the distinctive Christian character of the school or pupils' SMSC development to bring about meaningful dialogue and change. The leader for collective worship regularly monitors its impact on the whole school through a variety of ways including asking pupils to comment on each act of worship. This has led to improvements such as the length and quality of the prayers which are written by the older pupils and focus specifically on the current Christian value. This results in prayers that are meaningful to the children and allows them to express their thoughts with clarity and at length.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The achievements of pupils in RE are in line with national expectations and some pupils, particularly the older ones, are enabled to show a greater depth of learning and understanding. This is because the majority of teaching is good and assessment procedures are robust. Where teaching is only satisfactory, children are not asked searching questions about how their learning might be applied to their everyday lives. As a result of this, some teaching of RE does not support the school's Christian values or pupils' SMSC development. Where teaching is strong, learners have a high level of skill and can discuss difficult concepts with a high degree of understanding. In response to the resurrection, a child had painted an open door with light flooding through. 'God opened the door to bring light to the earth' he explained. The use of 'Gary's Big Questions' has enabled older pupils to show how RE is developing their SMSC understanding and building on the school's Christian values.

RE has a high profile within the school and is a core subject. Leadership is strong and monitoring by the leader of RE has led to decisive action. For example, it was seen that children in some parts of the school did not have a sufficient understanding of Christianity so there has been a renewed focus on the teaching of Bible stories. Children are now able to discuss the life and person of Jesus, as well as some stories from the Old Testament with a good degree of understanding. Governors have been involved in monitoring RE but do not currently ask probing questions about the purpose of RE and its effectiveness in preparing pupils for life in a multi-cultural world. The RE curriculum is effective in teaching all pupils about the key features of other faiths and beliefs and the children are respectful and knowledgeable in their discussions. This has been supported by the visits that pupils make to places of worship and by visitors to the school.

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

Since the last inspection, the newly formed senior leadership team has developed an inclusive, distinctly Christian vision. Care is taken that this is accessible to all children and families, regardless of their faiths and beliefs. The school has developed a culture of mutual respect, where all are encouraged to 'reach for the stars'. Consequently, all leaders can readily articulate and promote a vision based on distinctively Christian values. This has led to improvements in behaviour and in the progress and achievement of pupils that are clearly ascribed by all stakeholders to the school's distinctive Christian character.

Leaders are well supported in their role as leaders in a church school, through the allocation of resources and in the accessing of high quality training by the Diocese of Gloucester. The impact of the training for the leader in RE and in collective worship is evident through effective action plans and monitoring records.

Self-evaluation by the headteacher and senior teacher has led to clear-sighted improvement plans which have had a real benefit for learners. Governors are increasingly offering challenge through insightful questioning so that they are more effective in their role.

Newsletters to parents foster good relationships and support pupil achievement by detailing the weekly learning in each class and the focus for collective worship. These are particularly valued in a community where many children arrive by bus and parents do not have a daily contact with school. There are close links with the local church and the school seizes every opportunity to be involved at diocesan level as well as in the local church and community.

These have given confidence to learners so that they are better prepared for the next steps in their education.

The school has met all the development points from the last inspection so that there are real benefits for learners. RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements.

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