

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Bemerton St. John Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School	
Lower Road, Bemerton. Salisbury. SP2 9NW	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Salisbury
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Wiltshire
Date of inspection	22 March 2017
Date of last inspection	23 April 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	VA 126434
Headteacher	Alun Richards
Inspector's name and number	Lorraine Pugh 819

School context

Bemerton St. John is a smaller than average primary school with 210 children on roll. The school serves the local villages of Bemerton and Quidhampton as well as Wilton and Salisbury. Children are predominantly from White British backgrounds. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals and the pupil premium grant is below the national average. The number of children receiving extra support for special educational needs is also below the national average. The headteacher was appointed in 2011. The school is full and significantly oversubscribed.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bemerton St. John as a Church of England school are outstanding.

- The school's Christian values are deeply embedded in all aspects of school life and are known and followed by all members of the school community.
- The inspirational and caring leadership of the headteacher, supported by the religious education leader, enables children to achieve high standards within a highly effective Christian environment.
- Teaching about Christianity in collective worship and religious education makes a significant impact on the school's Christian character.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that governors strengthen their strategic leadership capacity, so that any future organisational changes will not adversely impact on the school's current outstanding Christian distinctiveness and effectiveness.

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

Bemerton St. John is an outstanding church school because core Christian values of perseverance, thankfulness, thoughtfulness, fairness and respect strongly underpin all aspects of its work. Values are explicit, well established and thoroughly understood by children and other stakeholders. They were chosen through a wide consultation process and are constantly re-enforced in school communications. These core values are taught to children from the very beginning of their time at Bemerton St. John, successfully raising their feelings of self-worth and desire to be the best they can be. Academic standards are at least in line with national age expectations and children make at least expected progress from their individual starting points. Parents recognise the impact of the values on the school's approach to learning and how this supports their children's achievements. Parents also recognise and appreciate the extra support given to children when it is needed. Each child is seen as unique and those joining the school with known difficulties swiftly settle, soon becoming valued members of the school community. The school is described as a place 'where everybody listens and where even the smallest concerns are dealt with quickly and sensitively, preventing them becoming larger issues'. Behaviour is exemplary, with politeness and respect clearly evident, both inside and outside of the classrooms. The school's Christian ethos gives children the necessary skills to nurture and maintain positive relationships. They understand that forgiveness can be difficult sometimes but explain that it's good to give a second chance. The school is ambitious for every single one of its children and those of all abilities are supported and challenged in their learning through careful questioning and differentiated tasks. Opportunities for spiritual development and reflection are seen throughout the school building and within learning, successfully supporting children's awareness of themselves, others and the world around them. School staff have a shared understanding of spirituality and this successfully allows them to not only plan spiritual encounters but to also recognise spiritual moments that occur through the school day. Reflection time is evident within lessons as well as worship, and this gives children the space to think about what they are doing and what it means to them. Children know about other cultures and faiths, understanding the importance each faith to those who follow them. They clearly explain why it is important to treat everybody with respect, regardless of difference. The school's commitment to teaching its children about the importance of diversity is shown in their being awarded the British Council International School Award. Religious Education (RE) is a popular subject that has a significant role in shaping the Christian ethos of the school. The passionate and skilled RE leader ensures that standards are at least in line with other core subjects and this is clearly evident in the high quality of the children's work. Children's acts of Christian service and responsibility are shown in their charitable work. They are consulted about the charities they wish to support and their decisions guide the outcome. Some causes have direct links with the school's community and this successfully allows the children to appreciate what charitable support can achieve.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

Collective worship has a strong central place in daily life clearly reflecting Bemerton St. John's Christian character. Children confidently recall worship themes talking positively about their impact on everyday actions. Each core Christian value forms a termly focus and this successfully supports children's understanding of their meaning and how they apply to daily life. Biblical stories are linked to the school's values, allowing children to define them as Christian values. For example, they clearly explain that the value of thoughtfulness is shown in the story of The Good Samaritan and that this shows them the importance of treating others how you would like to be treated. Children describe worship as a special time for everybody to meet together and a time to learn how to be better people. Thoughtful planning and a range of worship leaders play an important role in making worship an engaging and enjoyable experience for the whole school community. Local church members organise weekly 'Open the Book' worship where Bible stories are dramatized. Worship is inclusive and adults go to great lengths to make attendance possible for children whose behaviour could make it a difficult part of the school day. Pupils receive a rich variety of worship experiences and they say worships in the church are particularly special times. The local community has raised a significant sum of money to retain the St. John's church building as a multi use Christian space. The school uses it for a wide range of activities, including events to bring the local community together, such as the tea party organised by the children for elderly residents. Anglican traditions are used and children are able to explain their significance, for example the lighted candle to show that Jesus is listening. The Trinity is taught at an age appropriate level and children are able to describe God as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Prayer and reflection are especially important features of worship and children have many opportunities to create their own personal prayers, clearly appreciating its importance in their lives. Children say they like the way their prayers are shared with others, however, they explain that their privacy is respected if they want to keep their prayers to themselves. Each classroom has a reflection space that has been designed by the children in their own particular style. Children enjoy the opportunities they have to plan and lead worship. The children's Church Council is well established in its role, gathering the worship views of others as well as organising activities such as a 'lunchtime prayer' writing competition. The worship leader has formalised systems for planning, monitoring and evaluating worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.

The religious education (RE) curriculum is exciting, engaging and challenging. Standards are at least as high as those in core subjects and its content significantly impacts on shaping the school's Christian character. The school's RE provision has been awarded the Silver and Gold Quality Marks. These national awards recognise schools with exceptional RE provision and significant evidence has to be submitted to be successful in reaching the necessary standard. Assessment is regular and detailed, showing the children's attainment within the expected standards for their age. The school uses the Wiltshire agreed syllabus, the Discovery scheme and other high quality resources. The work in books is of the highest quality showing independent ideas, care and pride. Children appreciate and articulate both sides of key questions stating, 'Sometimes we disagree but we still respect everyone's views.' Religious education themes also include key events such as child led Remembrance Day services and Anti-Bullying week, with references made to the Christian values of the school. Religious education teaching is sometimes blocked into focused weeks and this is successful in maximising pupil interest, enthusiasm and impact. Children are not only learning about religion but also from religion. Detailed portfolios and a 'Reflection Book' illustrate the richness of the RE provision. They include learning statements from the children, which provide valuable assessment information, as not all evidence of learning will be found in children's individual workbooks. The responsive learning behaviours of children in lessons and the quality of teacher questioning to promote deeper thinking is exemplary. For example, older children were asked to consider whether the Christian message is evident today through listening to the lyrics of a current pop song. They were able to identify messages of love, hatred, fairness and care of the world and its people, concluding that the Christian message is as relevant today as it was 2000 years ago. Children study other faiths and are able to discuss their key features as well as similarities and differences to Christianity. Children said that they particularly enjoyed learning about Diwali because they were able to experience some of the features of this important Hindu festival. Opportunities for children to have first hand faith and cultural experiences strengthen the school's multi faith teaching and the school actively searches for visitors and visits linked to different faiths and cultures. This has increased children's understanding of the importance of each faith to those who believe in them. Regular monitoring and professional development ensure all members of staff acquire the necessary skills for delivering high quality RE teaching. Collaborative learning takes place with the RE leader's work across a number of other schools and her involvement with the Diocese. Governors have a strong presence within the school and undertake their own regular monitoring of RE. The information gathered informs the governors when challenging the school leadership regarding RE teaching and learning. Significant expertise exists within the school and this is utilised to its fullest capacity in order to enhance RE provision. This includes the involvement of governors, church members and local church clergy.

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

The vision, ethos and ambition of the school are clearly rooted in its distinctive Christian values and this has been pivotal in the school's success and increased popularity. The development points from the previous inspection have been fully addressed. The school's ambition to be an outstanding church school is reflected in its unique success in being awarded the Silver and Gold Quality Mark for RE. The headteacher, supported by his leadership team and governors, ensures that children and staff are central to all school decisions and policies and this has resulted in a vibrant, caring school where everybody is valued. The core values have been made explicit to every member of staff who have a clear understanding of how to support the individual needs of all children. The annual 'Visions and Values' day, for governors and leaders, ensures an understanding of the school's Christian vision is being continually explored and provides opportunities to discuss further developments. Curriculum information, including RE and worship themes, are communicated to parents and this is successful in encouraging further discussions at home. Procedures are in place and efficiently used by leaders to rigorously monitor the effectiveness of RE, worship and Christian distinctiveness. This information guides the school's further development as a Christian school. Governors are aware of the leadership strength in the school. They also recognise that strategic measures have to be increasingly considered to ensure the school's outstanding Christian practice is maintained, should any future organisational changes occur. The RE leader articulates how she continues to develop RE and worship and also describes the impact of past actions. She supports other schools' RE development, in her role as the local RE network leader, having been recognised for her outstanding leadership at Bemerton St. John school. The school's leaders, foundation governors and clergy meet regularly to evaluate and develop the school's Christian character, showing the strength of the school and church working together and the high value placed on this partnership. The establishment of the St. John's Place community space has been a very significant positive outcome from this working together. Strong working partnerships with the Diocese and other training providers have supported the high quality professional development of leaders and this has been successfully used to develop other adults in the school. Parents praise the school for the way it nurtures their children in love and Christian values, making it a highly effective and distinctive church school. The statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are met.