

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### Baydon St. Nicholas Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Ermin Street, Baydon, Marlborough, SN8 2JJ	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Salisbury</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Wiltshire
Date of inspection	14 March 2018
Date of last inspection	13 March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 126394
Headteacher	Caroline Knighton
Inspector's name and number	Neil Revell 894

#### School context

Baydon St. Nicholas has 139 children on roll. It serves a predominantly rural area within the parish of Whitton. The majority of children live outside the school's catchment. The proportion of children with special educational needs is in line with the national average. The percentage of children in receipt of pupil premium funding is below average. Most children are of White British heritage. Overall attendance is above the national average. The headteacher took up post in September 2016. There is currently building work to replace a temporary classroom.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Baydon St. Nicholas as a Church of England school are good

- Children have a secure understanding of a broad range of Bible stories and very confidently relate the school's Christian values and choices which they make in life to biblical material.
- The school and churches within the benefice work very closely together especially in the planning and leadership of inspirational collective worship which has a significant and positive impact on children's thinking, attitudes and decisions.
- Many children confidently express measured, reasoned opinions about a broad range of matters while also showing high respect for those whose views may differ. This is a result, in large part, of the school's shared understanding of spirituality and increasing opportunities to apply this across the curriculum.

#### Areas to improve

- Ensure that the new Christian vision is firmly established so that all aspects of school life, including strategic decisions, are both shaped by it and self-evaluated against it.
- Develop children's understanding of diversity in a range of faith communities to deepen their appreciation of multi-culturalism.
- Increase opportunities for all children to verbally express their views in religious education (RE) lessons in order to maximise opportunities for children's spiritual development.

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

The actions of Year 6 children at Baydon St. Nicholas collectively enabling and encouraging a peer with health challenges to win the prized Year 6 sports day race in Summer 2016, of their own volition, is testament to the way in which the school supports, fosters and encourages children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. It is also evidence of the way in which the school's Christian character is all-pervasive, shaping relationships and influencing choices which are made. Determined leadership of the headteacher resulted in a timely review of the school's Christian values, arising in part from a focus for development from the previous inspection. All members of the school community speak with passion and enthusiasm about the community-wide consultation which culminated in perseverance, kindness and respect being chosen. Within a relatively short period of time, these values have become integral to many aspects of school life and are part of the shared vocabulary of the school in classrooms, at break times and in the dedicated breakfast and after school clubs. Parents speak of children talking about the Christian values out of school and children say that, because of everyone's shared commitment to the values, the school is 'a society of friendly people, looking out for each other, working and living together in total respect'. Children's achievement is consistently at least in line with national standards. The school has built a framework for spirituality based on 'windows, doors and mirrors'. There are frequent opportunities, both planned and spontaneous, to reflect and explore deep questions across the curriculum. Children are very passionate and confident to share their own reflections while respecting and, if applicable, modifying their own views based on the opinions of others. They also readily refer to the school's Christian values when expressing opinions. One child commented, 'it is very hard to really, truly, deeply respect anybody else's perspective because we can never actually get into someone else's skin which means that respect is inevitably always a bit more shallow than it ideally should be which is an unfortunate reality of life'. Children are excited by opportunities to reflect and to learn in religious education (RE) and understand that Christianity is a diverse, multi-cultural world faith. 'The mountain is the same but there are different paths to climb it' was one child's metaphor to explain diversity within Christianity and there is widespread respect expressed for everyone regardless of their belief systems. Children are generally less forthcoming in their knowledge about diversity in other religions and about multi-culturalism. Some children describe themselves as Christian, some say that they do not have a faith, but all articulate that they thrive at the school and that there are many 'vitaly important' opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development 'which really help you to understand more about life and about living'.

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

The impact of collective worship is captured daily in much-cherished reflection books. Comments including, 'today's worship taught me that when the sea gets wild, I must remain calm' and, 'the worship today was really touching and has taught me how important it is to serve others' are typical of deeply reflective and meaningful responses which show that worship does make a significant difference to the lives of members of the school community. When children and staff were, hypothetically, asked, 'what would we lose if we stopped our daily collective worship?', responses were unanimous in emphasising how much collective worship means to them with one member of staff writing, 'we would lose our sense of identity; collective worship is a time for us all to reflect on our own situations and to link these with biblical teachings'. Recently each of the school's new Christian values has been the focus of collective worship for a term with surveys taken before and after the term to gauge the impact of the worship on people's Christian understanding of that value. When reflecting on the term's collective worship about perseverance, one child commented, 'I will always persevere no matter what. The more times you fall, the easier it is to get up if your faith keeps you going. It has also made me think more about additional challenges for people with disabilities to persevere. I respect people even more now than I did before'. Thus the school has introduced a range of means to evaluate the impact of collective worship on children's lives which was a focus for development in the previous inspection. The children have a very secure knowledge of a range of biblical stories and are able to link learning about their school values with parables, miracles and old testament texts. They have a deep understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The school held a 'trinity day' through which children have explored the concept of 'three in one'. Children describe the Holy Spirit as a 'silent watcher', an 'invisible teacher' and as a 'reassuring guide'. Children enjoy the opportunity for prayer which is at the heart of every worship, saying that it provides a time to 'think about our own wisdom and how we will respond'. Children sing with gusto and are challenged to deeply consider the words and lines in songs and to use these for further self-reflection about school values and their own SMSC development. One of the key strengths underpinning the school's outstanding collective worship is the close partnership with clergy from the benefice who work with dedication alongside the headteacher and the children's worship committee to plan worships and to share in the leading of these. Children say that the vicars support them to 'find Bible stories which help to explain the messages that we want to share with the whole school'. The vicar from St. Nicholas Church and other clergy in the benefice, as well as the Methodist minister, regularly lead school worship and the children also attend worship in the local church at various points in the year. Children respect and appreciate the variety of worship in different Christian traditions.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

Religious education (RE) has a high profile within the curriculum and makes an important contribution to the promotion of the distinctive Christian ethos. The subject is well-led by the deputy headteacher who has skilfully ensured that the curriculum reflects revised national expectations within the context of mixed-age classes where combinations of year groups working together can change on an annual basis. She also works with staff to ensure that there is a secure theological underpinning to all aspects of learning. Teachers deliver the subject with confidence and with good theological knowledge. Staff are excited by the newly-introduced 'Understanding Christianity' resource and value the opportunities which this provides for staff and children to explore Christianity in greater depth. Children's achievements are in line with the expectations of the syllabus; the school undertakes comprehensive assessment of individual achievements in the subject which was a focus for development in the previous inspection. As part of this the subject leader monitors work regularly and ensures that additional support is tailored for children if appropriate. Children have a good understanding of RE curriculum themes. Children enjoy RE and feel safe to express their opinions and to represent their learning in a variety of creative ways. As one of the teachers said, the school interprets learning in RE as being like a tricycle. The first 'wheel' is that information about religions and the world must be shared with children, the second 'wheel' is that skills such as analysis and enquiry are taught and the third 'wheel' is that learning is acted upon, as appropriate, in children's own lives. 'The three wheels provide stability and a solid base and keep you on the right track'. It is clear that this mirrors children's understanding of the deep value of learning in RE with one child in Year 6 saying, 'RE helps us to consider big questions and to grow in our understanding of everybody's beliefs. It can change how we do things for the better and that has to be a good thing'. Opportunities, though, for children to verbally express their views in lessons are not always maximised especially when there are additional adults, as well as the teacher, in a classroom. Children in Years 3-6 are confident in using and referring to the Bible and 'really enjoy reading sections from the Bible', saying that doing this is 'awe-inspiring' and 'really helps makes people like Jesus and Moses seem closer to us'.

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

The headteacher, working in partnership with governors, staff, and with external support, has led a comprehensive process to articulate a clear Christian vision for the school, which was a focus for development from the previous inspection. Accompanying the vision there is a separate 'school strapline', namely 'succeeding together', but the direct links between this and the vision are not obviously stated. The vision, with the 'nurturing' of 'happy, confident and resilient children' at its heart, is still very new and is not currently integral to strategic planning and self-evaluation by leaders. Vision and values together shape the school's focus on ensuring the well-being of every member of the school family. Parents praise the importance placed on pastoral care by the school. They give examples of how this has given confidence to individual children which, in turn, helps them to secure good academic outcomes. This all plays a part in the school's high overall standards of achievement. The school's vision of providing a 'Christian environment' is realised, in large part, through its very close partnership with the local church. The vicars are frequent visitors in school which, children say, 'makes us understand that church and school are like two arms on the same body'. In turn, a vicar from the benefice team speaks of the rich benefits which this partnership has on the church. On Education Sunday children from the school spoke in the church service about the school's values, meaning, as a team vicar said, that 'everyone in school and church is on the same page and that is incredibly powerful for our community'. Children and staff attend church services and are involved in leading elements of these at different points in the year. The school also has a very good relationship with parents and carers. In its most recent parent/carer survey, every parent agreed that the Christian values and ethos run through school life with all parents also agreeing that their child is well looked after at the school. Governors and staff work with the diocese, benefiting from diocesan development training in RE, collective worship and on the role of governors. Foundation governors have formed a committee which canvases children's views to inform the school's self-evaluation of its impact as a church school. However not all self-evaluation focuses sufficiently on the impact of the school's work. The chair of governors was resolute in her determination to maintain and develop, above all, the school's distinctiveness following the retirement of the previous headteacher after twenty-four years of service. The successful appointment of the current headteacher is securing this. School leaders, including governors, work in close partnership with other local church schools. The joint, locally-arranged, Year 6 leavers' service where children get to meet and work with each other prior to transition to secondary school, is an example of the benefits from this school-to-school collaboration. The school meets statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report March 2018 Baydon St. Nicholas Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Wiltshire, SN8 2JJ