

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

West Kirby St Bridget's Church of England Primary School

St Bridget's Lane, West Kirby, Wirral, CH48 3JT

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Chester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Wirral
Date of inspection	01 February 2018
Date of last inspection	April 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 105062
Headteacher	Neil Le Feuvre
Inspector's name and number	Sue Mawdsley 930

School context

St Bridget's is a larger than average voluntary controlled primary school. It serves an area of social and economic advantage. The proportion of pupils identified as disadvantaged is low. The number of pupils with special educational needs is lower than the national figure. Pupils are of predominantly White British origin with very few pupils speaking English as an additional language. Since the last SIAMS inspection the headteacher provides regular support to other schools in the Chester Diocese. Two newly appointed assistant heads deputise in his absence. The school has recently achieved the Rights Respecting School Award Level 2.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Bridget's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- School leaders have a compassionate and highly ambitious Christian vision for the school community, leading to a shared culture of purpose and achievement.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is woven through school life. The school's Christian character promotes a deeply held respect for diversity and equality. Pupils are strong advocates for social justice.
- Collective worship is highly valued and themes inspire a deep level of spiritual and moral reflection which impacts strongly on pupils' personal development.
- The school is highly valued by its community. Partnerships are exceptionally strong, inclusive and mutually beneficial.

Areas to improve

- In order to sustain leaders' clear Christian vision for the school, ensure that the school's Christian values are clearly articulated as the basis for whole school strategic planning and policies.
- Strengthen pupils' ability to link school Christian values and Biblical teaching by improving their knowledge of the life and teachings of Jesus.

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

St Bridget's core Christian values of faith, hope and love are deeply held by the whole school community. They have a significant impact on the continuing development of this vibrant and successful school. The school is rightly proud of the high academic achievements of its children, but this sits within a strong commitment to the flourishing of every child as a unique individual. Parents speak movingly about the school's values and how they have a significant impact on relationships and achievement. 'The teachers are genuinely interested in every child,' said one parent. 'They help each child to march to the beat of their own drum.' School leaders are highly tuned to the challenges for children growing up in a modern, competitive world. For example, staff and parents alike speak about the significant impact of a well-being programme introduced into the curriculum for older pupils in helping build resilience. As a result of strong teacher pupil relationships and a rich values based curriculum, pupils enjoy coming to school. Absence rates are low and exclusions very rare. Pupils are friendly and caring. A clear link is made between the school's positive reward system and its Christian values. As such, pupils can readily explain their approach to behaviour in terms of the Christian ethos of the school as well as the school's motto 'Together Everyone Achieves More'. The playground behaviour charter, based on Christian values, is prominent around school and understood well by the pupils. One pupil said, 'Our values are not rules you follow; they are what you show inside. It's about being the best we can.' School values are prominent in all aspects of school life and pupils understand they are Christian values from the Bible. All classes have a 'values book' where children record their thoughts about different activities in school related to Christian distinctiveness. Some values books have a passage from the Bible with the words 'faith, hope and love' underlined and older pupils are able to talk about this passage as the source of their core values. Pupils are less confident in knowing how their values are manifested in the life and teachings of Jesus.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is woven through the life of the school. Pupils are highly articulate and confident in expressing their thoughts and views on a wide range of contemporary issues. As a result of the work the school has done on the United Nations Convention for the Human Rights of the Child, pupils are passionate advocates for equality and respect diversity. They clearly express the links between their school's Christian values and aspects of the United Nations Convention. One striking example of this appreciation of every individual as unique is in a large prayer tree that takes a prominent position in the school's entrance. Every child and adult in school brought in a different piece of ribbon to tie on the tree as a celebration of diversity. Pupils speak with feeling about the message this conveys. 'This tree shows how we are all different but equal,' said one pupil. Pupils, staff and parents participate actively in fund raising for local charitable causes, particularly to combat homelessness. They care deeply about the importance of the contribution they make. Pupils also know how people are inspired by their faith. They understand, for example, how Corrie ten Boom's faith moved her to help others. There is a shared sense of spirituality throughout the school. Prayer corners in classrooms show that pupils reflect and pray sensitively on a wide range of themes and issues relevant to their lives.

Religious Education makes a strong contribution to Christian distinctiveness. Pupils say they enjoy RE lessons, especially learning about different faiths. During the inspection, an RE lesson with older pupils enabled them to compare Christian and Jewish places of worship and pupils responded thoughtfully. One pupil said, 'It's important to learn about other faiths so we understand and respect each other.'

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is highly valued and vibrant. It has a significant and deepening impact on the life of the school. It takes place in a variety of settings and is led by a range of different people. Some larger acts of worship focus on singing and celebration, while smaller class and key stage worship gives opportunities to explore themes carefully targeted to age and experience. All members of the school community see collective worship as engaging and relevant, with many opportunities afterwards for Christian reflection. The day of the inspection was the feast day of St Brigid, the patronal saint of the school. Worship centred thoughtfully on the life of St Brigid, linking her perseverance with school values and how we can learn from her faith by showing perseverance in our own lives. Pupils responded thoughtfully in class afterwards, using their own St Brigid's cross for personal reflection. Pupils talk about Anglican traditions in collective worship. They understand the centrality of prayer and often make up and say their own prayers. They join in a variety of responses to greetings in worship and talk about lighting the candle as a symbol of Jesus as light of the world. Pupils increasingly read from the Bible within collective worship. Personal spirituality is well developed within the classroom and each class has their own prayer corner. There are examples of pupils using these spaces for reflection outside collective worship. One child explained how she had made a 'special blessing box' out of card for the prayer corner with pieces of paper inside to write blessings on. Staff are especially appreciative of the time dedicated to adult prayer and reflection before their weekly morning briefing. They speak movingly about the value of this time in reflecting and praying together, taking it in turns to lead prayers.

A noticeable development is the strong and deepening partnership with the local church which is adjoined to the school grounds. Several services a year are held in church, led by staff, clergy and pupils. The local vicar and school leadership team have given much thought to developing a shared home school understanding of the purpose and nature of worship. They have changed the format of school services to enable a stronger focus on creating moments to be still in a sacred space. Parents, in particular, commented on enjoying the change, saying services now are a moving experience. Pupils have a developing understanding of the Trinitarian nature of Christianity and some older children have taken part in the Eucharist.

Collective worship is led well and carefully planned. The leader for collective worship bases themes on the school's core Christian values and the vicar has begun to link these to Biblical passages. Since the last inspection, evaluation of worship has been effectively organised to include the whole school community. Suggestions have been taken on board, for example, encouraging pupils to be more active in worship. This has led to the introduction of action songs and instruments. The school choir uses actions and percussion instruments to lead the rest of the school. Pupils who are learning to play the drums accompany the singing enthusiastically and with confidence, adding a tangible sense of energy and enjoyment. Pupils help plan and lead worship and are beginning to take more ownership. To extend the rich experiences already in place, the school has rightly identified giving pupils more responsibility for planning their own acts of worship as its next focus for continuing development.

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

The committed headteacher articulates a powerful and passionate Christian vision for the school. He is ably supported by two newly appointed assistant heads, as well as hard working staff and governors. The leader for RE and collective worship contributes effectively to development planning. Governors know the school well and give an effective balance of challenge and support for school leaders. They have a clear understanding of their strategic role in a church school. School leaders describe convincingly how their Christian vision sits at the heart of decision making with the best interests of the child at the centre. As a result, pupils achieve high academic standards but equally excel in a broadly balanced and rich curriculum. This is particularly evident in the commitment leaders have shown to achieving the advanced level accreditation of the Rights Respecting School Award. This has had a significant impact on pupils' personal development and well-being. They show a deep sense of care for each other, our world and its people. School leaders evaluate the school effectively and all stakeholders contribute to development planning. Since the last inspection, the work of the governors' ethos committee has been pivotal in developing aspects of Christian distinctiveness. Its work is effectively underpinned by a Christian working group which includes pupil and church representation. One example of the group's significant impact is in promoting the more consistent use of classroom prayer corners. Pupils now engage with prayer corners more actively and they are valued spaces in the classrooms. The RE and collective worship leader is passionate about her role and leads the subjects well. Arrangements for collective worship meet statutory requirements. RE has a high status in school, with detailed action planning for improvement. Standards in RE are monitored and evaluated robustly. As a result, pupils enjoy RE and it makes a significant contribution to their education. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors speak with passion about their school mission and the Christian values which underpin it. However, this link is not always clearly expressed in written form. A number of aspects of strategic planning, development plans and key policies are not explicitly linked to the school's Christian values. As a result, the Biblical basis linking strategic planning and Christian distinctiveness is not clearly established in documentation.

The staff see the headteacher as a visionary leader who lives out the school's Christian mission, valuing every member and supporting their well-being. Newly qualified as well as experienced teachers receive appropriate training that equips them to teach with confidence in a church school. The school's assistant heads ably lead the school when the headteacher is absent. Their enhanced role has had the benefit of raising their profile in school and contributes significantly to their development as Christian leaders. Through involvement in supporting other church schools, the headteacher has also enhanced his own leadership skills and strengthened links within the local diocese. Partnerships are strong, particularly with parents and church. Parents cite many ways in which they participate in the life of the school. They see the headteacher as a strongly committed Christian leader who is ambitious for all children to be happy and successful. Parents' views are gathered regularly and acted upon. They particularly enjoy their involvement in school worship and church services, which were described as 'uplifting'. Partnership with church is flourishing and dynamic. The vicar has an important role as a governor member of the ethos committee and supports school leaders well, particularly in developing Christian distinctiveness. There is a real sense of Christian mission in engaging everyone in a common goal with the flourishing of every child at the centre. Many in the school community describe its leaders as 'never standing still'. 'It doesn't matter what you look like or sound like or behave like,' said one parent. 'This school is really good at finding a role for every child.'