

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Broxbourne Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School	
Mill Lane, Broxbourne, Hertfordshire EN10 7AY	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese / Methodist District [delete as appropriate]	St Albans
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	N/A
Date of inspection	20 January 2017
Date of last inspection	January 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	VA Primary 117437
Headteacher	Paul Miller
Inspector's name and number	Mel Adams NS 58

Context

Broxbourne is a smaller than average primary school and nursery with 240 pupils on roll. Since the previous SIAMS inspection, there have been leadership changes including the headteacher, deputy headteacher and religious education [RE] leader, along with some new class teachers. Two co-chairs have led the governing body since September 2016. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities and disadvantaged is well below national average. A large proportion of pupils are from Christian families, and there are a small number from different faiths and cultures.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Broxbourne Primary as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Within the strong and nurturing Christian ethos of the school, pupils thrive in their learning and relationships, developing confidence to take on challenges.
- Daily collective worship, which extends across the school day through class and personal prayer, supports all members of the school community in their spiritual growth.
- The headteacher has rapidly demonstrated a drive to ensure that the vision and values are clearly understood, supporting inclusion and good standards.
- The vicar's strategic partnership with the school provides challenge and support for school leaders, staff and pupils, sustaining and developing the Christian character of the school.

Areas to improve

- Extend learning in RE by consistently providing learning tasks, which enable pupils to express and develop religious understanding.
- Deepen understanding of religion by building on recently implemented philosophical thinking, and extend these skills to all year groups.
- Extend understanding of the worldwide Christian Church to support spiritual and cultural development.

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

Broxbourne Primary is a school where the vibrant and nurturing setting, inspired by the school vision, 'love learning, love God, love life, love each other' enables all pupils to thrive. The vision is expressed through Christian values, which permeate the school, underpin collective worship, and support good relationships between all those who work and learn together. Staff, new to the school, speak of the striking way they observe colleagues and pupils, 'knowing the values, and wanting to do them'. They are evident during lessons, where, inspired by the theme of collective worship, pupils organise themselves, and discuss perseverance and resilience in their learning. In RE, pupils learn about the values, and apply them. In one lesson, younger pupils, exploring why God chose Moses, are able to speak of his character and values, and how this inspires them. Children enjoy their learning and enjoy coming to this church school, resulting in good attendance. Behaviour is exemplary, supporting pupils to learn well, and make good progress. These day-to-day experiences in school contribute to excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural [SMSC] development. The RE curriculum provides well for SMSC development and the schools's Christian character, with a governor describing how it 'gives them a moral compass'. Parents fully appreciate that the Christian culture creates a community where their children are cared for and 'given space to grow'. Recognising the impact of the values, they observe children of all ages being thoughtful and respectful, with one parent describing an activity out of school where an older child had spontaneously helped her child. Through the practical application of the vision, there is a clear and well-established understanding of spirituality as a church school, where pupils say that they enjoy learning about Jesus and how the Bible inspires their values. Lessons enable pupils to offer their ideas and take risks, knowing that their contributions will be valued. The ethos leads to the celebration of achievements however small, fully supporting the schools commitment to inclusion. Building on one of the areas to improve from the previous inspection, the introduction of philosophy for children is developing thinking skills and questioning, and deepening understanding. In considering ultimate questions, pupils debate whether there is always a definite answer, and challenge each other's assumptions, further enhancing their spiritual, social and moral development. Through daily worship in school, and visits to the local St Augustine's parish church, pupils gain a good understanding of the Christian faith. They have some understanding of Christian festivals around the world, but the school recognises that the understanding of Christianity as a worldwide, multi-cultural faith is in need of development. Great enthusiasm is shown for supporting charities, inspired by the needs of others, both locally and around the world. The pupils' Kingfisher Council, representing all classes, has led activities raising impressive funds, most recently for Water Aid.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Pupils, parents, staff and governors speak without reservation about the vital importance of daily collective worship creating the setting, which is at the heart of the dynamic Christian ethos. Steered predominantly by Bible stories, from which a range of Christian values is drawn, worship is made relevant to pupils of all ages. Pupils are able to articulate how, 'all our values mean something; they help us to be committed to never giving up'. They say using values helps them to solve problems and develop friendships. As a result, one of the youngest pupils speaks of seeing a friend alone at playtime, and offering to play with them because this is showing kindness. Prayer is an integral part of collective worship, and pupils confidently say together the school prayer and the Lord's Prayer. They appreciate that when worship leaders pray, they are asking God for help for different things. Worship extends into the school day, as pupils use classroom reflection areas and other spaces around the school, to write their own prayers. Some of these are used in classroom prayers, daily worship, or are published in the parish magazine. Staff appreciate the 'space to talk to God, have a stilling time, and re-centre and put things in perspective.' The focal point for daily worship, the lighting of three candles, symbolises God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, supporting pupils' understanding of the Trinity. They describe how Jesus came to earth as God in human form and that the Holy Spirit 'is always there with us, like God with us'. Pupils of different ages speak of Jesus as the light of the world, one pupil explaining, 'He shows us the way and takes us through the darkest times.' The vicar is a frequent visitor to the school, leading worship regularly. Providing pastoral support for members of the school community, he describes 'being there through the good times and the bad, taking time to be with God and adding a note of hope'. Through celebrating Easter, Pentecost and Christmas in the church, pupils have a good understanding of the church year. The prayers and hymns help them gain understanding of Anglican faith and practice. This is further developed through pupils' participation in parish services, which are well supported by parents, who speak of valuing being able to enjoy for themselves the worship, which regularly inspires their children. 'Hooked on worship' is a group of pupils of all ages, who work together in different teams to plan, prepare and lead worship regularly. These times are greatly appreciated by other pupils who say that they enjoy hearing from their peers, who, 'sometimes help us to understand things better because they are children too'. Evaluation is carried out through discussions between school leaders and clergy. More recently, the views of older pupils have been collated, giving insight into their personal understanding, along with understanding of the wider community and the world. One pupil described how, for them, 'compassion means being there for someone'. Another, speaking of justice, commented, 'there are hundreds of injustices in the world and many are not right at all.'

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Pupils say they enjoy learning in RE. They understand the importance of learning about Christianity and other religions, and how this enables them to develop understanding of faith and worship. As a result, they are supported in making their personal choices about faith. Teaching throughout the school is good, with most pupils achieving in line with age related expectations. Where pupils are given tasks, which enable them to demonstrate both knowledge and understanding, attainment and progress are good, in line with the standards in the school. This is illustrated where a younger pupil, learning about Hanukkah is able to explain the importance of light for those of Jewish faith. They then apply it themselves, saying, 'Light makes me feel safe because it reminds me of Jesus.' Some tasks, such as writing a simple recount, restrict the development of religious understanding and limit progress. The school has identified the need to provide quality tasks, including challenge for higher attaining pupils. Pupils see a real link between RE and daily worship and how the knowledge and insight gained support understanding of Christian faith and values. This is illustrated by a pupil responding to a question in assembly about why Peter was called a rock. Pupils say they enjoy learning about Jesus in RE and how this links with the values they hear about in assembly, supporting their understanding of Christianity. They have a growing understanding of other faiths and cultures, and speak with enthusiasm about visits to a range of places of worship helping them 'to understand that people talk about faith in different and exciting ways'. They say they would like to have more visits and have the opportunity to meet children from different faiths, and the school acknowledge this. The school values are evident in RE, providing rich opportunities for SMSC development. This is evident where pupils are able to identify the qualities of the characters they learn about, illustrated by a younger pupil, considering why God chose Moses, concluding that it is 'because Moses had already shown God that he could help people'. RE is assessed termly, providing an overview of progress for each class and across the school. Outcomes of assessments are used to support the next steps in learning. This is also used to evaluate the effectiveness of some aspects of the curriculum, most recently Christianity. Consequently, the RE leader is revising the scheme of work. This has been supported by staff training from the diocese. The RE leader works with the headteacher and the vicar, who ensure that RE has an important profile within the school. The governing body is fully informed of developments and regular reports from school leaders, along with visits to school, support their understanding of teaching and learning. Providing support and challenge, the vicar, in a report to the governing body, identifies that the school should consider using philosophy for children skills, 'as a way of eliciting discussion of ultimate questions within RE'.

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

Appointed since the previous denominational inspection, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have successfully sustained the commitment to the school vision and Christian values. Newly appointed co-chairs of governors have rapidly embraced their strategic roles. They work with school leaders and the governing body to ensure that the vision is at the heart of strategic planning, resulting in a powerful focus on every individual child. This is described in the school's as 'being fully inclusive and striving to enhance the life chances of all its members regardless of their circumstances'. Consequently, attainment and progress of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and the disadvantaged are often above expectations. RE and collective worship are well led and managed, and meet with statutory requirements, with school leaders, the vicar and governors working exceptionally well together. This ensures that all staff, including new leaders and teachers, have professional development opportunities resulting in a clear understanding of the importance RE and collective worship. This is ensuring that all staff understand their responsibility in supporting the school's Christian character. The partnership with the diocese has been strategic in providing appropriate support and training. The partnership between the school and church, and other local churches, is highly valued by the school and parish communities. This is evident from the way pupils, at a time of bereavement in the community, led fund raising events for the charity, 'Guide Dogs'. Parents speak of the school, and its close relationship with the church, as being a close community, and an integral part of the local community. They value highly how pupils learn about the Christian faith, one saying that 'it blends well with what we teach them at home'. They are aware of how the values are applied in school seeing pupils 'looking after each other'. Parents recognise, and are grateful for, the way staff 'take the time to use the values' in supporting pupils to sort out problems, saying, 'this shows that they really care'. Governors, through ongoing evaluation, have a good understanding of the performance of the school and its Christian distinctiveness. Areas for development are accurately identified in the school improvement plan, which includes maintaining actions from the previous inspection. Governors are very clear that their work is undertaken in light of the vision and values, describing 'prayer surrounding' meetings. For example they observe pupils able to discuss matters such as justice and fairness, relating these to their own lives. In addition they see pupils demonstrating empathy for each other and the outside world. As a result, governors understand how these experiences support strong SMSC development throughout the school.