

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Bridstow Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School	
Bridstow Ross-on-Wye Herefordshire HR9 6PZ	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Hereford
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Herefordshire
Date of inspection	10 November 2017
Date of last inspection	19 September 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 116869
Executive Headteacher	Daniel Brearey
Inspector's name and number	Karen Surrall 842

School context

Bridstow CE Primary is a smaller than average rural school with 89 pupils on roll. In April 2016 it federated with Brampton Abbots CE Primary School and both schools share an executive headteacher. Each school has its own governing body. The school has an average number of vulnerable children. There are fewer children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) than similar schools nationally. Since the last inspection there have been a number of staffing changes. The school has close links with the local parish church of St Bridget.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bridstow Church of England (VA) Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- This is a good church school where leaders are clear about the areas for improvement so that good practice is embedded and weak practice improved.
- There are excellent relationships between home and school which are underpinned by distinctively Christian values so that children flourish in an atmosphere of mutual respect.
- The clear Christian vision of the executive headteacher has moved the school forward in a relatively short period of time so that standards for all children are rising rapidly.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that teaching in religious education (RE) makes comprehensive links across different faiths and cultures so that pupils are able to understand religious diversity in local, national and global communities.
- Ensure that the reflective life of the school enables all children to be confident in using prayer and reflection in all areas of their lives, supporting their individual spiritual journey.
- Create robust monitoring systems of the school as a Church school so that there are clear and measurable outcomes and the impact of actions taken is well-defined.

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

Bridstow is a school that is growing in confidence in understanding itself as a church school. There is a suite of Christian values which are focused on for a month at a time. Through consultation with all stakeholders, the school has now developed a core set of four values that better emphasise the distinctively Christian character of the school. The values that the children have chosen reflect their profound sense of what the school means to them. These values are respect, friendship, happiness (joy) and trust. These values are clearly related to biblical teaching within the school so that most members of the school community can relate them to the life of Jesus. The distinctively Christian values of the school impact on every aspect of life in school. Parents speak highly of 'The Nest', a place where all children are welcomed to spend time when they are finding life challenging. 'It is a place to find an ear and to feel safe and secure,' commented a parent. Parents see the school as a very good church school where the Christian values have been 'imprinted' from Reception onwards. They value the positive and caring relationships within the school. Excellent behaviour is universally linked to the Christian character and values of the school. This is a school where children enjoy their learning and know that they are supported to 'shine' in every aspect of their school life.

The school has taken robust action over the last two years to ensure that the academic achievements of all children are of the highest standards possible. For example, all children, whatever their starting points, have reached the required standard in phonics by the end of Year 2. The headteacher relates this to the way that the school's distinctively Christian character informs decision making. As a result, the expectations for teaching and learning across the school have been raised so that the progress of all groups of pupils is improving rapidly. The school engages well with parents so that attendance has improved and there have been no exclusions since the last inspection.

The Christian values and character of the school contribute inconsistently to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. The 'Community Larder' project is a shining example of how the school has engaged the pupils in understanding that not all people in their locality are as fortunate as themselves. The ever-present table in the entrance area encourages all pupils to contribute to this project, which they do regularly. This is in contrast to the children's limited understanding of diversity and difference, particularly that Christianity is a multicultural, worldwide faith. There is some understanding of spirituality amongst leaders, but this is not yet sufficiently well understood by all staff to enable learners to develop a personal spirituality.

RE is enjoyed by all pupils and they are enthusiastic about what they are learning. They are encouraged to think deeply about how they can apply their learning to their everyday lives. These questions are not routinely grounded in the school's Christian values so that RE contributes inconsistently to the Christian character of the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is important to all groups of people within the Bridstow community. Parents welcome the half termly invitation to celebration assemblies so that they readily understand the impact that these times have on the school community. The children eagerly discuss the impact that collective worship has on the life of the school. They particularly enjoy hearing that they have been recorded in the 'Golden Book'. Teachers record times when they have noticed individuals whose behaviour reflects the Christian character of the school and sometimes the current value or one of the four core values.

There are close links with the local church of St Bridget, with the Open the Book team making fortnightly visits. Learners of all ages explain how these occasions really help to set the school's values in their Christian context, so that they can see that they are 'following in Jesus' footsteps'. Consequently, pupils are able to discuss with confidence how the life of Jesus, the Bible and the school's Christian values impact on the daily life of the school. Pupils have a good understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Worship times begin with music and participants are asked to focus their thoughts on a lit candle. This is placed on a table together with a cross and a Bible. Regular calls to worship and responses are infrequent so that these times don't always reflect Anglican liturgy and practice or the Church of England heritage of the school. A well-planned programme of visitors, including the vicar, ensures that collective worship contributes well to learners' spiritual and moral development and they are inspired to take action in the service of others.

The advent tradition at Bridstow is valued by all and encourages children, through reflection and stillness, to concentrate on the true meaning of Christmas. Each week an additional candle is lit, signalling a growing anticipation of this important festival in the Christian calendar.

Children understand that prayer is a 'time to respect God' and there are several times of prayer throughout the school day, although this is generally a joint, learned prayer rather than having any form of spontaneity. Prayer is not yet seen as a personal encounter or as having a place outside the school day. There is an attractive reflection area within the library which is beginning to be used as a place for quiet thought and contemplation. The newly appointed RE monitors are keen to see this area used more frequently and to establish a similar area outside.

Reflection areas inside the classrooms encourage learners to think about the values of the school. Children enjoy taking part in the worship times and are adept at managing the organisational details. They are keen to take more of a lead and to plan and deliver worship times more often. Feedback on collective worship from all stakeholders has led to some changes but this is not detailed enough to really show the impact of monitoring.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

Learners enjoy their RE lessons and engage well with the themes and topics taught. They are encouraged to see how the teaching of the Bible can be related to their everyday life and they understand the importance of RE. They have a satisfactory knowledge of Christianity, but their understanding and knowledge of other faiths and religions is not good enough. This means that they have a limited understanding of the similarities and differences between different faiths. The school has begun to use the Understanding Christianity resource to enable learners to focus on 'big questions' around key ideas and apply their learning with meaning and purpose. This is too new an initiative to show real improvement so far.

In the lessons observed teaching was generally good and the work produced was of an acceptable standard. The RE books show that there is good progress in the children's knowledge of Christianity as children move through the school but this is not true when learning about other faiths. This is because children are not encouraged to make links between common ideas such as prayer or celebrations. Tasks that enable children to work at greater depth are not regularly planned for so that more able children do not always work to their full potential.

Planning does not routinely link the teaching of RE with the school's values. Consequently, RE has only modest links with the distinctively Christian character of the school. The RE curriculum is increasingly ensuring that teaching addresses pupils' SMSC development so that they are developing a range of skills such as enquiry and reflection. The school's assessment system shows that standards in RE are similar to those in other core subjects. At present there is limited in-school moderation and no moderation with other schools to ensure robust teacher assessment. The headteacher currently leads RE but another member of staff is being prepared for this role. This includes training around the Understanding Christianity resource and developing partnerships with staff at Brampton Abbots. The RE leads have a good understanding of teaching and learning within the subject and effectively communicate the improvements required to staff and governors.

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

The headteacher has worked hard to ensure that the school's vision to 'Shine as a Light in the World' underpins every aspect of life at Bridstow, including its distinctively Christian character. This is exemplified by the high level of resourcing that is given to those children with SEND and those who are more vulnerable. The SEND lead is held in high regard by both parents and staff and her almost fulltime post ensures that these children are enabled to make good progress at Bridstow. This vision and its origin to the story of St Bridget is well understood by all stakeholders.

Governors ensure that the school is one that 'won't overlook the individual'. Children are clear that the vision to 'Shine as a Light in the World' relates to both the life of St Bridget and to Jesus as the light of the world. 'It is important for us to be our best' explained a child in Year 3. As a result, children achieve well, matching the national average at the end of Key Stage 2 and at the end of the Early Years Foundation (EYFS) stage. Key Stage 1 data shows that these pupils achieve slightly below the national average.

Governors have made significant decisions, such as forming a soft federation with another voluntary aided Church of England school, with the school's distinctive Christian ethos at the heart of the process. All stakeholders are clear that both schools have different personalities but are drawn together by their shared Christian ethos. Governors know the school well although, as yet, monitoring systems are not robust enough to ensure that the impact of actions taken is clearly discerned. The school has met the development points from the last inspection sufficiently to show progress that has impacted positively on outcomes for pupils.

Partnerships are strong at Bridstow. The forming of the soft federation is increasingly enabling staff to work together and the partnership has brought the school an experienced and effective headteacher. The Wye Valley Learning Network is a group of 14, principally Church of England, local schools. Regular meetings between senior leaders, including the RE leads, has resulted in a clear action plan. At the heart of this is a desire to ensure that children develop a deeper understanding of other faiths and cultures through mutual collaboration.

The school prepares its staff well so that they are able to take on the challenges of leadership. This is typified by the way the role of RE lead is being gradually transferred away from the headteacher. The school meets its statutory requirements for RE and for collective worship.