



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### **Barlaston Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School**

Broughton Crescent  
Barlaston  
Stoke on Trent  
ST12 9DB

**Previous SIAMS grade: Good**

**Diocese: Lichfield**

Local authority: Staffordshire

Dates of inspection: 7 May 2015

Date of last inspection: 28 April 2010

School's unique reference number: 124233

Headteacher: Mandy Clarey

Inspector's name and number: Susan Taylor 688

#### **School context**

Barlaston Church of England VC First School is a small but expanding school with currently 100 pupils aged 4-9years. The majority of pupils are of a white British background and almost all pupils speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils in receipt of pupil premium is average. There has been a complete change in teaching staff since the last inspection. The church has been in a period of interregnum and a new incumbent has very recently taken up post.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Barlaston Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School as a Church of England school are good.**

- The clear and consistent vision of the headteacher, governors and staff is evident in all aspects of the school and impacts upon pupil development, well-being and learning.
- Children confidently relate the school's Christian values and motto to life and learning at school and home.
- Pupils have an openness and understanding of prayer, illustrating excellent spiritual development.

#### **Areas to improve**

- Involve governors more formally in the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of worship and the Christian effectiveness of the school.
- Develop the range of creative opportunities and participation in worship to enable pupils to engage further.
- Make collective worship planning more explicitly linked to Biblical teaching.

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

The Christian ethos in this school is excellent and permeates every aspect of school life. The school has six Christian values; honesty, thankfulness, forgiveness, peace, trust and friendship, which underpin every aspect of school activity and the well-being of the pupils. These values are very evident on the website and in parental information and documentation so all parents and visitors can have no doubt as to the Christian ethos of the school. The badge on the school uniform clearly shows the school's Church of England foundation and the school motto. The older children can explain why this new badge tells people so much more about their school than the previous one and are very proud to wear it. Parental questionnaires show that parents value the Christian distinctiveness and think it makes a difference to their children's attitudes and motivation to attend school and behave well. Displays in the school clearly link the motto of "Let Your Light Shine" to the school values, with their root in Biblical teaching. These values are fully embedded and have created an environment where the Christian distinctiveness has led to high standards of learning and behaviour. Pupils are fully aware that the values come from the teachings of Jesus and often apply them using "What Would Jesus Do?". All staff are excellent role models and form a united team and set an excellent example to the children. The consistency in their approach to pupils and parents enables all pupils to develop their potential in both their well-being and academic achievement. Statistical evidence shows that all children make good progress in their learning including the most vulnerable and the more able. Due to thorough tracking systems intervention for individuals and groups are quickly implemented so that all children achieve very well. A sensory room and outdoor learning solar dome caters well for the differing emotional and learning needs of the children. A well-planned outdoor area and spiritual garden gives pupils opportunities to develop their spirituality. Pupils speak freely of their feelings "*when I am outside I feel peaceful*", "*I can picture a rainbow with my family and friends under it*". Children are enthusiastic about their learning in religious education (RE). By providing a broad and balanced curriculum encompassing a range of learning styles the RE subject leader, who was new to the school this academic year, has ensured that the subject makes a clear contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education (SMSC). Links with a school in Ethiopia have enabled pupils to develop their cultural awareness and appreciation of Christianity as a world faith. Through the school making full use of opportunities including visits, visitors and themed days pupils have a high degree of respect for, and a developing understanding of, other faith communities and religions.

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

Worship at Barlaston CE(C) First School is planned and delivered so as to reinforce the school's Christian values. This has an impact on attitudes and relationships. Children are enthusiastic about collect worship, especially the weekly class worships, and can speak about the stories and associated message. Collective worship includes Bible passages and teaching about Jesus but as this is not central in long-term planning some opportunities for range and depth about Christian belief are missed. Members of the church lead worship weekly in school and the school visits the church for services four times a year, this gives the children some understanding of different worship styles. Collective worship routinely includes song, prayer and reflection and pupils value this quiet thinking time. Children light the candles to signify the start of worship and know that the three candles represent God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and consequently, relative to their age, have a good understanding of the Trinity. There is a clear, permanent worship focus area and display and as a child said "*I can look at the candle and see Jesus*". The music and pictures on the screen when children enter the hall enable them to reflect, so providing opportunities to develop spiritually. The blessing prayer is said daily and the Lord's Prayer on occasions and even the youngest children are confident and enthusiastic to come out and say their own prayer. Pupils enjoy the weekly family worships and parents value this opportunity to attend and bring younger siblings. The school has correctly identified that a wider range of styles, creativity and pupil input would enrich collective worship.

Children have some idea of Anglican traditions which are enhanced by church visits and visitors. The Bishop of Stafford has lead worship and explained his job and the symbolism expressed through his vestments. Each classroom has a reflective area which includes a prayer box. These areas are well used and children value them and often write their own prayers. There is a prayer tree, prayer stones and other artefacts in the central area, which are well used and give opportunities for spiritual development. One child said “*if I have a worry I can put a stone in and pray to Jesus*”. A strength of the school is the way children speak openly about personal prayer and this has shaped the way they respect and care for others. The headteacher, who is worship leader, records outcomes of worship themes through impact statements. The next step would be to include Foundation governors in the evaluation of the impact of worship as this would generate more evidence to highlight pupils understanding of core Christian beliefs and Bible teaching.

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

The school is led by a headteacher whose personal Christian faith influences her leadership of the school and the opportunities and outcomes of the pupils. From her appointment interview to the present day her vision of building the school around the motto of “Let Your Light Shine” and the Christian values that follow has not wavered. Consequently all staff, governors, parents and pupils share this vision and it influences pupil attitudes, relationships and learning. Pupils are actively encouraged to put Christian values into practice through a range of charity giving such as water-aid and global issues such as Fairtrade. The school has links with a school in Ethiopia and this has helped pupils’ cultural development. Governors give a high profile to Christian distinctiveness in staff appointments and so the team, mostly new appointments since the last inspection, are very united and embrace the vision and this has moved the school forward. The Church link worker works closely with the school, running a well- attended Christian club and being part of the church worship team. This, together with church members and visiting clergy, has enabled the church links to continue during the recent interregnum. Now that a new incumbent is in post these links could be even further enhanced. RE is given a high profile in the school and the new RE subject leader has had a major influence on the effectiveness of the school. A Bible study group entitled “So Why God?” is enjoyed by the many children who choose to attend and consequently their knowledge of the Bible has grown. The school works closely with the diocese, the local authority and neighbouring schools and takes every opportunity for training, sharing and development so as to improve their practice. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They know they can speak to a member of staff at any time and say that any issues are dealt with promptly. They say that pupils are well-prepared for transfer to the middle school by the caring attitude and high expectations of the school and pupils being encouraged to be independent learners. One area of development from the previous inspection was to develop prayer beyond collective worship and this has been well achieved. Another area was to record evidence of impact in the self-evaluation document. This document says much about the provision but it still lacks written evaluation of impact, although evidence is available in the school. Governors are involved in the life of the school and are a welcome support to the headteacher and staff, who they support both practically and prayerfully. Although they feel that the school is effective as a Christian school they do not formally monitor, evaluate and report back on this.

SIAMS report May 2015 BarlastonCE(VC) First School, Barlaston, Stoke on Trent ST12 9DB