

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Brindle St. James Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

Water Street, Brindle, Chorley, Lancashire PR6 8NH

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Blackburn
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Lancashire
Date of inspection	23 March 2017
Date of last inspection	June 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 119462
Headteacher	Janet Webborn
Inspector's name and number	Anne B. Woodcock 445

School context

Brindle St. James is a very small school. It serves a wide, mainly rural area near Chorley in south Lancashire. Virtually all of the 65 pupils are of White British heritage. They come from mixed, but predominantly affluent socio-economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding for social disadvantage is well-below average. The school supports a lower than average number of pupils with additional needs. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes. The headteacher has a 20% teaching commitment.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Brindle St. James as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The outstanding vision and leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by the assistant headteacher, governors and staff, has created a harmonious, distinctly Christian learning community in which every member is valued as unique and special.
- Well-established Christian values inform and direct every aspect of school life. They inspire supportive, nurturing relationships and impact very strongly on pupils' excellent behaviour and very positive attitudes to life and learning.
- The outstanding collective worship and Religious education (RE) contributes significantly to pupils' excellent spiritual and personal development.

Areas to improve

- Extend pupils' experience of different faiths and cultures, including multi-cultural Christianity, so that they can deepen their understanding of diversity and difference.
- Involve all members of the school community in reviewing the school's mission statement to ensure that it continues to accurately reflect the school's vision and values.

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

The school's distinctly Christian character is immediately felt by visitors. Christian values are prominently displayed and consistently used by all members of the school family. 'Christian values are the things God wants us to be like,' stated a Year 1 pupil. 'They come from God through the stories Jesus told.' The values of Christian love and trust permeate all relationships and they impact very strongly on pupils' excellent behaviour. 'We treat others as we wish to be treated, we forgive and are good friends,' explained a Year 2 pupil. Pupils are eager, confident and articulate learners. Their attitudes to life and learning are extremely positive. They are inspired and excited by their lessons. Attendance is high and pupils show remarkable resilience, striving to meet the challenging targets set for them. Consistently good, often outstanding teaching supports all pupils within the mixed-age and ability classes. School and national data shows that all pupils make very good progress from their starting points and standards of attainment are consistently high.

Provision for pupils' spiritual growth, personal development and well-being is excellent because it is woven seamlessly throughout the rich and exciting curriculum. Pupils are passionate, highly reflective learners who are encouraged to think deeply and express their ideas creatively. They benefit from regular, high quality learning experiences, both in school and through visits to the theatre, concerts and art galleries. The outdoor learning environment is used effectively so that pupils explore the natural world and come to appreciate their responsibilities for its conservation. Pupils' responses are reflected in the high quality displays of art, prose and prayer seen throughout the school.

The school's vision and values, which are explicitly stated in all public documents, impact strongly on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. RE makes an outstanding contribution to the school's distinctive Christian character and to pupils' SMSC development. Pupils accept responsibilities willingly and show respect for the feelings of others. Parents recognise that the varied curricular experiences provided enable their children to develop spiritually and personally. 'Our children leave this school as happy, well-rounded people who are ready to meet future challenges,' stated one parent. The school is a vibrant, highly distinctive and effective learning community based on explicit Christian principles. This is ably reflected in a piece of work in RE. One Year 5 pupil wrote, 'A good Christian puts others before themselves, teaches others about Jesus and loves everyone, including enemies.' It shows that the school's vision for children to 'learn to love God, love one another and themselves' is fully achieved.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is a much valued and integral feature of the daily life of the school. It is inspirational, inclusive and participatory. Pupils' attitudes are extremely positive because teachers make it fun and memorable. They explain that worship time is unique and special because it brings everyone together to worship God. 'I enjoy worship because it gives me time to think about what I believe in and I can learn more about God and Jesus,' stated a Year 5 pupil. Themes which are firmly founded on Bible teaching and Christian values are explored creatively. As a result, pupils have a very good knowledge of Bible stories and Jesus' life and teaching. 'Jesus performed miracles of healing and used parables like the Good Samaritan to teach us about how we should love and care for each other,' stated a Year 4 pupil. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the Christian concept of the Trinity is good. The consistent use of three candles and opening greetings and responses which refer to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, support their understanding very well. 'Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to his disciples and it gave them courage and strength to do his work,' explained a Year 6 pupil. Pupils understand God as a caring father, creator and king.

The level of pupil participation in planning, leading and evaluating worship is exemplary. The well-established worship at Brindle (WAB) group take responsibility for planning and leading worship independently on a very regular basis. For example, they prepared and led last week's 'World Water Day' worship. Their aim was to help people understand how lucky they are to have clean water and show how some people have to cope without it. Feedback from their peers illustrated that they had achieved their aim. Pupils participate actively during worship led by staff, clergy and visitors. They enjoy helping to act out parables and recall some 'awesome' events which surprised everyone, such as the time when the headteacher hid a £5 note inside a lemon.

Prayer and reflection are key features of the worship life of the school. Pupils write and use their own prayers, many of which are displayed around the school in books and on prayer trees. They also volunteer to read and extemporise their own prayers during worship. They know the Lord's Prayer and have investigated how this is written in many different languages.

Strong links with the church enhance the worship experience and support pupils' spiritual growth. Pupils worship in church regularly at festival times and they lead worship on other occasions, such as Education Sunday. Parents

attend these services and the achievement worship held in school because they value being able to share in their children's work and worship. Clergy lead worship regularly in school. Pupils therefore experience traditional Anglican practices within a range of settings.

The monitoring and evaluation of collective worship is exceptionally robust. Feedback from pupils, staff, governors and visitors informs future planning and insight as to the impact worship has on their attitudes and beliefs. As a result, collective worship continues to evolve and inspire.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The profile of RE is exceptionally high. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their lessons because they excite and inspire them to consider personal beliefs and find out about the beliefs of others. Lessons are extremely well-planned to meet the needs of the mixed-age and ability classes. Teachers' subject knowledge is thorough and they are very well supported by the subject leader who ensures that they are thoughtfully guided and resourced. The diocesan syllabus is used creatively so that pupils investigate, explore and analyse challenging questions of faith and belief. High quality teaching ensures that all pupils participate at their own level. Teacher questioning encourages pupils to deepen their understanding and reflect on meaning. As a result, pupils make outstanding progress and standards of attainment are high. This was ably illustrated in one lesson during which the youngest pupils reflected on 'what I think about the cross'. Two Year 2 pupils wrote, 'I think Jesus must have felt very sad because he was on the cross. There's one bit of good news because he died for us. God said that it had to happen and Jesus agreed.'

The leadership of RE is exceptionally strong. Rigorous assessment and tracking processes, which include consistent marking and pupil feedback, ensure that gaps in learning are identified to inform future planning. Pupils are fully engaged in the process so they know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve. RE is effectively monitored by senior leaders and governors so standards continue to rise. Governors scrutinise work alongside staff. Progression and the high quality of pupils' work is reflected in their work books and class scrapbooks.

Through their study of Islam and Judaism, pupils gain knowledge of and respect for different faith systems and cultures. They enjoy finding out about how other people worship God. They are able to describe key facts and identify some similarities and differences. For example, older pupils described the link between The Last Supper, the Jewish feast of Pesach and the story of Moses leading the Jews out of Egypt. However, the school recognises that the provision of a wider range of experiences will further enhance their learning.

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

The leadership of the headteacher is exemplary. Her distinctive Christian vision is explicitly expressed and fully supported by the assistant headteacher, dedicated staff and a skilled, committed governing body. All work harmoniously together to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met within a distinctly Christian learning environment.

Rigorous church school self-evaluation engages all members of the school community. It ensures that church school issues are identified and prioritised within whole school improvement planning. Leaders recognise that the current mission statement does not do full justice to the school's Christian vision and practice and that a review is needed to ensure that it remains relevant and effective. Governors monitor and evaluate the work of the school robustly. They challenge and support, consistently seeking to raise standards and improve outcomes for pupils. They ensure that the needs of all pupils are met through the effective use of increasingly limited human and financial resources. Issues from the previous denominational inspection have been fully addressed and the impact of changes continues to be monitored leading to ongoing improvements. Governors have secured outstanding leadership for RE and collective worship. Both meet all statutory requirements and are well-supported and resourced. As a result, standards in RE continue to improve and the impact of collective worship on pupils' knowledge, attitudes and behaviour is outstanding.

Partnerships with the church and diocese are extremely strong. Diocesan support enhances the provision for RE and collective worship through, for example, attendance at pupil RE conferences. As a member of the Yarrow Teaching Alliance the school benefits from continued professional development which support teaching and curriculum development. Strategic development and succession planning is well-considered. For example, the assistant headteacher has completed the Christian leadership course. The pupil voice is exceptionally strong. Pupils know that their opinions are valued and acted upon and they are very proud of their many roles, responsibilities and achievements. Their understanding of wider world issues, such as poverty and injustice, is supported through the well-established link with Pencott School in Uganda.

