

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Brinscall St John's Church of England / Methodist Primary School	Harbour Lane Chorley PR6 8PT
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese/Methodist District	Blackburn Diocese Chorley and Leyland Methodist Circuit
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Outstanding
Local authority	Lancashire
Date of inspection	24 November 2016
Date of last inspection	April 2012
School's unique reference number	119705
Headteacher	Linda Clayton
Inspector's name and number	Jo Williams 863

School context

Brinscall St John's School is a medium sized primary school, located in a rural area with joint Anglican and Methodist foundations. The school has a small percentage of pupils who are eligible for free school meals and the number of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average. Since the last inspection there have been several key staff changes. A new headteacher was appointed in 2014, several long serving staff have retired and some teachers have gained promotion in other schools.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Brinscall St John's C of E / Methodist Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The school benefits of strong leadership that is deeply rooted in the clear Christian vision and has a direct and positive effect on the well being of the school community.
- Christian values are lived out across the school and this is demonstrated through pupils' exemplary behaviour.
- There are meaningful relationships in the school based on trust resulting in pupils feeling safe and cared for.
- The school contributes to a wide range of well established, effective partnerships, many of which are mutually beneficial.

Areas to improve

- To support pupils' growing spiritual development through providing increased opportunities for pupils to plan and lead worship with greater independence.
- To undertake a more reflective approach when evaluating assemblies to ensure that pupils' worship experiences are both deeply meaningful and of a sustained high quality.

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

The vibrant Christian character of the school has a direct impact on pupils' learning with sustained high academic standards as outlined in national tests over several years. Pupils draw on the school's chosen core Christian values, such as determination, to support them in their lessons. The mission statement, 'Precious in God's sight, living, loving, learning', is lived out across the school ensuring high levels of pupil well being. Attendance is excellent and exclusions are rare. Parents appreciate the fact that the school gives security to their children by ensuring that they know they are special. As one parent said, 'The love of God shines through everything'.

The Christian character of the school underpins pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils share their thoughts with confidence and empathy demonstrating a deep understanding of complex issues. This was demonstrated in pupils' enthusiasm for learning about global topics alongside the desire to write a prayer for a friend during playtime. Relationships are rooted in the Christian character of the school. Staff explained that they modelled the school's Christian values which subsequently results in pupils' exemplary behaviour throughout the school day. Pupils talked of the importance of making eye contact when listening to one another and responding to one another's ideas with respect. One pupil reported, 'our ideas matter'. Highly effective pupil relationships were also demonstrated when older pupils supported younger children in a woodland adventure to find the Gruffalo. The story of 'Sparkle' the toy swallow's journey to South Africa, used in worship, has contributed to pupils' well developed understanding of Christianity as a multicultural worldwide faith. Likewise, multi faith weeks and well planned Religious Education (RE) units ensure pupils' respect for other faiths. Experiences such as visitors to the school through church links with Kenya and a focus on British values have secured pupils' deep understanding of diverse communities.

RE is viewed as a core subject and has a high profile within the school. The subject is key in supporting the Christian character of the school and provides effective challenge to support pupils' wider spiritual development. Pupils described how they valued times to reflect in RE lessons with one child commenting, 'It helps us engross in the story and put yourself in that person's shoes ... what would you be thinking or saying?'

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is central to the life of the school. Pupils described its impact as a calming experience providing them with space to find peace and think of others. One child commented that worship is when 'you're learning about God but in a big meeting'. Pupils are keen to share ideas they have heard in worship at home, one child asking if he could borrow the DVD about the life of Corrie Ten Boom to show his parents. Collective worship is distinctively Christian and draws upon the school's half termly Christian values. Key church traditions are regularly included in worship such as sharing in the peace and using recognised church responses. Bible passages are key in underpinning the daily acts of worship which are based on the church year. This ensures pupils' deepening understanding of church traditions. Worship is used to enrich pupils' experiences of being part of a worldwide church. Visitors in worship such as representatives from Fairtrade, Christian Aid and the Salvation Army broaden pupils' understanding of the Christian faith across the world.

Prayer is central to the life of the school. The chair of governors began the first meeting of the inspection with prayer. There are frequent opportunities around the school building to engage in prayer, from a prayer cave in a classroom to a box of paper and pencils outside to write prayers at playtime. Pupils are confident in turning to prayer for different situations. One child commented that 'God's like a friend, you don't need to be fancy, just speak to Him'. A parent shared how her children had given a prayer of thanks in front of the Asda delivery man on receipt of their weekly groceries.

Worship utilises prayer and significant times in the church's year, such as Pentecost, to support pupils' increasing understanding 'the mystery' of the Trinity. Pupils spoke of how three different candles are lit in worship and how, as Christians, the Holy Spirit is inside you. Times for reflection and sharing are built into worship thus deepening pupils' spirituality. The Anglican and Methodist clergy are highly committed to supporting the Christian character of the school. This is evident in the support they provide for worship in both planning and delivery. Evaluation of worship is undertaken by both staff and pupils but this is not yet sufficiently reflective to ensure sustained improvements. Pupils' opinions are sought and they contribute to elements of worship planned by staff. Pupils are confident in worship but do not often enjoy independent involvement in its planning and delivery.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE has a high profile within the school and it provides pupils with frequent opportunities to grow spiritually and explore the deeper meaning of Christian values. One child applied a Bible story heard in RE of someone having trust to be healed to his own need for faith to face his fear of an athletics competition. Close monitoring of the subject by teachers ensures that standards in RE compare favourably to other areas of the curriculum. When describing their work in RE one pupil commented, 'I like a big challenge'. Pupils are given 'big questions' and the school employs a 'questful' approach to delivering the RE curriculum. This ensures that pupils frequently employ a range of high order thinking skills. Year 1 pupils were asked 'why did God send Jesus at Christmas?' having explored artwork of the nativity scene from around the world. Responses included 'to love us' and because 'He is the light of world' demonstrating pupils' high level of subject knowledge and empathetic approach.

Teaching is of a high quality providing pupils with stimulating lessons using a wide range of activities including drama, poetry and art. Pupils described an array of activities that supported their learning in RE. These included making clay models of Bible characters, the vicar baptising a baby doll and the acting out of the David and Goliath story. The school's Christian values provide meaningful links in RE lessons. One child explained that RE lessons helped them to live out Christian values in everyday life. RE lessons support pupils' knowledge and understanding of different Christian backgrounds. There is an effective balance between the distinctively Anglican and Methodist traditions with units on John Wesley and visits to both churches. The pupils talked of 'the vicars' coming to RE lessons and how that helped them to understand key questions.

The RE curriculum is predominantly Christian but the school includes teaching on other world faiths. Pupils expressed great enjoyment of a recent 'Multi Faith Week' and visits to different places of worship. Parents described the positive impact that this multicultural approach had had on their children's understanding of diversity. They added that the school was not afraid to tackle difficult issues such as extremism in a measured and supportive context. The leadership of RE is highly effective. The subject leader is rigorous in her approach which has a direct impact in maintaining high standards in the subject. Monitoring and moderation activities and extensive portfolios of pupils' work support staff in undertaking accurate assessment in RE. Staff described their high expectations for standards in the subject and their focus in ensuring that there 'are no barriers to achievement'.

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

The school leadership is prominent in expressing the distinctively Christian vision which is to ensure that every pupil is cherished as one of God's children. Its impact permeates all aspects of school life with a governor describing the Christian vision as being 'within the DNA of the school'. A parent explained that the Christian love in the school was key in her choosing the school for her children. Christian values are lived out across the school ensuring that pupils feel 'Precious in God's sight'. Pupils are encouraged to 'have faith' when faced with challenges and to 'be determined' in tackling them. As a result academic standards are high and pupils feel cared for. When asked about bullying one pupil commented that 'we follow God's rules and do what He asks us to otherwise it will be a horrible world'. The areas for improvement from the previous report have been fully addressed. The school's leadership has highly effective systems for self-evaluation which feeds into rigorous action plans supporting school development. Staff and governors have a strategic approach and work closely together to secure continued improvement. The whole school team knows their school well and the children are the core focus when implementing key actions. The school is very effective in preparing future leadership of church schools. The current headteacher had previously been deputy headteacher in the school. Staff listed a variety of courses and training that was available to them to develop their leadership skills. A teaching assistant described opportunities within the school that had given her the confidence to become a Sunday school teacher in a local church. The school has nurtured numerous effective partnerships both locally and globally many of which are mutually beneficial. There are proactive links between the school and the local churches. A school ensemble regularly contributes to worship at the local church. When asked how is Brinscall St John's CofE / Methodist Primary School different from a non-church school one pupil looked surprised at the question and simply stated, 'Jesus helps us here'.

SIAMS report, November 2016, Brinscall St John's CofE / Methodist Primary School, PR6 8PT.