

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### St Botolph's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Rookery Avenue, Quarrington, Sleaford, NG34 7FE

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Lincoln</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Date of inspection	21 November 2017
Date of last inspection	18 September 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary controlled 132251
Headteacher	Deborah Wilson
Inspector's name and number	Jane Kent 873

#### School context

St Botolph's Church of England voluntary controlled primary school is a larger than average school in the market town of Sleaford. There is very low mobility but the school does provide for some service families. The proportion of disadvantaged children is well below national average. However, in the last eight years there has been a significant increase in the numbers of children who face personal challenges rising from 6% to about 30%. Ofsted has very recently inspected the school. The inspection judged the school to have made rapid improvements in all areas.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Botolph's Church of England voluntary controlled primary school as a Church of England school are outstanding

- At the heart of the school is a shared and explicit commitment to sustaining the Christian character and values of the school in the pursuit of enabling all learners to flourish in their present childhood and in developing attitudes of wisdom and love to shape their adult life.
- Opportunities to reflect on personal attitudes and experiences are abundant and well used by different members of the school community. Significant thought is put into supporting all individuals to manage challenging situations and encouraging learners to be gracious in both receiving and giving help.
- The Christian vision and values of the school are central to leadership. It is confidently lived out with thoughtfulness and consideration.
- The Bible is used as a source of inspiration and knowledge that helps all members of the school community to understand the school's Christian values and respect difference and diversity.
- Collective worship and religious education contribute significantly to the Christian character of the school.

#### Areas to improve

Ensure greater depth to the current established opportunities children have to develop personal spirituality by;

- Developing opportunities to explore and experience spirituality in a range of creative ways.
- Support learners in developing a vocabulary and language to describe the concept of spirituality.

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

During a time of rapid improvement and close scrutiny the school has continued to develop its Christian character powerfully demonstrating its vision statement that says 'through our commitment to Christian values and secure relationships we will nurture, support and empower each other. All our children will have success today and be prepared for tomorrow.'

The Bible underpins the values of school. Key Bible stories with supporting scriptural text help develop an understanding of the Christian roots of the values. They are lived out with respect and sensitivity allowing children freedom of individual choice and exploration. Stories beyond the Bible, historical events, current news from around the world and incidents of every day life are all used to deepen understanding of the values whilst also developing a broad perspective of shared human values.

Children from across the school talk maturely about opportunities to reflect and think about their own behaviours and attitudes and those of other children. They talk about the Gazebo, its red carpet and willow arch describing it as a journey of calm where they can 'lose their worries' and take time to reflect. One child said the values 'help me have the friends I have' and went on to explain how on joining the school they were shown round by other children who 'introduced me to new friends and gave me my own voice'. Each classroom has a well-resourced reflective area. It provides the opportunity to access and read Biblical scripture and create prayers. Large class crosses made by children demonstrate how Christian values are central to attitudes for learning. Children talk about their own class cross, the prayers and hopes they have included in them and the wider meaning of the cross. One child said 'it tells us about Jesus who died on a cross. I can remember he is here.' The school's twelve Christian values have been chosen in consultation with all members of the school community. As a result parents, staff, children and governors alike confidently take personal responsibility in upholding them and contributing to the Christian character. A staff member described the school's character as 'being around you all the time. It's immersive. The children understand it and take it a step further'.

Teaching across the curriculum incorporates opportunities to relate the school's values to wider learning. It makes explicit links between all areas of knowledge and the choices children make. Children can talk about human and natural disasters that have taken place and show a commitment to helping where they can. 'Time to Shine' books hold collections of group and class work from religious education (RE) lessons. Along with individual books these show a wide RE curriculum that contributes significantly to the Christian character of the school. Children talk respectfully and with thought about other world religions. From Early Years to Year 6 they talk about Christianity. Older children identify the differences between religions and talk about the things world religions have in common. Teachers and RE leaders recognise that the mono-cultural profile of rural Lincolnshire provides limited opportunities to easily explore Christianity as a diverse, world faith. Steps have been taken to address this but plans are in their infancy and evidence of children's understanding is still developing.

Parents express confidence and security that all opinions and attitudes are equally accepted and valued. They endorse the school values and explicit promotion of them saying that having a value to think about each half term gives the opportunity for deeper reflection and 'makes the children tender-hearted'. A parent talked about the welcome and care given at the school and recognises them as specific Christian values promoted by the school. She says that her children were 'welcomed, loved and cared for' and for the first time they felt a sense of 'belonging'. Children from Service families are given specific provision to help develop personal strategies to manage times when parents are away from home. Special group activities for them create a family feel at school whilst sensitive promotion of the contribution service personnel make nationally ensures the children and their families feel valued and respected by the school community.

Although the reflective and nurturing elements of the school's character are shared and well articulated the understanding of spirituality is less well developed. Children are beginning to link their strong attitude of reflection to exploring something greater beyond them, for example a Year 5 child described the atrium and font in the centre of the school as representing 'the light of God'. However, opportunities to explore and experience spirituality in a range of creative ways to develop a vocabulary and language to describe it equivalent to that of reflection is yet to be specifically addressed.

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

Collective worship is central to supporting the school's Christian character and values. Children respond well to shared worship times and talk equally enthusiastically about whole school, group and class worship. The Bible is the central source of inspiration and guidance for worship. Bible stories are carefully chosen as part of the term's plans. Because of this approach, children and staff have a broad knowledge of the theological basis of worship and make strong links with shared positive human values and inclusive, kindly behaviour. The collective worship leader is well supported by the local vicar. The vicar regularly leads worship and encourages and supports staff in developing a

theological understanding of worship themes. Published material supports planning but does not dictate or dominate the approach to, or shape of, worship week by week.

Class worship focuses on different news stories from around the world and encourages children to think about the implications of the values being explored in light of a particular news story. Parents say that children often continue their discussion at home, which, in turn, helps them talk as a family with care and compassion about world events and their personal lives. For example, as a direct result of thinking about the disastrous impact of Hurricane Irma a parent explained how her children talked with her about how lucky they felt. Other parents echoed the same experience and described their children's developing attitudes as 'a wider sense of thankfulness'.

Children, staff and parents particularly enjoy the celebration assembly. Awards are given for achievement in learning promoting and valuing an attitude of hard work alongside accomplishment. Values certificates are awarded to those children who have actively demonstrated Christian values giving these behaviours equal status to educational awards and high prominence.

Children take part in leading and planning acts of worship. They confidently perform short dramas, read Bible stories in an engaging manner and organise the worship resources. In addition to being included in leading worship itself older children are given the responsibility of awarding values stickers to their peers when they see them behaving with positive attitudes that demonstrate the value being explored in the worship.

Collective and individual prayer is shared across the school and at different times of the day. As well as school prayers that the children learn to recite by heart class prayer books hold individual prayers written by the children. They choose and read from the book each day enjoying the opportunity to lead prayer for their class. Children are sensitively encouraged to voice personal prayers in their own quiet times too. A child talked about her prayers saying 'I prayed for my mummy when she was poorly'.

The carefully thought out displays, objects and furniture around school encourage reflection and prayer. 'Jars of Hope', prayer trees, the spiritual pond and Gazebo provide places for confidential and public sharing of prayers, hopes and concerns. They all add to the rich spiritual experience children might choose to take part in.

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

The Christian vision and values of the school is explicit and central to the school's ethos, culture and character. It is the motivating force behind strategic decisions and provision for children and their families. Since the school opened in 2002 the school has seen a significant change in the needs of its children. Leadership is responsive and ensures individual needs are met emotionally, socially and educationally.

Leaders understand the accountability of their roles. They carry out those responsibilities within the Christian values of the school and effectively support colleagues well. Action plans, staff feedback and children's work all demonstrate a consistent approach to improvements for church school effectiveness. Development plans for collective worship and RE reflect the responsive nature of leadership. They have been effective in securing rapid change and raising standards and achievement for all groups of children. Development plans demonstrate how staff are supported in developing the distinctive character of the school. Staff, governors, parents and children agree that they are included in consultations and contributing to improving the school. They give the Christian values and development of reflective spaces as examples. The headteacher leads by overt example. She continuously promotes the importance of the Christian character of the school in its overall effectiveness whilst demonstrating care and compassion to all she serves. Staff and governors agree that her open and invitational approach to team work is central to the success of the school.

Care and time is given to nurturing new staff and providing understanding of the distinctive character and expectations of a church school through diocesan training and school mentoring. The RE and collective worship leader has been equally well supported with training and encouragement. She is extremely effective in her role and her work and support is recognised and valued by the school community. A succession plan is in place as she takes maternity leave ensuring effective practice that is already in place will continue.

Partnerships, both formal and informal are sought out and valued including with the local church through the work of the vicar, the diocese and partner schools. Personal contacts from the staff and unplanned opportunities that arise to serve and contribute to the lives of learners, their families and the wider community are sought out and welcomed. Governors have a good understanding of the school through regular monitoring. They work well with senior leaders. Governor minutes do not yet demonstrate the full extent of their work.

The legal entitlement for collective worship and RE is fully met.