

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Bishop Bridgeman Church of England Primary School	
Rupert Street, Bolton, Lancashire, BL3 6PY	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Manchester
Previous SIAS inspection grade (as a Church of England voluntary aided primary school)	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	August 2016
Name of multi-academy trust	Bolton and Farnworth Church of England Primary Multi-Academy Trust
Date of inspection	26 January 2017
Date of last inspection	February 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy 142943
Executive Principal	Jill Pilling
School Principal	Hafsha Hafeji
Inspector's name and number	Nigel Castledine (652)

School context

Bishop Bridgeman is a larger than average Church of England primary school in an urban area of significant social deprivation. A high proportion of the pupils have English as a second language. The percentages of pupils with special educational needs or disability and those eligible for free school meals are both above the national average. There is a growing number of International New Arrivals.

Since the last inspection the school has become an academy and has accordingly restructured its leadership team. The school is involved locally and nationally in advancing the development of Church of England schools.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bishop Bridgeman as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The Christian ethos of the school motivates and sustains the highest possible standards of pupil progress, attainment and nurture for every pupil.
- The resolve and dedication of the senior leaders and governors ensures that Christian distinctiveness provides a robust foundation for the school's on-going drive for sustained development.
- Living, vibrant Christian values enrich every aspect of school life. They are upheld by daily worship, prayer and reflection that root them into the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.
- The national outreach of the school through its innovative annual ethos conferences inspires the development of exceptional Church of England school distinctiveness and leadership.

Area to improve

Flowing from the school's Christian beliefs is the support given to other schools by sharing and developing exceptional educational leadership and practice, underpinned by distinctive gospel values. These beliefs have also stimulated the school's confidence and trust in the influential pupils' ethos group to lead and inspire others.

- To increase the scope and appeal of the support offered to both primary and secondary schools, utilise the skills and enthusiasm of the pupil ethos group to promote the development of Christian distinctiveness.

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

This school shares its pervasive Christian vision by inspiring all its pupils within a learning community that has a shared understanding and celebration of faith in God. This inclusive vision remains deeply Christian, whilst inclusive and respectful of all the faiths of the school community. Its inclusivity has inspired an ethos group of pupils, with a mix of ages and beliefs, to meet to ponder the big questions of faiths. This group has gained a remarkable ability to share this focus with others which greatly enhances the school's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The exceptional focus of the group's work includes two books, videos and their influential annual ethos open conference. This ethos group is inspiring the thinking of Church of England schools and faith leaders across the UK. The school's vision statement, 'We work, we play, we care, we pray' stems from the Christian vision. It raises pupils' aspirations to achieve high personal academic success, as well as inspiring and enhancing their social and spiritual development. From a low starting point, pupil progress in each of the key stages is outstanding and by the end of Key Stage 2 most pupils achieve significantly above national expectations. An assertive mentoring approach ensures all pupils are taught key skills and gain resilience which stimulates their enjoyment, interest and extended engagement in learning. Attendance figures are above national expectations which indicate that pupils enjoy school life and their learning. Pupils know they are valued as individuals and are very proud of their achievements.

Because of the school community's shared understanding and respect for faith, all members of the school community display mutual care and affection for one another. The school has identified seven core Christian values of faith, hope, love, trust, honesty, friendship and forgiveness. The whole school community speaks the same language of these values and uses their terminology and biblical links to explain the thinking. The school's exceptional provision for religious education (RE) ensures that pupils learn to express these thoughts and beliefs in age-appropriate ways, whilst growing in understanding of the importance of faith and belief in daily life. In a Year 2 RE lesson, one of the girls observed, 'Jesus gave great love and hope to the leper when he healed him.' A Year 6 boy commented, 'I felt proud that I had been forgiven and that made me feel better about myself.'

An annual Ethos Super Learning Day, led by the ethos group, celebrates and explores the impact of the school's key Christian values. Pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is a high priority, integral to all aspects of school life. It supports pupils in flourishing as individuals and celebrates their unique qualities. Because pupils develop a good understanding of their own and other's cultures and beliefs, differing ethnic and faith groups, including those not represented in the school, are regarded very positively. Christian values inspire pupils to want to help others by taking on of responsibilities as well as showing Christian stewardship in their support for charitable giving. Christian values help pupils to develop a clear understanding of the concept and consequences of right and wrong behaviours, and learn about the importance of upholding truth, justice and fairness and challenging racism. Bullying is a rare occurrence and is dealt with swiftly and compassionately. The school's behaviour policy reflects the teaching of Christian forgiveness and making a fresh start. A member of the ethos group described the school as 'like a great big family where everyone's equal'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Daily collective worship is the key stimulus for the whole life of the school. It enriches and reinforces the Christian values, it informs its curriculum and it sets the context of its care and nurture. Pupils describe it as 'a time to spend with God' and are able to contribute to the worship as fully as they wish, experiencing a sense of fellowship, irrespective of their faith backgrounds. Innovative focal points for worship are a mirror, window and door, representing self-reflection, looking at God's world and taking new paths in life.

The three symbols of Bible, cross and lit candle on the worship table serve as a reminder for Christians of the doctrine of the Trinity. Worship songs, biblical references, teaching and prayer (including the school prayer written by pupils) are all strong features of Anglican tradition. Although most worship takes place in school, festivals are celebrated in Bolton parish church and monthly Sunday worship in St Philip's church is part of school life. These enable pupils and parents of any faith to meet the Anglican traditions of the school in a church setting. Worship plans follow the seasons and festivals of the Christian calendar ensuring it remains predominantly Christian. Celebration days mark the special events of other faiths, and provision is made for those observing Ramadan with an area set aside for prayers for all who wish to take part.

Worship is enriched by the variety of leaders who include the senior leadership team, local clergy and visitors as well as the ethos group each half term. A weekly meeting between the vicar as chair of governors and the executive principal monitors the worship plan delivery. Each worship leader is responsible for gathering evaluations of their theme and delivery. These inform future plans and ensure worship remains stimulating. The school's strong spirituality and faith teaching leads some pupils towards confirmation as full members of the Church of England. Stimulating places for personal reflection are provided throughout the school, and the hall 'pin a prayer' wall has a personal prayer or reflection written by every pupil. A Year 6 girl reflected, 'Prayer means everything to me.'

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The profile of RE is very high, ensuring it is regarded as integral core subject of the curriculum, linked into many other subject areas. The school's RE teaching is carefully planned to include sufficient emphasis on how the subject impacts on pupils' thinking, their future actions and their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development.

RE inspires the universal acceptance and respect for the personal beliefs of the whole school community. It strongly influences the understanding and impact for the school's Christian values and its worship. A member of the ethos group explained, 'We all have our own religions but we like to learn about the similarities and differences between the faiths of our school, and our values help us celebrate them in in our work and worship.'

Pupils are inspired by RE, finding it an exciting, rewarding and thought-provoking subject. A Year 4 boy delighted in commenting, 'The whole school's addicted to RE!' This is because of the exceptional impact of team-teaching from each class teacher and the RE specialist higher level teaching assistant which ensures all lessons are of the highest quality. Development of RE assessment procedures since the last inspection has ensured that regular assessment and moderation of pupils' work is effectively carried out. This shows RE progress and attainment meet age-related expectations, with a significant percentage of pupils exceeding these levels. The dedicated work of the RE coordinator and subject specialist is well supported by senior leaders and governors who receive a termly subject leader's update report. The importance of RE and worship to the school means their development and standards are reviewed as an integral part of each year's School Strategic Plan. The school was awarded the RE Gold Quality Mark in spring 2016.

The richness of learning in RE is seen in photographic evidence, art, pupils' books, and floor-books. The school was a winner in the 2016 'Art in Heaven' competition with an intricate mirrored cross, which a child explained, 'helps us to see God in ourselves'. The interactive nature of displays of RE and worship in the school's classrooms, hall, corridors and the use of artefacts representing a range of beliefs, all reflect the inclusivity of faith learning.

RE is enriched by visits to churches, cathedrals and the places of worship of other world faiths. The parish clergy make themselves available to discuss issues of belief with pupils and to answer their questions. Members of the local community and parents are also involved in RE lessons, sharing their faiths and their worship lives. Pupils, therefore, understand Christianity as a world faith, one older girl observing, 'There's no country made for one religion.'

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

The innovative and visionary work of the executive principal is the catalyst for the development of the school's exceptionally rich and distinctive Christian vision. Her distributed leadership style has empowered the school's principal and senior leaders to inspire both staff and pupils in the continuous development of the school. This is a school that believes every child is a rich gift from God, and therefore every pupil is valued as a uniquely special individual. The distributed leadership style has inspired the ethos group to ensure that each member is encouraged to give of his or her best in the group's faith outreach work.

Governors exercise strong strategic leadership whilst also providing practical support for the school. This is done through effective challenge for the senior leadership team, particularly on pupil progress, with an uncompromising drive for continuous improvement. The governing board was awarded the Governor Quality Mark in 2014.

A very successful innovation is the highly popular but voluntary Saturday school sessions, in which pupils explore the Christian faith with exciting and stimulating activities and fellowship. The passion that pupils have for experiencing and sharing the school's Christian ethos influences all of school life. This ambitious work is shared with the many visitors who come to experience and be inspired by the school's unique learning atmosphere, underpinned by its passionate Christian faith.

The executive principal is chair of Bolton RE Standing Advisory Committee, whilst the RE coordinator is a member of the local diocesan RE hub. The chair of governors is a member of the diocesan Board of Education. These connections refresh RE and widen the opportunities for Christian outreach to other schools. Some staff members have opted to undertake the diocesan Christian leadership course, and aspiring leaders are supported in gaining national primary qualifications. Continuing professional development is provided for all staff and governors. This emphasis enhances succession planning and extends the professional skills of all staff.

Positive links between home and school have resulted in the award of the national Leading Parent Partnership award. Parents and carers appreciate the care and attention given to each child's needs, and the work of the learning mentor is highly regarded. High value is placed on the ways in which parents are kept well informed and able to support their children's learning. The level of trust in the school and its strong Christian faith is clear with a mother stating, 'Anyone's concerns are sorted out quickly because the faith and family of school supports everyone.'

SIAMS report January 2017 Bishop Bridgeman Church of England Primary School, Bolton BL3 6PY